House of Commons

Wednesday 27 January 2010

The House met at half-past Eleven o’clock

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

BUSINESS BEFORE QUESTIONS

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES BILL [LORDS]  
(By Order)

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Wednesday 3 February.

Oral Answers to Questions

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster was asked—

Youth Citizenship Commission

1. Natascha Engel (North-East Derbyshire) (Lab): What steps her Department has taken to implement the recommendations of the Youth Citizenship Commission.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Ms Dawn Butler): I am co-ordinating the Government response to the Youth Citizenship Commission. I have been impressed by the breadth of commitment of all Government Departments in engaging young people as active citizens in their communities and as they go through the transition to adulthood. I expect to publish my findings in response to the YCC in February, when I shall report on the significant amount of Government initiatives on delivery for young people.

Natascha Engel: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. As she knows, the UK Youth Parliament is absolutely key to delivering on the proposals outlined by the YCC. Will she press the House authorities to provide core funding for the UK Youth Parliament to secure its future, so that it can deliver on those proposals?

Ms Butler: I would like to congratulate my hon. Friend on all her work for the all-party parliamentary group on youth affairs. She does an excellent job. The UK Youth Parliament is a real success story: my hon. Friend will know that it held a great debate here in the House, and one of its key priorities is to lower the voting age to 16. She makes a valuable point, and I will indeed press the House authorities to try to ensure that we get some core funding for the UKYP.

Mr. David Evennett (Bexleyheath and Crayford) (Con): We are all very keen to get more young people involved in the electoral process, and to ensure that they vote and participate. An election is near, so what more can the Government do to fulfil the commission’s recommendation that eligible pupils should be encouraged to register via school to make sure that they participate when it comes?

Ms Butler: The hon. Gentleman makes another valuable point. We do not need any changes in law to ensure that young people are registered in schools, colleges and universities. We need to encourage those institutions to make sure that young people are encouraged to sign on and be registered to vote when they reach 17, so that we have the maximum number participating in the next election.

Get Safe Online Campaign

Q2. Alison Seabeck (Plymouth, Devonport) (Lab): What assessment has she made of the effectiveness of her Department’s Get Safe Online campaign.

Q6. Mrs. Betty Williams (Conwy) (Lab): What steps her Department is taking to raise public awareness of internet safety.

The Minister for the Cabinet Office and for the Olympics, and Paymaster General (Tessa Jowell): By sponsoring the Get Safe Online initiative, my Department continues to work with private sector partners to raise the very important issue of public awareness of internet safety. The Get Safe Online initiative has won two prestigious awards for this joint working, and it continues to increase the number and length of visits to its website. There have been more than 605,000 links to the site—far more than its US counterpart, which has achieved only 25,000.

Alison Seabeck: I thank my right hon. Friend for her reply. A lot of people in my constituency still enjoy using cheques, which is a good thing, but more and more people—especially elderly people—are seeking to shop online because it is easy. What additional support and advice can she offer older users of the internet, who may be less familiar with the systems? What protections are in place?

Tessa Jowell: My hon. Friend has been a long-standing campaigner on this issue on behalf of her elderly constituents. It is an extremely important matter, as people over 65 are the fastest growing group of internet users. That may seem slightly counter-intuitive, but that group of users grew by 15 per cent. in 2009 over the previous year, whereas the number of younger people using the internet grew by only 3 per cent. in the same period. Get Safe Online works specifically with Age Concern and has focused precisely on the important issue of security in banking and other financial transactions. It is important that the technology and content of websites always keeps ahead of fraud’s capacity to cause great anxiety and distress.

Mrs. Betty Williams: What are my right hon. Friend and her colleagues doing to encourage new sponsors to support this very valuable initiative?
Tessa Jowell: I thank my hon. Friend for that question. Get Safe Online is a joint initiative, involving the Government and important private sector sponsors such as HSBC and Microsoft. Indeed, the Minister for the third sector, my right hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Angela E. Smith), recently hosted a sponsorship event as a result of which two new sponsors came on stream. It is clear that sponsors understand the initiative’s potential public benefit when it is presented to them. It is a very attractive sponsorship proposition.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): The Minister mentioned fraud. With an increasing number of people being used as money mules, what are the Government doing to track down the foreign international gangs behind those schemes, and in particular to prosecute UK citizens who take their cut of the money?

Tessa Jowell: I would like to refer the hon. Gentleman’s question to the Home Office, which takes the lead on this. I do not think that I referred specifically to money mules; I referred to protection for elderly people doing their banking and other financial transactions online. I hope that, as far as there is operational responsibility for this, his point about anticipating crime and future forms of fraud is taken into account in the constant review under the auspices of Get Safe Online working with the relevant organisations.

Jenny Willott (Cardiff, Central) (LD): There has been a dramatic increase in cyber crime related to online transactions, as the Minister mentioned. Treasury figures show that transactions have more than doubled in the last three years, but the amount of identify theft and fraud has nearly quadrupled in the same period. What are the Government doing to tackle this growing problem, and what assessment has been made of the Payments Council’s decision to phase out cheques?

Tessa Jowell: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State is taking forward this very important work, meeting the relevant stakeholders. Once those discussions have concluded, she will want to make a statement to the House.

NHS Charities

4. Mr. Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): What discussions has she had with the Charity Commission and the Secretary of State for Health on proposed changes to the accounting treatment of NHS charities.

Angela E. Smith: I have discussed the accounting arrangements for NHS charities with the Charity Commission and the Secretary of State, Department of Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Phil Hope). The funds of an NHS charity are, and will continue to be, controlled by the charity’s trustees for charitable purposes. The international financial reporting standard will have no effect on the independence of those funds. My hon. Friend the Member for Corby, however, has engaged with colleagues in the Treasury to seek to delay the implementation of that requirement for a further year.

Mr. Bone: That was a slightly confusing response. Will the Minister make it quite clear whether the Government are pursuing the option of consolidating NHS charities on NHS balance sheets? Can we just have a simple yes or no?

Angela E. Smith: The hon. Gentleman may operate in a world in which yes or no does it for him, but most things in life are a bit more complex. However, I can give him a categorical assurance that the finances of NHS charities will remain entirely controlled by the trustees of those charities, which is appropriate. All that we are talking about, and the source of the confusion and misunderstanding, is a technical change to accounting and reporting arrangements. I can give the hon. Gentleman an absolute assurance that funds will remain controlled by the trustees, and will continue to be controlled by the trustees.

Mr. Bill Olner (Nuneaton) (Lab): My right hon. Friend will know that many communities give a great deal of support to NHS services, both in the hospice movement and in general health services. People would be dismayed if they thought that the moneys given voluntarily would be used against the NHS hospital budgets.

Angela E. Smith: I agree with my hon. Friend. And they will not be. This is purely a technical accounting matter, so I am sorry about those concerns, because they are unfounded. There is no intention whatsoever that anything should be done with charity funds, which should remain with those charities. It is a purely technical accounting matter, and I hope that those assurances will satisfy my hon. Friend.

Mr. Douglas Carswell (Harwich) (Con): The Minister described this as a purely technical matter, but is there not a danger that NHS charities could be subject in effect to more central micro-management? Should we not seek in fact to decentralise control?

Angela E. Smith: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no such intention. This arrangement will not centralise any funding or any control of those charitable funds at all.

Mr. Lindsay Hoyle (Chorley) (Lab): I welcome my right hon. Friend’s statement that she is going to defer implementation for 12 months, but may I persuade her to go back and have further meetings, and support the Sunday People campaign not to introduce the new arrangement at all, and ensure that people feel happy to give freely and openly to charities in the NHS without any issues?

Angela E. Smith: First of all, I do not have the power to introduce it or not. It is a matter for the Treasury, because it is a technical—

Mr. Hoyle: You can do better than that Angela.

Angela E. Smith: If I can finish answering the question that my hon. Friend asked. [HON. MEMBERS: “Oh!”] I would always wish to respond to my hon. Friend in full, and I will continue to do so. I am sorry that there is misunderstanding about this, because we do not want
people not to give to charities in the NHS because they think that the money will not be used appropriately. It is purely a technical matter but, as I said, the Health Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Corby, has asked the Treasury to defer implementation for a year to provide the reassurance that is required.

Mr. Nick Hurd (Ruislip-Northwood) (Con): The Charity Commission does not agree with the Government. It warned 18 months ago that the proposals risk undermining public confidence in the independence of NHS charities, but still the Government dither. Those accounting standards were never meant to be applied to charities. Other countries have chosen not to apply them in this way. They are being imposed because of bureaucratic diktat. The issue needs gripping by Ministers, so will the right hon. Lady pledge to work with colleagues in the Department of Health and Monitor to persuade the Treasury not just to defer a decision for another year, but to drop this whole nonsense altogether?

Angela E. Smith: I am not sure that there is any disagreement in the House on the principle of what the Government seek to do. NHS charities should have their funds independently administered by the trustees, which is the law. As I said, the Health Minister, who has been dealing with the matter with the Treasury, fully understands the views of the House and will ensure that they are represented at all times.

2011 Census

Q5. James Duddridge (Rochford and Southend, East) (Con): What the percentage response rates were to the 2011 census rehearsal in October 2009. [313355]

The Minister of State, Cabinet Office (Angela E. Smith): The census rehearsal, unlike the 2011 census, was voluntary and was carried out in just three areas.

To date, the provisional percentage response is 38 per cent. overall and analysis of the rehearsal returns is still ongoing.

James Duddridge: The Minister, knowing Southend well, will know that I am appalled by those low figures, given that the 94 per cent. average at the last census was even lower in Southend. We felt that we undercounted by about 20,000 people, which cost us £7 million each year. Will the Minister agree to meet me and Southend council in the time before the general election to make sure that we are fully prepared for 2011?

Angela E. Smith: I would be happy to meet the hon. Gentleman. In fact, I would be happy to meet him after the general election as well, to discuss the matter. I understand the points that he makes, but the census rehearsal is voluntary. There was no publicity about it and it does not in any way reflect the response rate that we will get for the census, which I anticipate will be much the same as at the last census. What I can tell the hon. Gentleman, which will be helpful in terms of the points that he raises, is that additional work is ongoing by the Office for National Statistics, which undertakes the census, to ensure that the response rate is as high as possible. That is part of the reason for the rehearsal—to look at the actions that the ONS can and will take in areas that traditionally send in fewer response forms. So action is being taken to address the very points that he made. Indeed, the ONS has been meeting Southend council and others to look at increasing the response rate.

Julie Morgan (Cardiff, North) (Lab): What efforts are being made to reach groups that are traditionally difficult to reach, such as ethnic groups or Gypsies and Travellers?

Angela E. Smith: The ONS has put additional work into that. More than £2 million will be spent to encourage organisations and individuals who have been more reluctant to respond to the census to encourage them to do so. Billions of pounds of public money is allocated in expenditure each year, and it is right that we have projections of where the population lives and what the needs of future populations will be. That applies to all populations in this country, so every effort will be made and extra resources will be put into ensuring that those people are able to respond.

Mr. Francis Maude (Horsham) (Con): How can the cost of half a billion pounds, which is double the cost of the last census, be justified at this time of fiscal crisis? In 2001, 10 per cent. of the data was not even counted; it was imputed. Is this not a thoroughly wasteful and inaccurate exercise?

Angela E. Smith: Absolutely not. It is a very valuable and important exercise. The cost is about £482 million, but we estimate that the benefit to the economy of the work that has been done is about £700 million, so the benefits outweigh the cost. The cost is about 87p per person per year. For every person in the country to pay 87p per year for the benefit that we get from the census is good value.

Mr. Maude: The census is not even accurate. Why are Ministers rushing to send millions of the 32-page census forms to the printers this March, a full 12 months before the census date? Should not a responsible Government be scaling the census back? Is not the answer a less intrusive, much cheaper census that offends the public less, increases compliance and therefore yields much more accurate information?

Angela E. Smith: I think the right hon. Gentleman struggles to make his point. If we look at the costs of censuses across the world, our census is better value for money and cheaper than those conducted in such countries as New Zealand, Canada, Australia and the USA. In the USA the census costs more than £2 per person per year—significantly more than in this country. [Interruption.] Hon. Members may find that amusing, but I find value for money quite an important aspect. The Government are doing everything they can, working with the ONS, to ensure that the information is accurate. It is important that the response rate is as high as possible. We use the information to help to allocate Government priorities and Government expenditure, so I totally refute the right hon. Gentleman’s comments.

Voluntary Sector (Government Funding)

Q7. Mr. Gary Streeter (South-West Devon) (Con): What recent representations she has received on the effect on the voluntary sector of changes in levels of Government funding. [313357]
The Minister of State, Cabinet Office (Angela E. Smith): I regularly meet third sector organisations to discuss various issues, including any potential changes to the levels of Government funding. Owing to the third sector’s value to the community, public funding increased to £12 billion in the most recent financial year, an increase of more than £3.5 billion over seven years. The Government have further increased their support to the sector with a recession action plan, which is worth up to £42.5 million, and the £17.4 million hardship fund provided additional support. We have also funded a website that provides a one-stop shop for information about funding and financial opportunities, including advice and guidance on sustainable funding opportunities.

Mr. Streeter: I am very grateful to the Minister. Whoever wins the next election, there are likely to be spending cuts in national and local government, and that will inevitably reduce the amount of funding for the third sector just at a time when its burden of social care is on the increase. How does the Minister intend to square that circle?

Angela E. Smith: The issue of local government funding has caused the third sector considerable concern, and we have been working with local government and those who commission services from the third sector to ensure that commissioners are aware of the value of the third sector and how they can best apply for the work that it undertakes on behalf of local government. In terms of social care, that is the most crucial consideration.

Greg Mulholland (Leeds, North-West) (LD): There are issues with Government funding, but council budgets are under huge pressure, too, and, in the drive to enable the third sector to undertake core social services, that is leading to a double pincer movement for many local charities. What will the Minister do to ensure that councils do not simply say, “We cannot fund you,” and that we do not lose the core social services that councils used to run?

Angela E. Smith: If third sector organisations are undertaking core social services, they will be doing so on behalf of the local authority, which will fund those services. I say to all local authorities, look for the third sector and how they can best apply for the work that it undertakes on behalf of local government. In terms of social care, that is the most crucial consideration.

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Dr. William McCrea (South Antrim) (DUP): Surely the Minister accepts that the voluntary sector makes a vital contribution to the well-being of our society. Therefore, in these difficult financial times, financial support should be strengthened rather than diminished.

Angela E. Smith: It is gratifying to receive so much support for Government funding of the third sector; it has not always been forthcoming from the Opposition. We have addressed those funding issues. During the recession, the Government have given an extra £42.5 million to the third sector, and that support has been absolutely crucial. We want to ensure that we still support the third sector, but we will not regard it as a cheap option for the provision of public services. It is a quality option that deserves to be properly funded.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Ms Dawn Butler): The Government Communication Network is the successor to the Government Information Service, which was disbanded in 1997. Over the next 12 months, the permanent secretary at the GCN will improve the professional skills of communicators throughout the civil service, maintain professional standards, increase efficiency and deliver maximum value for money. Effective communication performs a critical role in providing important information to the public and improving access to public services. The Government will continue to use communications in support of their policy agenda, building on current successful campaigns.

Norman Baker: I am grateful to the Minister, and I am sure that the Government Communication Network does a marvellous job, but at a time when we are looking to ensure that public money is well spent, will she explain why, for example, it is necessary for the Ministry of Defence to have 255 people employed in communication?

Ms Butler: Over the years, there has been a lot of demand on press officers’ time. I will give the hon. Gentleman some figures. There are 374 media personnel in the Press Gallery and more than 3,000 journalists at the BBC, and each of their queries demands a response. On average, the Department for Children, Schools and Families, for instance, receives 600 calls a day. The increase in numbers is a direct response to the increased number of questions to Departments.

Charities (Regulatory Burden)

9. Mr. Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): If she will take steps to reduce the regulatory burden on charitable organisations.

The Minister of State, Cabinet Office (Angela E. Smith): The Government are committed to cutting burdens on charities and other third sector organisations. Further plans outlining how this will be achieved were published last month. The changes that we have already made to charity law and to the accounting and reporting thresholds have resulted in savings for up to 5,000 charities.

Mr. Hollobone: Gift Aid is a wonderful thing, but it is complicated to administer and particularly costly for smaller charities. When can we have some sensible proposals from the right hon. Lady to simplify and reform the system?

Angela E. Smith: Gift Aid is a matter for the Treasury. However, I have regular meetings with representatives from the third sector, as well as with Treasury Ministers, who are reviewing the operation of Gift Aid to see what more they can do to assist charities in this regard.

Tom Levitt (High Peak) (Lab): Is it not the case that the Charities Act 2006 brought rationalisation to the regulations governing the charities sector and therefore...
made it much easier, in many ways, for them to function? Is it not also the case that where third sector organisations are delivering other services such as hospices and so on, they must be regulated in terms of the service that they are delivering? What is important, therefore, is not the quantity but the quality of the regulation that we have imposed.

**Angela E. Smith:** My hon. Friend, who has vast knowledge of the charitable sector, makes a valid point. This is a matter of balance. We need to ensure that there is adequate regulation to protect donors’ money and the services that they provide, but we do not want to overburden those organisations with unnecessary regulation.

**Ann Winterton** (Congleton) (Con): As charities are finding it extremely difficult to maintain income streams because of the fragility of the economy—[Interruption.]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Lady, but there are far too many private conversations taking place in the Chamber. That is very unfair to the hon. Lady and to the Minister answering the question.

**Ann Winterton:** I will start again, Mr. Speaker. As charities are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain income streams, would not now be the very best time to try to reduce the regulatory burden even further to minimise the adverse effects on all charities, including NHS charities?

**Angela E. Smith:** I do not think the hon. Lady heard my answer to the original question as regards exactly what we are doing. We are publishing plans outlining more to do. However, the measures that we have taken to date in relation to charity registration, and other matters, have been welcomed by charities, and we will continue to do what we can to support them.

**Advice and Advocacy Services**

**10. Hugh Bayley** (City of York) (Lab): If she will take steps to ensure that third sector organisations have sufficient resources to provide advice and advocacy services for people employed by companies that do not recognise trade unions. [313361]

**The Minister of State, Cabinet Office (Angela E. Smith):** Because of the third sector’s value to the community, public funding increased to £12 billion in the last financial year, which amounts to more than £3.5 billion extra over the past seven years. During the recession, we have provided additional funding to advise centres and to the communities they help. That includes an extra £13 million for legal aid, an extra £10 million for additional hours of service by citizens advice bureaux, and more than £6 million for information, advice and guidance services and hardship funds. These services are open to those in every community irrespective of their employment status.

**Hugh Bayley:** The national minimum wage protects the earnings of vulnerable workers, but during the recession bad employers have sacked low-paid staff or unfairly changed their working conditions, especially in non-unionised workplaces. What have the Government done to support vulnerable workers to ensure that they get good advice and representation about their rights at work?

**Angela E. Smith:** I would urge every member of the public in employment to be a member of a trade union that protects their rights. However, the Government provide additional support to ACAS, to the pay and work rights helpline, and to the Directgov website. We also have a campaign to ensure that workers are aware of their rights at work so they cannot be discriminated against and treated as my hon. Friend describes.

**Grassroots Grant Programme**

**12. Clive Efford** (Eltham) (Lab): What recent assessment she has made of the effects on local communities of her Department’s grassroots grants programme. [313363]

**The Minister of State, Cabinet Office (Angela E. Smith):** The £130 million grassroots grants programme has already provided more than 13,000 grants to small charities and voluntary organisations, totalling more than £33 million. Those grants have enabled small groups across England to do what they think is best to meet the needs of their own communities. More than £13 million has been received in donations from businesses and individuals, which has been boosted by the Government’s provision of £25 million through match funding.

**Clive Efford:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that voluntary organisations in receipt of that money are best placed to provide opportunities for young people to get employment through sport and training opportunities, and that that provides people with an excellent opportunity to participate in making their communities better?

**Angela E. Smith:** I would commend my hon. Friend for the work that he has done in his constituency on this issue, working with the third sector and encouraging young people to volunteer and engage. He is absolutely right that the ability to volunteer seems to be a route into employment because of the skills and confidence that people gain through volunteering.

**Charities (Regulatory Burden)**

**13. Tim Loughton** (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): If she will take steps to reduce the regulatory burden on charitable organisations. [313364]

**The Minister of State, Cabinet Office (Angela E. Smith):** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Hollobone) a moment ago about how the Government are reducing burdens on charities and the voluntary sector.

**Tim Loughton:** I recently visited a mental health charity that was getting its funding from 27 different sources and having to fill in 27 audits and 27 accounts of how it was doing its job properly every year. It was having to employ at least one full-time person just to do the paperwork. Surely that is a nonsense and we can streamline that whole system.

**Angela E. Smith:** We can to an extent, and one thing that we can do is consider having one reporting system for such organisations. However, I do not think for a minute that the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that some...
Ms Harman: I have been asked to reply.

Mr. Whittingdale: I have been asked to reply.

Mr. John Whittingdale (Maldon and East Chelmsford) (Con): If he will list his official engagements for Wednesday 27 January.

The Leader of the House of Commons (Ms Harriet Harman): I have been asked to reply.

As the House will know, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is in Northern Ireland, where talks are ongoing to secure agreement on the devolution of policing and justice powers. The Prime Minister will make a written statement to update the House later and place it in the Library of both Houses.

I am sure the whole House will wish to join me in paying tribute to Rifleman Peter Aldridge from 4th Battalion the Rifles, serving as part of 3 Rifles Battle Group, and acting Lance Corporal Daniel Cooper from 3rd Battalion the Rifles, who have died in Afghanistan. They were both heroes who displayed extraordinary courage, spirit and absolute commitment to the tasks that were before them and their colleagues, who, along with their families and friends, will remember them with great, great pride.

Mr. Whittingdale: May I join the Leader of the House in paying tribute to Rifleman Peter Aldridge from 4th Battalion the Rifles, serving as part of 3 Rifles Battle Group, and acting Lance Corporal Daniel Cooper from 3rd Battalion the Rifles, who have died in Afghanistan. They were both heroes who displayed extraordinary courage, spirit and absolute commitment to the tasks that were before them and their colleagues, who, along with their families and friends, will remember them with great, great pride.

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Ms Harman: The Ministry of Defence has been very concerned indeed to ensure that we support those who have been injured in the line of service. The Secretary of State for Defence produced a Command Paper that particularly addressed the issue of support for veterans. There has been a big upgrading of the compensation scheme and a further review of the scheme is under way. The Secretary of State for Defence has been working closely with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on this.

Q14. [313315] Mr. Mark Todd (South Derbyshire) (Lab): Our economy will rely increasingly on export-oriented manufacturing industries. Toyota, Rolls-Royce, JCB and others employ about a third of the workforce in my area in high added-value manufacturing. What can the Government do to improve the performance of our export-oriented manufacturing sector, to make it more successful in future for the benefit of us all?

Mr. Hague: We wish the Prime Minister well in his endeavours in Northern Ireland because we all want the devolution of policing and justice to be completed and progress in Northern Ireland to continue.

On that subject, we welcome the appointment of a new NATO civilian representative in Afghanistan, and the fact that it is the current British ambassador to Afghanistan, Mark Sedwill, whom we all hold in very high regard. Are the Government confident that his work will be closely co-ordinated with that of the United Nations so that, this time, military gains will be followed by effective reconstruction?

Ms Harman: Indeed, and I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his commendation of that distinguished diplomat. It is precisely to support that work that the conference is to be held in London to look at taking forward issues on Afghanistan. There are 70 countries attending, as well as the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon.

Mr. Hague: Looking ahead to that conference tomorrow, should we not recall the lessons of the previous Afghan conference in London in 2006, which set dozens of extremely ambitious objectives for Afghanistan, most of which have never been met? Do the Government agree that, this time, the conference should focus on realistic goals that can be delivered, concentrating on improved governance and reintegrating former Taliban members? Will the Government seek regular reviews of the progress made, including at the conference proposed for Kabul in a few months?

Ms Harman: Of course, we are looking to ensure that we play our part so that, in Afghanistan, we have the right military action to tackle terrorism, we support Afghanisation of the armed forces and the police services, and we have economic and political development. I would have thought that the right hon. Gentleman would take the opportunity to support the work that will go on tomorrow instead of simply carping.

Mr. Hague: The right hon. and learned Lady should know the position. Immediately after Question Time, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and I will visit President Karzai to push forward exactly the same agenda as the Government, so there is no need to make party political points about that important subject.

Doubtless, President Obama will mention Afghanistan in his State of the Union address tonight, but he is also expected to talk about reforms to the regulation of the
banking system. No country was left more exposed to the failure of the banking system than the United Kingdom. President Obama has called for retail banks to be prevented from getting involved in large-scale proprietary trading. Why are the Government not supporting the President’s proposals enthusiastically and working with him to realise them?

Ms Harman: We are working very closely internationally, including, of course, with President Obama. The United States has different structures and different problems in its banking system, which the US Government are seeking to address. We have been addressing the problems in our banking system, and it is important that we all work together internationally to ensure that we can deal with the problems that have so affected all our economies.

Mr. Hague: Well, of course it is important to work together internationally, but the Prime Minister said that he did not envisage a “divide in future between… retail and corporate deposit taking… and investment banking and trading conducted at an international level.”

That is the Prime Minister’s stated position, which is very different from the President’s, and I put it to the Leader of the House that the Prime Minister is probably wrong.

Let me ask about something else for which President Obama has called. There is a clear case for a levy to compensate taxpayers for what happened in the past and what may happen in future. Is it not time to work with the President on agreeing the sort of levy that he proposes and drop the Prime Minister’s Tobin tax on transactions, which has been rejected throughout the world and was ridiculed yesterday by the Governor of the Bank of England?

Ms Harman: We have never argued for a one-size-fits-all solution, with every single country taking the same action. We have always agreed that all countries should work together—whether in the G20 or the European Union—to tackle the global economic crisis. We agree with President Obama and just about every other country in the world that we need a fiscal stimulus to support the economy in recovery. The only people who seem to disagree with that are the official Opposition.

Mr. Hague: President Obama has just announced a freeze on spending in the United States and the UK Government have just raised the rate of VAT, which is hardly a fiscal stimulus. The Governor of the Bank of England said that President Obama’s proposal is much more serious than the Prime Minister’s Tobin tax. In fact, the Governor said that he could not think of anyone internationally who was enthusiastic about the Prime Minister’s idea, so let me ask about a third aspect of banking reform.

There is a growing consensus that only central banks have the authority, ability and know-how to maintain proper supervision of the banks. The Prime Minister took that power away from the Bank of England in 1997 and created a system that failed. Given that countries such as the United States and Germany want their central banks to have more responsibility for banking supervision, will the Government now change their policy and adopt that approach?

Ms Harman: Obviously, what America has been doing is dealing with a very fragmented system of regulation, which involved no fewer than eight regulators. We have already rationalised the system of regulation. What is important is that the organisations have the right powers within the right framework, and that is what the Financial Services Bill and other measures are determined to ensure. The Conservatives said they wanted less regulation when they were in government, so it is good to hear that they are supporting firm action to tackle irresponsibility in the markets.

Mr. Hague: It was the Prime Minister in 2007 who trumpeted his record—as he thought of it—of deregulation in the City and said we could look forward to a “golden age for the City” from then on. Is it not clear that the Prime was wrong and is wrong now on the system of financial supervision, wrong on the Tobin tax, wrong to build an economy based on debt, and wrong not to back the United States on banking reform? Are not those failures just another part of a miserable record, in which we have the biggest budget deficit in peacetime history, the largest bank bail-out in the world, the deepest recession since the 1930s and the weakest recovery in the G20? Does the right hon. and learned Lady think it is time to back some of the United States’ proposals to sort out the banks in future?

Ms Harman: We have helped the economy through the recession and supported the recovery. When the right hon. Gentleman was in government and sitting in the Cabinet, there were double the number of repossessions; when he was in government, there were three times as many bankruptcies; and when he was in government in a recession, there were four times as many job losses. I have to say that his reversing is even worse than mine. We are building up Britain, and the Conservatives are trying to talk it down.

Ms Gisela Stuart (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab): Could the Leader of the House have discussions with her colleagues in the Treasury and the Department for Transport to ensure that we get a decision on the high-speed rail link this side of the general election, and that, when we get that decision, Birmingham and the west midlands get the links they deserve?

Ms Harman: We are very strongly supporting investment in our rail system, which is part of our economic infrastructure, and we will make sure that those decisions come forward to support manufacturing and the economy in Birmingham as soon as possible.

Dr. Vincent Cable (Twickenham) (LD): May I add my condolences for the loss of Lance Corporal Cooper and Rifleman Aldridge?

May I congratulate the Leader of the House on her foresight in establishing the National Equality Panel, which reported today? It helpfully reminds us that after 18 years of Conservative Government, inequality had widened and reached the level described in the report as “shocking”. Will she explain why now, after 12 years of Labour Government, income inequalities are the same—still shocking—wealth inequalities in shares and property are worse, and, as we discovered on Monday of this week, child poverty is growing?
Ms Harman: I join the hon. Gentleman in thanking Professor John Hills and his panel for the important report by the National Equality Panel. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the report states that under the Conservatives—[Interruption.] Under the Conservatives, inequality widened, and as a result of the effect of this Government’s policies, most particularly on tax and benefit, the growing inequality has been stemmed. We have also tackled poverty, especially child poverty and pensioner poverty, but we think that inequality matters for the individual, for opportunity, for the economy and for a more peaceful society, so we are determined to do more to tackle inequality, which persists and can be handed down the generations.

Dr. Cable: Well, the Government may be determined, but the brutal truth is that economic inequality is getting worse. Part of the problem is the failure to reform the unfairness of the tax system. We all understand why Conservative Governments might wish to give top priority to rewarding the wealthy, but why have the Labour Government given overriding priority to cutting the tax rate that wealthy people pay on their capital gains to a lower rate than the tax paid by working people on their earnings, and why have they left wholly unreformed a property tax system under which ordinary families pay the same amount of tax on a modest family mansion as billionaires pay on their multi-million pound mansions?

Ms Harman: The hon. Gentleman is simply wrong in what he says about the report’s findings. It says that over the 13 years that we have been in government the effect of our tax policies, combined with our benefit policies, has been to narrow inequality. We have tackled poverty, in particular pensioner poverty and child poverty. One thing that would not help those on low and modest incomes would be the savage cuts proposed by the hon. Gentleman’s party.

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): The threat of the third runway at Heathrow continues to blight my community. Although a compensation scheme has been introduced that will protect the homes of some residents, many residents are excluded from it. It also does not cover people such as the local shopkeeper, the hairdresser and the publican who live above their premises and who will lose their homes and their livelihoods. Will the Leader of the House facilitate a meeting between local MPs and Ministers to discuss what compensation can be provided to those people?

Ms Harman: I would certainly be happy to suggest that the Secretary of State for Transport meet my hon. Friend and other hon. Members to discuss these important issues.

Q2. [313302] Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): Tens of thousands of people dead, a whole region destabilised, no mythical weapons of mass destruction and this week we learn of the dubious and immoral war on the back of one of the biggest deceits in political history?

Ms Harman: These matters, which were debated and decided on in this House of Commons, are now the subject of the Chilcot inquiry. It is choosing the evidence to be brought before it and that it requires to be examined. It is independent and I suggest that we thank it for its work and await its report.

Q3. [313303] Mr. David Chaytor (Bury, North) (Lab): Last week, Woodhey high school in my constituency was named as one of the country’s top performing schools for sustained improvement in GCSE results. That follows £8 million of investment in new facilities. The other schools in Bury, North are awaiting their capital investment. What would be the effect on school standards if the Government’s only policy were to cut the deficit further and faster than ever before?

Ms Harman: I agree with my hon. Friend that education is important, not only for every individual to achieve their potential, but to ensure that we have a dynamic economy. I am delighted that Woodhey high school has seen such a big rise in its results, not only last year but in the last three years, and I join him in congratulating the school. Those results are due to the hard work and dedication of the teachers and pupils, but they are also thanks to the extra investment we have put in. We will continue to sustain and support investment in education.

Q4. [313305] Mr. David Jones (Clwyd, West) (Con): The Business Secretary once famously remarked that Labour was intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich. Is the right hon. and learned Lady equally relaxed about how the Prime Minister’s predecessor has decided to go about it?

Ms Harman: We have asked the National Equality Panel to look at how we can ensure that we help social mobility and—[Interruption.]

Mr. Speaker: Order. I want to hear the answer.

Ms Harman: We are determined to ensure that there is social mobility, and one of the important findings of the NEP report is that more unequal societies have less social mobility, which is why we are determined, with Government action, to continue to support policies that spread fairness and equality.

Q5. [313306] Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone) (Lab): Will my right hon. and learned Friend join me in congratulating the Coalfields Regeneration Trust on rebuilding mining communities devastated and broken by the Tory closure programme? Is she aware that the renewal programme in mining communities has been carried out by creating 90,000 places in education and training and rebuilding 2,200 facilities in the communities? Will she urge—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Please get to the end of the sentence.

Mr. Clapham: Will my right hon. and learned Friend urge her colleagues at the Department for Communities and Local Government to—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that we have got the thrust of it.
Ms Harman: I will support my hon. Friend’s urgings to my colleagues in the Department for Communities and Local Government, and I am delighted to join him in congratulating the Coalfields Regeneration Trust on its first 10 years of operation. I know that he has worked with fellow MPs in former mining constituencies to ensure significant regeneration in these areas, which face such challenges, particularly after the devastation of the Tory years.

Dr. Evan Harris (Oxford, West and Abingdon) (LD): Question 6, Mr. Speaker.

Ms Harman: I will support my hon. Friend’s urgings to my colleagues in the Department for Communities and Local Government, and I am delighted to join him in congratulating the Coalfields Regeneration Trust on its first 10 years of operation. I know that he has worked with fellow MPs in former mining constituencies to ensure significant regeneration in these areas, which face such challenges, particularly after the devastation of the Tory years.

Ms Harman rose—

Hon. Members: Come on!

Ms Harman: It’s all right. It will be worth waiting for—well, perhaps not.

Crown Accession


Ms Harman: The Government are in contact with other countries of the realm where the Queen is Head of State about updating the rules of succession.

Dr. Harris: The right hon. and learned Lady was right the second time.

In March, the Lord Chancellor himself said that the sort of anti-Catholic and anti-woman provisions at the centre of our constitution have no place in a modern society, and that the Prime Minister was ready to consult Commonwealth Heads of Government. Will the right hon. and learned Lady suggest that he write to them, if he is too busy to consult, so that we can get on with this reform?

Ms Harman: As the Prime Minister has said, people recognise the need for change, but that change can be brought about only by the Prime Minister working with the 16 other countries. The discussions are continuing. We cannot speak for those other countries, but we are sure that progress will be made.

Engagements

Q7. [313308] Anne Main (St. Albans) (Con): Before the Prime Minister goes to Her Majesty to ask for the Dissolution of the House, will the Government come before the House and give a statement to Equitable Life victims on when they can expect a fair and reasonable settlement?

Ms Harman: Equitable Life policyholders lost out as a result of mismanagement that went back to the 1980s. There is concern on both sides of the House about that. The hon. Lady knows very well that there has been an ombudsman’s report on the matter, that we have apologised for the regulatory failures that caused loss, and that we have set up a system to establish how there should be ex gratia payments. Sir John Chadwick has got this work under way and will be making his interim findings in the spring.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South) (Lab): May I put it to my right hon. and learned Friend that one of the causes of the growth in inequality has been the extension of outsourcing of jobs that were previously done in-house? A class of working people has grown up that no longer qualifies for pensions, sick pay, redundancy pay and all the other things that in the 20th century we used quainly to associate with civilisation. Is it not time that the Government started to discourage outsourcing?

Ms Harman: The transfer of undertakings regulations were designed to give protection where work was transferred out from direct employment in the public sector to the private sector. However, the Equal Opportunities Commission has documented evidence to show that this has been a downward pressure on women’s wages and their income in retirement. We are determined to ensure not only that people in public services can give a good service to the public, but that they are fairly treated in employment.

Q8. [313309] David T.C. Davies (Monmouth) (Con): Balal Khan was this week sentenced to just three years in an institution for a violent rape. Will the Minister refer that disgraceful sentence to the Attorney-General and also investigate the parents and community, to find out how that young man could have such a complete disregard for women’s rights?

Ms Harman: I am sure that the Attorney-General will have drawn to her attention the point that the hon. Gentleman has raised, which will give her the opportunity to consider whether she wants to refer that sentence to the courts.

Mrs. Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op): Today is Holocaust memorial day, 65 years after the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that although the evil of the holocaust is unique, its lessons must be applied to the racism and anti-Semitism of today, so that a better society can be enjoyed by everyone?

Ms Harman: I support absolutely what my hon. Friend has said. We in this House regard Holocaust memorial day, which is today, as very important. There will be a debate in the House tomorrow and there is a book of remembrance that can be signed. The work of the Holocaust Educational Trust is very important indeed, but we must also bear in mind the lessons that come out of the holocaust about prejudice, discrimination and anti-Semitism, which we must fight wherever they rear their head in this country.

Q9. [313310] Mr. David Heath (Somerton and Frome) (LD): It was revealed last week that a company in my constituency had been selling bomb detectors to the Iraqi Government that do not—indeed, cannot—work. If the Government knew about that, why did they wait until the BBC report last Friday to impose an export ban? If they did not know, why were Government agencies so curiously inquisitive about $85 million-worth of security equipment being sent from the United Kingdom to a war zone?
Ms Harman: I will ask the Business Secretary to respond to the hon. Gentleman in detail on the important issue he has raised.

Q10. [313311] Geraldine Smith (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Lab): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that Royal Mail and the Communication Workers Union are making good progress on modernisation and addressing the industrial relations problems that have bedevilled the industry. Can she now say when the Government will sort out the pensions deficit, which needs to be done as a matter of urgency?

Ms Harman: Like my hon. Friend, the Government are strong supporters of the Royal Mail and want it to have a secure and prosperous future at a time of big change. We are committed to the universal service six days a week and to a post office network. We are also committed to changing the regulations to allow more ability to compete, and we obviously want to ensure that the pension liabilities are secure as well.

Mr. Brooks Newmark (Braintree) (Con): Each year, 1,000 women die from cervical cancer. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland young women can get screening at the age of 20, yet in 2004 the Government sought to increase the age for women in England to get screening to 25. Why do the Government discriminate in that way, and will they consider redressing that injustice?

Ms Harman: We are very concerned indeed to make sure that we prevent, and have early detection for, as many cancers as possible. In that, we ensure that the necessary resources are available but we are guided in the application of those resources by clinical judgments. The hon. Gentleman is no more a scientist than I am; what we have to do is take the best advice and act on it, and make sure that there are the resources to back it. That is why we have trebled investment in the national health service.

Q12. [313313] Dr. Brian Iddon (Bolton, South-East) (Lab): We are desperately short of teachers in the STEM subjects—science, technology, engineering and maths—and the situation is likely to get worse as we move again to teaching the sciences separately. What impact does my right hon. and learned Friend expect if we are to recruit only first-class or upper second-class students to teach those subjects?

Ms Harman: I urge my hon. Friend not to worry about that at all, because like so many other Tory policies it will probably be changed by this afternoon. What will be unchanged is our commitment to science, in which my hon. Friend has played a leading role.

Anti-Slavery Day

Q13. [313314] Mr. Anthony Steen (Totnes) (Con): If he will make it his policy to support the establishment of an Anti-Slavery Day in the UK to raise awareness of human trafficking.

Ms Harman: The Government are determined to combat human trafficking. We are considering the hon. Gentleman’s proposal for the establishment of an awareness day, and will respond to him in due course.

Mr. Steen: We need that day even more now. Before the earthquake in Haiti, many of the 200 orphanages there were actually fronts for child trafficking. Since the earthquake, we have a new problem: 380,000 children at risk. Will the right hon. and learned Lady speak to her international aid contacts this afternoon and establish a network for children at risk, so that they have somewhere safe to be until they can trace their family or until there is time to set up some kind of arrangement to ensure their safety? The traffickers are circling. We need to make sure they do not catch the children.

Ms Harman: I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman for his work on the issue, which he has consistently and intelligently raised in the House. I agree that there is work to be done by the police and prosecutors internationally. There is also the work of voluntary organisations, which I know he supports, helping to bring the message warning people of the dangers of trafficking, and protecting those victims. I congratulate him on his suggestion. We will look into it.
Point of Order

12.33 pm

Mr. Greg Hands (Hammersmith and Fulham) (Con): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have given prior notification to the Member concerned.

In Communities and Local Government questions yesterday, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) put a question with a wholly erroneous set of comments attributed to the leader of my council, Hammersmith and Fulham, including the statement that “one problem with social housing was that it was hard to get rid of these people”. —[Official Report, 26 January 2010; Vol. 504, c. 669.]

That comment is entirely false. The leader of the council never said any such thing, so I should be grateful for your guidance, Mr. Speaker, on how we might set the record straight for what is, after all, one of Britain’s best-loved and best-run local authorities.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his attempted point of order, but as he will know, on the strength of his experience in the House, it was not a point of order but a most interesting point of debate, which has now been placed fairly and squarely upon the record.

BILL PRESENTED

School Admissions Bill

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Mr. Paul Burstow, supported by Tom Brake, presented a Bill to enable admission authorities to have regard for local authority boundaries and other defined localities when allocating school places; to provide for the appointment of an independent lay majority on local school admission forums; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 12 March, and to be printed (Bill 57).

Young People Leaving Care

(Accommodation)

Motion for leave to bring in a Bill (Standing Order No. 23)

12.34 pm

Helen Southworth (Warrington, South) (Lab): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make provision for minimum standards in respect of accommodation for young people leaving care; to impose a duty on local authorities to ensure that such standards are met; and for connected purposes.

This Government have made considerable progress in the support of vulnerable children and put in place exemplary legislation and regulation to improve the outcomes for those children. The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 established laudable principles and objectives to improve the experience of young people in care, to deliver high-quality corporate parenting, to listen and respond to young people, to bring stability and continuity into every aspect of a child’s care, and to create an uncompromising culture of high aspirations.

Those are incredibly laudable objectives, but they need to be underpinned by detail. Indeed, the Act is largely underpinned by extensive regulation, one aspect of which is currently out for consultation. It relates to young people between the ages of 16 and 18 who are in the care of a local authority and who are being placed in accommodation in an unregulated setting—that is, not in a children’s home or a foster home. This is the first time that there will have been a definition of suitable accommodation for those young people.

I shall refer to those plans in detail in a moment, in the context of my Bill, which would put in place minimum standards for young people of 18-plus who are leaving the care of a local authority and who are making the transition to independent living. As we all know, that time of a young person’s life involves an awful lot of support needs. They depend on other people to help out when they are trying to take those first steps. They are trying to work out whether a particular course of action is the sensible one, and whether it will take them where they want to go. They are asking themselves, “Where do I want to go?” or, in some cases, “Who do I want to be?” and “How can I take the steps to achieve that?”

At the moment, there is a gap between the laudable aspirations that I have mentioned and the direct experience of people in care and leaving care, and it is our responsibility to sort that out. A young person should not have to try to second-guess the system when they have no experience of these things. They need to be supported in the same way that they would expect to be supported by a caring parent. Such a parent would ask, “Is this accommodation suitable? Is it where you want to be? Where do you want to be? Where do you want to go to school and university? Where do you want to go to college? What do you want to achieve? Have you got a job? How can we support you?” We need to be able to work effectively to provide somewhere safe and secure in which a young person can fulfil their aspirations and do as well as they possibly can. We are not in that situation at the moment.

I have an example of a young woman who got in touch with the Who Cares Trust. She started a job in London, her first job. The work was hard and involved a lot of hours, and she had a lot of things to take into
account. She needed a lot of help from her foster carers, even though she was at an age when they did not have to provide it. The flat that she had been offered was dirty. She said, “Don’t tell me people live in this filth.” Her foster carers could not believe it when they went in. It took a whole set of them a week to clean the place up. She said that there was grime, dust and growth on the walls, that the walls had holes in them, that plaster was missing and wallpaper was peeling off, and that there was damp and mould everywhere. She could not believe that she was expected to live in such a place, but it was the only option offered to her.

I recently had a meeting with a group of young people who came to Parliament to tell me about their experiences, along with a group of social workers. The social workers were great people; they were helpful and supportive. They said, however, that young people up to the age of 21 were being supported. One of the girls then asked a question, and it is a question that we need to find an answer to. She asked why, if young people were being supported up to the age of 21, she had been placed in a bed and breakfast with her baby when she was 18.

We talk about the intergenerational problems experienced by vulnerable young people, but we have the ability to help them to break out of them. We must mind the gap. At the moment, young people are telling us that they can be placed in bail hostels alongside people who have problems with drug addiction, or in places where prostitution is actively taking place. These are places where they would never have been allowed to go when they were in the care of a local authority, yet they are being placed in them by the authorities because there are no effective minimum standards.

Some authorities are brilliant—they have worked it out and know how to do it. Some agencies are incredibly effective: the National Care Advisory Service, which works directly with local authorities and young people, has tremendous experience of what works and what can be done well. Crucially, it has involved a considerable number of young people with experience of care in drawing up what they believe should be the minimum standards for accommodation. I have been in several meetings with them and gone through these matters in detail. What I have noticed most is the close correlation between what good local authorities and children with experience of care say is the minimum standard needed, and minimum student accommodation standards drawn up by universities and colleges in consultation with their students. It defies logic that an 18-year-old at a university or college now benefits from extensive, detailed minimum standards on whether accommodation is suitable, but an 18-year-old leaving care does not.

What is provided for an 18-year-old leaving care and going to university or college? During their time at university they have minimum standards, but during the holidays they have nothing. The basic need for standards of the most vulnerable children who go to university or college is unmet. Why must there be standards? If there are standards, the expectation is set. The Bill would define not good practice but what is safe or legal for anybody else. For a house in multiple occupation, a set of legal standards is required. Those standards must be available to our most vulnerable children.

Significantly, I do not have the considerable time necessary to go through the recommendations of the National Care Advisory Service in detail, but young people currently have to make a decision on the hoof, on one choice. Everyone in the House knows that there is a difference between an unfair tenancy agreement and a fair one. There is a difference in terms of safety between somewhere with a lock on the door to which the person concerned has the key, and somewhere that does not. Who would feel comfortable going to sleep in a place where they did not have a lock on the door? Who would feel comfortable going to sleep in a bail hostel without a lock on the door? I have had horrifying discussions with young people about their experiences in bail hostels where they cannot lock the door. That is not good enough, it is not acceptable, it is our responsibility to do something about it, and we have the opportunity to do so.

Currently, regulations are being put together for young people aged 16 to 18. As far as they go they are good, but they do not specify that a young person should have a private room, or that they should be able to secure it. That is not good enough, but it is significantly better than the provision for young people aged over 18. To mind the gap for young people leaving care from the age of 18, we should bring in legislation that is sufficiently robust for them to be able to challenge a poor decision, and to prevent predators moving into the market and exploiting the vulnerability of such young people. Beyond that, it must also be sufficiently robust to ensure that they are secure, safe, able to achieve, and able to grow into who they want to be and should be.

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That Helen Southworth, Derek Twigg, David Cairns, Ms Karen Buck, Ann Coffey, Mr. Kevin Barron, Mrs. Janet Dean, Christine Russell, Mike Hall, Mr. Russell Brown and Annette Brooke present the Bill.

Helen Southworth accordingly presented the Bill.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 12 March, and to be printed (Bill 56).
Opposition Day

[3RD ALLOTTED DAY]

Dementia Services

Mr. Speaker: I inform the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

12.45 pm

Mr. Stephen O’Brien (Eddisbury) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House wishes to see the quality of life improve for the 700,000 people in the UK with dementia; pays tribute to their families and carers and all those who campaign and fundraise for dementia charities; is concerned about the findings published in the National Audit Office report on Improving dementia services in England, HC 82, that showed the Government had failed to implement robustly the Dementia Strategy; calls on the Government to publish the report of the Nutrition Action Plan Delivery Board, which was submitted in July 2009, and in particular to respond to the inappropriate tube feeding of those in dementia care; deplores the inappropriate use of anti-psychotic drugs in the care of those with dementia; is concerned that 50,000 elderly people are forced to sell their home every year to pay for their long-term care; is concerned that the effect of the Personal Care at Home Bill will not help those with dementia in residential care; calls on the Government to prioritise research to combat dementia; proposes that the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence assess the wider societal value of treatments in its appraisals; and further calls on the Government to adopt a social care insurance model for residential care costs and to recognise dementia within a wider reform of social care.

We have brought this motion before the House because we are deeply anxious about the welfare of the rising number of dementia sufferers and their families, and of every elderly person in the UK who is having to live with the effects of an unreformed social care sector. Let us be clear about the scale of this issue. Of the 8.2 million people who are over 65 and of the 6 million people who use social care, 700,000 people have been diagnosed with dementia in the United Kingdom—and that figure is set to double over the next 30 years. In other words, about one in 10 of all social care users has dementia. In the context of a rapidly increasing awareness generally, the Government have promised much but delivered little to this group of people.

Jeremy Wright (Rugby and Kenilworth) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that those figures may not tell the whole story on dementia? He has described the number of people who have been diagnosed with dementia but, as we know, many cases have not yet been diagnosed.

Mr. O’Brien: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. He is absolutely right to have spotted that I said that 700,000 was the number of people who have been diagnosed with dementia. I did so precisely because of the under-diagnosis that occurs and the cases that will doubtless shortly be diagnosed.

Dr. Nick Palmer (Broxtowe) (Lab): On that point, the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology says that 700,000 is the current estimate but that in fact only one in three of those people have had a formal diagnosis from a doctor, so the previous intervention was not correct.

Mr. O’Brien: The hon. Gentleman attempts to be more precise, but he will find that 700,000 is the figure for the number of people whose diagnosis has been accepted by all the agencies that need to make calculations and predictions, not least the Government. Some of that diagnosis may not have been done through a formal medical diagnosis, but it has become accepted through the other agencies as the appropriate diagnosis.

Mr. Hugo Swire (East Devon) (Con): Is not this issue of diagnosis the precise point, because one of the things we were promised in the national dementia strategy was better training for general practitioners and earlier diagnosis, and that has not happened? That is why so many people are still not being properly diagnosed.

Mr. O’Brien: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that excellent point. He is right and he anticipates one of the issues that I hope to develop a little later in my speech.

There are specific measures that could improve the outlook for people with dementia, and for their families and carers, but it is important to bear in mind the fact that these social care reform issues affect all our fellow citizens who need to access and use social care services. Sufferers of advanced dementia represent some of the most vulnerable older people in our society. As we consider the challenge of meeting their needs, we must pay careful attention to the wider social care reforms that could protect the health and well-being of all elderly people. I hope that we can keep that bigger picture in mind as we debate this matter today.

First, let us consider dementia specifically. There is no masking the truth that dementia is a frightening and debilitating disease that plays havoc with the lives of those who come into contact with it, be they the sufferers of the illness, the families or the carers. The trauma of a diagnosis and the difficulty of coming to terms with the gradual loss of memory is only intensified when patients discover that little co-ordinated support is available for sufferers.

I pay tribute to all those in the third sector—in particular the Alzheimer’s Society and the Alzheimer’s Research Trust—who have supported sufferers and championed their cause. I also pay tribute to the work of my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Jeremy Wright) and the all-party group that he founded and chairs, which has been so influential. We should also pay tribute to hard-working elected members of councils across the country and their officials who are working to provide this care at a local level, as well as to all those operating in the local government departments.

I cannot give enough praise to the family members, neighbours and friends who, as informal carers, love and care for vulnerable and elderly people and for those with dementia, who face even greater challenges. We should keep them uppermost in our deliberations and not forget the real human lives that these policy debates represent.

Two weeks ago, the National Audit Office published a broadly critical report on the Government’s dementia strategy. Among its many misgivings, it noted that “there has not yet been a robust approach to implementation”
of the strategy; that
"it has not been given the levers or urgency normally expected for
such a priority";
and that it is clear
"that value for money will remain poor unless these weaknesses
are addressed urgently."

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): The National
Audit Office reported, of course, to the Public Accounts
Committee. We had a very good hearing on this subject
in October 2007. I was promised 10 times by Sir David
Nicholson, the head of the NHS, that the matter would
be a national priority. That commitment was given
10 times. There have been three framework directives
since then and it is still not a national priority—it is
only a strategy. If my hon. Friend is fortunate enough
to become a Minister for Health in May, will he consider
making it a national priority?

Mr. O’Brien: I am grateful to the Chairman of the
PAC for that intervention and for the work that he has
overseen, as well as to the NAO, which has done that
work. In answer to his specific question, I am glad to
confirm that we have already said that, should that
happy occurrence take place, this matter will be a priority.
Part of my argument will be to ask how much, if one is
going to state—as the Government have—that this is a
priority, that needs to be followed through with actions
rather than words, including operating frameworks.

The Secretary of State for Health (Andy Burnham):
Let us be absolutely clear. Is the hon. Gentleman saying
that he would make it a national target or that he would
leave it to local discretion? He cannot stand there, make
suggestions and posture on this issue without being
absolutely clear on that point.

Mr. O’Brien: I hope that the Secretary of State will
reflect on the fact that he did not use the word “priority”,
which was the word that I used. For some reason, he felt
compelled to use the word “target”, which is always a
potential distortion. That was a distortion. My answer
is that the issue, as I am about to make clear, concerns
how the actions flow from the word “priority”, once we
have called it that.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside) (Lab): I
must say to the hon. Gentleman that, as vice-president
of the Alzheimer’s Society, patron of my city’s Alzheimer’s
group and someone who is contributing to the Alzheimer’s
Research Trust, I am surprised that he is making this a
party political issue. Let me ask him a simple question.
The thrust of the Audit Commission’s review was that
the strategy was good and that the new appointment of
the director in charge of this matter will help, but that
the £150 million allocated had not reached the parts
for which it was intended because of the nature of
decentralisation and the lack of ring-fencing. Given the
Conservative party’s commitment to the new NHS board
and to even more decentralisation to professionals from
the Secretary of State or politicians in this House, how
could the hon. Gentleman possibly determine what a
priority would be locally when he could not even determine
it nationally?

Mr. O’Brien: I am grateful to the right hon.
Gentleman—no doubt he will seek to catch Mr. Speaker’s
eye later, as that was a speech. Let me return to the
intervention that he made at the beginning of it. He
clearly needs to recognise that if anybody was making a
party political point it was the Secretary of State, who
intervened in the most tribal manner, as is fairly typical.
The answers to the right hon. Gentleman’s questions
will, happily, become clear from what I am about to say.

The NAO’s report came on the back of a disappointingly
vague Green Paper on social care and a personal care
pledge by the Prime Minister that the Labour party’s
own Lord Lipsey has described as a “gimmick”.

Let me correct the claim in the Government’s amendment
that
“the Personal Care at Home Bill will help some 400,000 people”.
It is offering free care to only 270,000 people, of whom
160,000 already receive it free. It will take only 2,384
people out of care homes—the stated aim of the policy
on the human rights grounds that are critical for its
intra vires—from a population of more than 500,000. It
will help less than 3 per cent. of social care users. In
other words, the Government have not grasped the nettle:
we have an ageing population on our hands, cases of
dementia are on the rise and time is running out.

By contrast, the Opposition have led the way in
recognising that if a Government are to be serious
about addressing the needs of dementia sufferers and
older people across the country, reforming older people’s
care services across health and social care in a way that
is both socially and fiscally responsible must be a priority.
That was precisely the answer that I gave. To cover one
of the points mentioned in the intervention by the right
hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett),
which was rapidly developing into a speech, our policies
on Alzheimer’s research and pooled personal budgets,
our proposals to reform the National Institute for Health
and Clinical Excellence's drug assessments, our home
protection scheme for affordable guaranteed residential
care and our commitment to a reinvigorated public
health agenda have forced the Government to pick up
the pace of reform.

John Mann (Bassetlaw) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman
mentioned fiscal responsibility and other matters. Has
he had a chance to consider the approach taken by
Conservative Nottinghamshire county council? Is he
learning from it? The council is privatising dementia
care homes, which will mean automatically that the day
care service provided for dementia sufferers, which it is
going to state—as the Government have—that the matter would
be a national priority. That commitment was given
10 times. There have been three framework directives
since then and it is still not a national priority—it is
only a strategy. If my hon. Friend is fortunate enough
to become a Minister for Health in May, will he consider
making it a national priority?

Mr. O’Brien: The hon. Gentleman will no doubt have
to answer to his right hon. Friend the Member for
Sheffield, Brightside for introducing a party political
element in his intervention. Clearly, what matters is that
we should recognise that local services reflect the national
priorities that have been set. If a national priority is for
a dementia strategy delivered through actions on the
ground rather than words, no doubt that would be more
persuasive to a local council as it reached its decisions.

The National Audit Office raised four main criticisms
of the dementia strategy. First, will the Secretary of
State make clear just how much of the £60 million of
dementia strategy funding for 2010-11 will be spent on additional dementia services? Does he have any plans to undertake a baseline assessment to see from what starting point those services are being run? We need only look at the recent carers strategy to see how urgently this assessment is needed. It emerged before Christmas that the £50 million disbursed for emergency respite care this year never reached the front line; instead it got soaked up in local primary care trust bureaucracy. Not only does that leave dementia sufferers with little hope of benefiting from resources, but it seems particularly disingenuous for the Government to take the plaudits for pledging taxpayers’ money without the funds ever reaching the front line.

On the second criticism, will the Secretary of State tell the House what the source of funding is for meeting the £1.9 billion cost of implementing the strategy over its 10-year lifespan? To date, the Government’s impact assessment has identified only £533 million of efficiency savings over 10 years, which leaves nearly three quarters—

John Mann: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. O’Brien: I shall make progress, I think, as I have already answered the hon. Gentleman.

To date, the Government’s impact assessment has identified only £533 million of efficiency savings over 10 years, which leaves nearly three quarters of the budget unaccounted for. Does the Secretary of State agree that those diagnosed with dementia today need to know that there is a safety net of funding for their care and treatment as they face the years ahead?

Thirdly, the Government have yet to tackle the gaping hole in the skill set of all professionals who encounter dementia patients as part of their job. The £1.9 billion dementia strategy budget covers diagnosis and early intervention in people’s homes, but the NAO report points out that no estimate has been given for the cost of the pledges that the strategy makes for the training of NHS and social care staff.

Fourthly, can the Minister explain why dementia was not included in the Department of Health’s fixed national and local spending priorities—Vital Signs—in 2007? That serious omission—

Andy Burnham: Will the hon. Gentleman give way again?

Mr. O’Brien: Perhaps I can make sure that the Secretary of State knows the point that he has to answer: why was dementia not included in the Department’s fixed national and local spending priorities, Vital Signs, in 2007? The vital point is that that serious omission took place only a month after the Department had asserted in a statement to the PAC that dementia was a national priority. Is dementia really a priority?

Andy Burnham: The hon. Gentleman says that he believes in local decision making in the NHS. Is he saying, at the Dispatch Box today, that he would make dementia a mandatory national requirement in tier 1 of Vital Signs? Yes or no?

Mr. O’Brien: The answer to that is, of course, no. That is because Vital Signs is the Secretary of State’s target system, and it has been discredited for distorting health provision. The precise point of this debate is that the Government are not delivering the results on the ground, even when they come out with something called a dementia strategy.

Robert Key (Salisbury) (Con) rose—

Mr. Swire rose—

Mr. O’Brien: I give way.

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I say to the hon. Gentleman that it is helpful to me and the House to know to whom he is giving way? Is it the hon. Member for Salisbury (Robert Key) or the hon. Member for East Devon (Mr. Swire)?

Mr. O’Brien: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for East Devon (Mr. Swire).

Mr. Speaker: I am grateful. Mr. Hugo Swire.

Mr. Swire: I am most grateful, Mr. Speaker. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is important that PCTs see dementia as a priority? In the NAO report on the NHS operating framework for 2010-2011, the office’s director of health value for money Karen Taylor said that trusts would concentrate on other issues if they were not made to focus on dementia. Is not that a fundamental flaw of the present Government’s strategy?

Mr. O’Brien: That is precisely the problem that arises when something is called a priority but is not then backed by action. It is why we have the motion before us today. Most importantly, we already have the evidence of what happened with the national carers’ strategy, given that the Princess Royal Trust has said that it could not find out where the £50 million for this year had gone.

Robert Key: The collective amnesia of Health Ministers is remarkable. My hon. Friend will remember that about a year ago my distinguished constituent Sir Terry Pratchett led a delegation to No. 10 on behalf of the Alzheimer’s Research Trust. We met the Prime Minister and the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Corby (Phil Hope), who is in his place. The Prime Minister, the Minister of State and the good and the great of the dementia strategy who were present said that the Government recognised that this was a finite, predictable problem that they would address. They have not done so. They have failed to get the money to where it is needed, whether that is training people in hospitals to cope with dementia patients in there for other reasons, or helping the voluntary sector to provide vital services.

Mr. O’Brien: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has always taken a keen interest in this important area. He is right to remind us about the visit of Sir Terry Pratchett, not least because that followed his address to the Conservative party conference’s main hall debate about dementia and how we must care for our elderly population. We were very pleased to see that that had been followed through with an invitation to 10 Downing street. Indeed, we wish to see the earnest of what was discussed there translated into action.

Jeremy Wright: The Secretary of State asked my hon. Friend whether dementia should be part of the NHS tier 1 priorities. Does he agree that that was an odd question, given that dementia does not feature specifically in any of the Government’s tier 1, 2 or 3 priorities?
Mr. O’Brien: My hon. Friend is an expert in this subject and fully understands the difficulty that that entails. Most importantly, he recognises the priorities going forward. If we were to be given the chance to do so, we would look very carefully at the preventive agenda under the public health budgets. We would also ensure that the priorities are given to the NHS board, thus avoiding the target-based strategy that the Government have manifestly failed to deliver.

Mr. Blunkett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. O’Brien: With respect, the right hon. Gentleman, who intervened earlier, should wait until I have made more progress. I will give way to him later.

The most important thing is to recognise that, in addition to the four criticisms that I outlined earlier, the Government have also made an announcement about memory clinics. I hope that the Secretary of State will tell us what is going on with the memory clinics that were promised in every town. How many towns does he think that there are in England, and how many currently have such clinics?

Despite reams of questions from me and other Opposition Members—

John Mann: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that?

Mr. O’Brien: It is interesting that the hon. Gentleman seems to have a question about every single point that I am making. I shall come back to him if I may, after I have made sure that the Secretary of State is aware of what I am saying. Despite questions from Opposition Members on the budget for memory clinics and the number of staff expected to be employed to deliver them, the Government could only answer:

“Decisions about the nature, number and funding of the memory clinics will be made locally by primary care trusts, depending on local circumstances.”—[Official Report, 23 February 2009; Vol. 488, c. 202W]

What sort of a promise is that? The question for the Secretary of State today remains this: what is the precise number of planned and existing memory clinics and how many specially trained staff are there in the country?

John Mann: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I discussed memory clinics, among other issues, with my PCT last week. Nottinghamshire’s Tory county council has privatised care homes in my constituency and elsewhere, with the result that day-care services will go, among them day-care memory clinics. Does he agree with that approach? Is it what we will see should he ever be in power, or would he adopt a different approach? We want to know.

Mr. O’Brien: I note that the hon. Gentleman did not answer his own question about whether there were any memory clinics in his constituency’s towns. It is vital that he applies that scrutiny to his Government’s policies. This debate is taking place because the Government have to be held to account.

Angela Browning (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): I am a member of the PAC, and we took evidence on this issue on Monday. However, another issue arose that cannot wait—the appointment of dementia champions. We asked the civil servants before us how many of them

there were, and where. They could not answer, although I believe that they will respond in writing to my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Mr. Leigh). The practical implementation of many aspects of the strategy does not need to wait and the Government can get on with that. Having dementia champions in PCTs and hospitals saves money and introduces the efficiency savings needed to implement the strategy.

Mr. O’Brien: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that excellent point. It is an example of how we need make sure that people at the front line get actions rather than words.

It seems that the Government have got into a habit of making unfunded pledges of late. Not only was their dementia strategy riddled with spending loopholes, but the Minister’s announcement last week of safeguarding vulnerable adults boards for every local area was equally vague about where the resources to implement the boards would come from. He made no mention of how the boards would co-ordinate with the dementia strategy, despite dementia sufferers being some of the most vulnerable people in our communities.

I hope that the Secretary of State will take this opportunity to explain why he claimed in a statement last week to be implementing a system of registration for home care workers with the General Social Care Council, when the GSCC has informed some of its stakeholders that plans for the system are actually on hold. Clearly, the Secretary of State is too busy trying to bolster his party’s manifesto to worry about making sure that these ambiguous claims are given the necessary detail, and the action points that have been highlighted.

Last week, we uncovered figures on malnourishment in our hospitals. The problem has not been dealt with, despite repeated pledges from Ministers. Evidence shows that it is the elderly who are most at risk from malnourishment in hospital, as they are often unable to express their needs to nurses. Over the last three years, I have been hammering away at this outrageous and scandalous issue. We need only look at the new year press coverage of the widespread unnecessary tube-feeding of the elderly in care homes—particularly those with Alzheimer’s—to see the harm that can be done to patients if the caring professions are under-equipped to meet the demands of dementia, both in terms of training and resources.

John Mann: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. O’Brien: No, I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman any more. He is clearly rather excited.

The Royal College of Physicians undertook a review of tube feeding and deplored the practice as “completely unethical”. That the Government is content to let the elderly and Alzheimer’s sufferers be subjected to such appalling treatment as a result of overworked and under-trained care home staff is simply unacceptable. The Government have been sitting on the report of the nutrition action plan delivery board since July last year. I am glad that the amendment states that it will be published “shortly”. Given that it is six months overdue, I hope that the Minister will undertake to publish it tomorrow.
If the unnecessary tube-feeding of the elderly was not enough of a wake-up call for the Secretary of State, in November, the Government published a report overdue by 10 months on the inappropriate use of anti-psychotic drugs to treat dementia patients. Such drugs have a number of serious side effects that pose a particular risk to the elderly. They make patients unsteady and increase the risk of falls, they cause individuals to become socially withdrawn and they can accelerate cognitive decline, exacerbating the effects of dementia. Can the Secretary of State tell us what, if any, action has been taken as a result of the report? After three months, and after an initial delay of a year, all that the Government have done is appoint a national clinical director this week, although that is a welcome move.

It is a sobering thought that the suffering of millions could be prevented if we found a cure for dementia. That might or might not be possible in future, but today anything that can be done to slow the onset of the disease is to be encouraged and welcomed. The Opposition believe that the Government should not resign themselves to the status quo but press ahead in support of research into new treatments for Alzheimer’s, which is why we pledged in 2007 to increase the proportion of research budget to more than £100 billion over the past 13 years. Dementia services are an important issue, so can he guarantee the real-terms increases to the NHS budget going forward.

Mr. O’Brien: [Interruption.]

It would be very nice if the Government included a calculation of the wider societal costs of a given treatment when undertaking NICE appraisals. It is clear that dementia, as with other diseases, has an impact on local authority budgets and on public spending as a whole. Along with our commitments to value-based pricing, and to streamlining the NICE process, that will pave the way for dementia sufferers to access better drugs.

We need to offer those who are faced with a diagnosis today, and those for whom a cure may not be found for a number of years, the chance to guarantee their care needs so that they can be reassured that whatever the impact of dementia on their lives and their loved ones, they will be able to access residential care should they ever require it. I have explained to the House before the merits of our home protection scheme, and the careful calculations behind what we have promised. It was designed precisely to meet those concerns and allay the fears first raised by Tony Blair 13 years ago about a need that has remained unmet over a period of Labour government. People can now look forward to a Conservative Government delivering a well-designed scheme that deals with people’s fear of going into residential care. We need to look at the context of social reform—

Andy Burnham: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. O’Brien: Of course. Perhaps the Secretary of State can answer the same question.

Andy Burnham: If that is the hon. Gentleman’s big idea, can he explain how that will possibly help people who want to live at home with their family in the community, and not receive care in a care home?

Mr. O’Brien: The Secretary of State knows that that intervention was completely unnecessary, because it has never been claimed that it would help people to stay in their home. The idea is to meet the fears of people who have to go into residential care, by making it affordable and so that we do not discriminate against those who cannot afford it. It would not have the perverse incentive that he suggested, because of the national assessment criteria on care needs. The Prime Minister’s knee-jerk reaction in the Personal Care at Home Bill did nothing to address that issue, and deliberately discriminates against people who need residential care. Doubtless that will be debated in the other place on 1 February.

Mr. Swire: [Interruption.]

Mr. O’Brien: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Friend says about the proposal is interesting, because in my constituency of East Devon, we are dealing with the case of Mr. Mejor, a former Spitfire pilot, which has attracted national attention. His care is being reassessed at the moment. His daughter is his carer and he has an elderly wife, but they may have to forfeit their home. Such isolated cases are becoming increasingly prevalent around the country, but they could be avoided if we adopted Tory policies.

[Interruption.]

Mr. O’Brien: I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

Angela Browning: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for a Minister from a sedentary position to accuse my hon. Friend the Member for East Devon (Mr. Swire) of being ignorant? Is that appropriate behaviour for Ministers in the House?
Mr. Speaker: On the whole, I have good hearing. I must admit that I did not hear that remark.

Mr. Swire: I did hear it.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I was not disputing the word of the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Angela Browning)—I was simply making the point that I did not hear it. What I would say—and I am grateful to her for her point of order—is that it would be a good thing if the House settled down. I know that this is a highly charged matter on which strongly held views are being expressed, but that must be done in a seemly way that will command the respect of the country.

Mr. O’Brien: It is indeed a serious subject, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for East Devon (Mr. Swire) for raising a case that has become widely known. Our reforms would enable his constituent to be better served and to receive the care appropriate for his needs.

To summarise, the issue of how we provide sustainable and affordable options for residential care is part of a wider debate on social care reform. The Government have played fast and loose with the challenge of reforming social services. Despite promises made in 1997, they ignored their own royal commission and, indeed, the whole problem, until 2008. We have had a vague Green Paper following an even vaguer consultation which has, in Lord Lipsey’s words, been blown out of the water by the Prime Minister’s announcement of free personal care last year.

Having rushed the Personal Care at Home Bill through the House, the Government have still not given any assurances on the costings of the Bill, or its robustness in the face of a potential legal challenge under the Human Rights Act 1998. Nor will the Bill help any of the significant number of dementia sufferers already in care homes. With the Secretary of State keen to make the Bill a top-three issue in Labour’s election campaign, the House would do well to acknowledge the fact that dementia sufferers and, indeed, all older people with care needs, deserve more than political posturing on something that has not yet been properly costed.

I hope that the Government will treat today’s debate as an opportunity to discuss how we can work together to ensure that the public reap the benefits of the dementia strategy through action on the ground, and to reflect on how we build on the strategy to meet the demands that dementia will inevitably make on our health service in the coming years. We need such action, rather than words, and the Government must act quickly. It is time for Government to step up to the challenge posed not only by this devastating disease but by an unreformed social care sector, not with words or another vacant pledge, but with action at the grass roots of the NHS and social services and a concerted leadership effort at the helm of Government. A national care service does not simply come about or, indeed, become a national service simply by our using those words. It is important that the Government answer serious questions about provision, portability and, not least, who will pay. We are not just talking about the prioritisation and allocation of funding within the health budget. We are talking about supporting the work that funding enables: offering tailor-made training to staff at the front line; researching a cure; ensuring that the public have easy access to the best drugs on the market; and enabling all older people, no matter what their care needs, to guarantee their residential care in old age. All that will greatly enhance the quality of life for those diagnosed with dementia and for all elderly people seeking dignity and security in old age.

Mr. Lindsay Hoyle (Chorley) (Lab): I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He is extremely generous. Does he also believe in the establishment of memory centres?

Mr. O’Brien: The Government announced the establishment of memory clinics, rather than memory centres, in every town. That has been amended, on occasion, to memory services. Clearly, what matters is not the building, but the training and the skills of the people offering all the NHS and care services, who need upskilling so that those services are better known by all who come into contact with patients. That will enable them to deal with many who remain undiagnosed, which was one of the earliest points made in the debate.

The issue of dementia and the challenge posed by our ageing population cry out for leadership. It is one of the greatest and completely known and predictable challenges for our political generation. I urge all Members across the House to come together on the issue and to make the difference for some of the most deserving and vulnerable people by supporting the motion.

John Mann: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. When the House adopted the Nolan principles and rules, which it did by resolution, there were two specific requirements on hon. Members, were they to receive finances or other assistance from outside bodies. The first was that the interest should be registered, which is signified by the letter R by convention and has been done in a fairly widespread way. The second is more important.

The second Nolan rule adopted by the House, as I recall, is that for 12 months after receiving such money, the Member is not able to initiate any legislation whatsoever that impacts directly or indirectly on the recipient of that money. It is my understanding that a company called Care UK donated £21,000 to one of the signatories of the motion. Is there an additional rule that Members who are dissatisfied should complain to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. At this very tense and competitive time, I should hope that Members would not air these matters on the Floor of the House when they are matters not for the Chair, but for the Registrar of Members’ Interests and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards.

If Mr. O’Brien wishes to respond to the point of order, he is welcome to do so, but he is not under any obligation to do so.
Mr. O’Brien: I am happy, Mr. Speaker, to take the opportunity to say that that is an extraordinary thing to be raised as a point of order, as you somewhat indicated. I can assure you, and through you the House, that any money that has been received by the office of any right hon. or hon. Member, particularly in opposition, to support their parliamentary work and particularly in relation to research, has been fully, openly and transparently declared at all times with the Electoral Commission and with the Registrar of Members’ Interests, on time and in proper conformity with all the rules, and that no possible conflict of interest could arise.

Mr. Speaker: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman. The point of order has been raised. The response has been made. I hope that if it is pursued, it will be pursued elsewhere.

Before we proceed, I should like to say that the hon. Member for Eddisbury (Mr. O’Brien) gave way generously in the course of his contribution. I am sure that was appreciated by the House. This is an Opposition day. There is another debate to follow. Several Back-Bench Members wish to speak in this debate, and I hope that further Front-Bench contributions will be tailored accordingly.

1.23 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Andy Burnham): I beg to move an amendment, to leave out from “charities” to the end of the Question and add: “welcomes the Dementia Strategy launched in 2009 which contains a programme of work to transform services for those with dementia over five years and is backed by funding of £150 million over two years; notes that the Government will shortly publish the report of the Nutrition Action Plan Delivery Board; rejects the use of tube feeding on any grounds other than clinical need; welcomes the independent clinical review of anti-psychotic drugs which contains recommendations for the reduction in the use of these drugs for people with dementia; further welcomes the appointment of a National Clinical Director for dementia to promote better care and provide leadership for the implementation of the strategy; welcomes the creation of a ministerial group to develop dementia research; recognises that the enactment of the Personal Care at Home Bill will help some 400,000 people with the highest need; supports the Government’s proposals to create the National Care Service, the first national, universal, entitlement-based system for care and support in England; and acknowledges that the Government’s Dignity in Care campaign is working to engage local people in a social movement and to put dignity of those in care at the heart of services.”

It is hugely encouraging that today the House is again debating the care and support that we provide to older people, particularly those with dementia. Let me start on an uncharacteristically non-partisan note by congratulating the Opposition on calling today’s debate. This is the third occasion since the publication of our Green Paper that we have debated these issues. Since then, we have also passed the Personal Care at Home Bill.

In its long history, the House has never given such focused attention to this subject, which in time will touch the lives of all our constituents and arouses such raw feelings among those families most affected. When I introduced the Green Paper to the House, I said that we wanted to build an unstoppable momentum for reform of social care in England. It is beginning to feel that we are now getting close to achieving that momentum, but we need to do more. As the hon. Member for Eddisbury (Mr. O’Brien) said, we must build confidence among patients and carers groups, which have done such wonderful work in raising awareness of these issues while the political spotlight was elsewhere, that this time we are serious about change.

In these debates, I have often used general national figures to illustrate the challenge and the nature of the ageing population. Today, I want to share with the House some stark figures presented to a meeting that I attended in Wigan last week. This local presentation of figures puts things in a sharper focus. In the Wigan borough today, 49,700 people are aged 65 and over, and 5,200 people are aged 85 and over. In just 15 years, those figures will have increased to 63,900 and 9,300 respectively. Twenty years from now, there will be 75,500 over-65s and 11,900 over-85s.

If we leave the current unfair system to cope with demographic change in my constituency in the Wigan borough, it would have three social consequences. First, more older people in Leigh would be living in a more vulnerable condition with their personal care needs not being adequately met, placing a strain on other public services, particularly the local NHS. Secondly, a generation of older people in Leigh who, as in many former mining areas, are the very first in their families ever to own their properties outright, would be asked to draw on those assets to pay for care in old age with the most unfortunate standing to lose all they have worked for. Thirdly, more people in Leigh would have to act as informal carers under even more strain as public support is spread more thinly, and would face an ever bigger battle to get help from the support system.

Mr. Hoyle: I understand my right hon. Friend’s commitment to his constituency, Leigh, and his use of statistics from there. Will he drop over the border and visit the important constituency of Chorley in Lancashire to see the need for a memory clinic there and the benefit that it would bring Chorley and its constituents? Will he come early and support that?

Andy Burnham: Chorley is just over the border and I would be happy to do that. Across the north-west we have seen real demographic change and a break with the past. In many communities in the north-west, people of the older generation were living in social or council housing. Today we have a generation of pensioners who have worked for and own their homes outright. It is my argument that if we leave the system unreformed, the unfairness felt by that generation will be far greater than anything we have seen so far. That is a key part of my argument for change. I would be happy to talk to my hon. Friend’s constituents about how they see the issue and how it would affect them if we failed to act this time.

Bob Spink (Castle Point) (Ind): May I raise a pragmatic point with the Secretary of State? Does he agree that people who need adaptations such as showers or stair lifts in order to continue to live in their own homes with dignity and independence should be able to get those without having to wait for months and sometimes even years? Can we address that point? By spending just a little money, we would save much greater sums in the longer term and give those people dignity.

Andy Burnham: The hon. Gentleman raises an important point. We have all probably seen in our constituencies how the disabled facilities grant has been stretched and
[Andy Burnham]

has had to go round an ever-increasing number of people. In a constituency like mine, there are lots of traditional old terraced properties, those properties need adaptations if they are to be made fit for purpose to enable people to get around. He is helping me to make my point. I am prepared to say that more money should come from my budget to invest in those homes to give people the support that they need. If we do not make that investment, the end result will be the national health service seeing those people in the accident and emergency department because they are not being adequately helped at home. That is the argument that I am advancing with some passion.

Bob Spink: Will the Secretary of State confirm that councils can add their own money to the disabled facilities grant, if they wish? They should not just hide behind the Government grant.

Andy Burnham: That is true, and we need a different approach, whereby all public bodies come together and think about prevention and the promotion of independent living in the home and the community. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to make that call.

John Mann: All public bodies should come together. Will my right hon. Friend comment on Tory-run Nottinghamshire county council, which, in its budget next month, proposes to cut 20 occupational therapy posts? Are they precisely the people who need to make the DFG assessment, which is a statutory requirement of councils, and, should the council’s cut succeed, it will automatically lead to more delays in my constituency.

Andy Burnham: Given that my hon. Friend has been determined to raise that issue three times, somebody ought to comment on the situation in Nottinghamshire. The Opposition studiously avoided it. Conservatives councils, by their actions, do something very different from the fine words that we heard delivered at the Opposition Dispatch Box not only in my hon. Friend’s constituency; they do something very different locally, and we should inform people of what is going on there.

Mr. Swire: Most of us in the Chamber are signed up to the idea of independent living, whereby people should be allowed to stay in their own home if they want to, for as long as possible, but does the Secretary of State not agree that there is an inherent danger in that? Care packages become critical for those people, and they should receive a holistic care package so that they do not become isolated in their own homes, which can and does happen.

Andy Burnham: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, who makes a very important point. It would not be right for people to live in their homes without the necessary support, or when they were too vulnerable to do so, but he seems to be making the argument that I made to the hon. Member for Eddisbury (Mr. O’Brien) a moment ago. I said that we should introduce public support to help people live independently, because that is what they want, whereas the hon. Gentleman said that the right policy response was to cover costs for people going into residential care. I fear that that policy, which he and his colleagues have advanced, would create an incentive to push older people too early into care establishments and not give them the support to cope at home. Once care is free in a home but not in the community, it must create an incentive for people to enter care prematurely.

Mr. Swire: None of us wants people entering care prematurely, but the Secretary of State needs to distinguish between those who are elderly and those who have some form of dementia, because if they do not have carers who can care for them at home, by definition they will be driven into residential care at some point.

Andy Burnham: We do make that distinction, and we do distinguish people’s needs in the care system. I agree with the hon. Gentleman; I do not wish to disagree with him on that point.

Mrs. Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a huge risk in labelling people with dementia as unable to cope at home? In our desperate desire to protect older people, it is possible to say that because someone has dementia and diminished capacities, they lack the right to make sound decisions for themselves. It is our responsibility, as far as we are able, however, to tailor our care packages to enable people to remain at home. We should not take the decision to remove a person’s right to make that decision for themselves. [Interruption.]

Andy Burnham: My hon. Friend makes a point of fundamental importance, and Opposition Members would do well not to mutter and chunter about it, but to think about it for a moment. As we face demographic change, we need to rethink our ideas about ageing and the quality of life that we give to people, and our preconceived prejudices about what it means for somebody to develop dementia in later life. That is why the Government’s policy focuses on supporting people at an early stage and giving them that support so that they can maintain independence. Alongside that, we want to ensure that we work to change public attitudes to dementia and the lives that people can lead. I shall return to that point.

I was describing the situation in Leigh and the social consequences that I predict from a failure to act to reform our social care system. There is a depressing prospect if we fail to face up to the scale of demographic change. Reform of our care and support system is long overdue. One good thing that could come out of the debate would be a commitment from all parties to introduce a reform Bill in the next Parliament. That would instil confidence in those voluntary groups in our communities which have long called for reform. I hope that the other parties will be able to make that commitment today.

People with dementia would be some of the biggest beneficiaries of a fundamental overhaul of the system, but in advance of any reform we have been working hard to improve our understanding of dementia so that we can start immediately on improving services for people suffering with the disease and for their carers. Almost one year ago we published the first ever national dementia strategy, and since then we have been working
to give it life—to bring dementia out of the shadows, raise awareness and set in train a system-wide process of change and reform.

We now have an implementation plan, setting priority areas for health and social care in order to take urgent action and guide the process nationally and regionally. Regional baseline reviews were completed in the autumn, paving the way for detailed joint local dementia action plans to be delivered by March, and we have a strong governance structure, pushing forward changes throughout the system. Building on unprecedented levels of grant increases since 1997, we have allocated to primary care trusts £150 million—in excess of the impact assessment figures—to support that work and make the strategy happen; and, as changes to services must be locally driven, we have given PCTs the freedom to determine their spending based on local needs. We believe that that is the right approach.

Jeremy Wright: The right hon. Gentleman has dealt with the point about why he decided not to ring-fence that money, but will he deal with why he did not ask PCTs to report back on how they had spent that money, so that we could at least have ascertained whether they had spent it on what the Government had expected them to spend it on? The Government have not asked PCTs to report back on the strategy under discussion, and that is unlike what was done for the national end-of-life strategy.

Andy Burnham: That is a fair question, and we are conducting a spending audit, which will produce a report. I shall be happy to share with the hon. Gentleman the response from that exercise.

Mr. Blunkett: I was very pleased to be in Leigh on Saturday, but I was not able to examine the services there, because I was at my right hon. Friend’s 40th birthday party. Will he join me in thanking the Alzheimer’s Society’s chief executive, Neil Hunt, who is stepping down, for his work on raising the profile of Alzheimer’s and for his contribution to the strategy? Will my right hon. Friend also confirm that the Opposition’s criticisms of public health?

Jeremy Wright: My right hon. Friend, who is quite right to praise Andy Burnham:

Andy Burnham: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The 2000 Act was groundbreaking. It was bitterly opposed by some, if not all, Conservative Members, but it was much needed. It changed what had been a fairly unregulated system into a system where clear standards were required. We have built on that change year on year. As she will know, we will soon require all providers of health and social care to be registered with the Care Quality Commission. This continuous drive for the improvement of quality and safety in the provision of all health and social care continues, and I am grateful for her support.

On the national dementia strategy and the steps that we have taken to ensure that we see progress on the ground, improving services for people with dementia is highly complex, but as we reach the end of the first year of this five-year strategy, progress in planning is beginning to show improvements in practice. Let us take Croydon memory service, where people have doubled the number of dementia assessments and helped to overcome the stigma attached to the disease. Assessments at the service are carried out with the patient and the carer in their home, so that we can help to maintain their independence and quality of life. Or let us look at Wakefield, where staff are working to reach as many people as possible, as early as possible when they become ill, again trying to support them in their own homes. They are bringing together social workers, district nurses and community mental health staff to create the kind of strong, close teams that make all the difference to patients and their families who need that professional support. We want to see more of those services across the country. That is the answer to the point that the hon. Member for Eddisbury made about memory services. Forty demonstrator sites have been set up around the country to look at how dementia advisers and peer support networks can help families to get the support they need.

We are also working hard to raise awareness of dementia—this addresses the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mrs. Moon) —and we will launch a public awareness campaign in March. That will be focused not only on reducing the stigma that comes with dementia and improving understanding of dementia but on encouraging people to seek help and information if they see the early signs of the disease.
Last week, we had an important interim report on our national dementia strategy from the National Audit Office; I am grateful for the attention that it continues to give to this important matter. The report describes our strategy as “ambitious and comprehensive”. It acknowledges the progress that we have made while rightly challenging Ministers to intensify our efforts. I welcome the report and take its recommendations very seriously.

We must recognise that we are in the first few months of this five-year strategy and that change will not happen overnight, but there are actions that we are taking to improve things now. For example, we know that we need to do more to improve commissioning. New joint commissioning guidance was published in June last year, and that is now helping PCTs and councils to make the right decisions in their area. We know that we need to improve training, so we have commissioned Skills for Health and Skills for Care to look at training needs across health and social care and, where gaps exist, to address them in the work force development action plan. We also know of the need to find the local leaders to drive through this programme of change—The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Jeremy Wright) was correct to lay emphasis on that important point. The recent Alzheimer’s Society report on acute hospital care and dementia was very helpful in prompting the acute sector to give priority to dementia. I welcome that.

Care and dementia was very helpful in prompting the action plan. We also know of the need to find the local leaders to drive through this programme of change. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Jeremy Wright) was correct to lay emphasis on that important point. The recent Alzheimer’s Society report on acute hospital care and dementia was very helpful in prompting the acute sector to give priority to dementia. I welcome that.

There is a long way to go. I can tell the House that the Minister of State, Department of Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Phil Hope), who is responsible for care services, and I are putting a determined and relentless focus on these services to achieve the transformation that we want to see. To help us, we have Martin Green as our dementia champion for the independent sector, and only last week we appointed the first ever national dementia clinical director, Professor Alistair Burns. Alistair will take forward our response to the anti-psychotics review to implement all its conclusions and recommendations, leading to reduced use of these drugs in the management of dementia. He will lead on the national audit of services and the action plans that follow. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister, who has driven forward work in this area and, indeed, commissioned that review by Sube Banerjee.

As we approach the first anniversary of the strategy’s launch, I am confident that we are on track to deliver our goals. I have described the NHS and social care services that I want to see in the coming years—services that are high quality and efficient, preventive and people-centred. Providing effective early support for people with dementia is a vital part of that vision. We now have the evidence to show just how crucial early invention can be. The partnerships for older people projects helped more than 250,000 older people, enhancing their quality of life, improving local working relationships and providing efficiency savings for the entire health and social care system. The evaluation of the projects was published earlier this month. It showed that through early intervention, they cut overnight stays in hospital almost by half, cut accident and emergency attendances by just under a third, and cut clinic or out-patient appointments by more than 10 per cent. For every £1 invested in prevention, there was an average saving of about £1.20 in emergency bed days. In fact, it was found that there was a £1.40 saving for secondary and tertiary prevention and a 70p saving for primary prevention services. This shows that even well-being services can deliver efficiency gains. Taken together, that makes a compelling case for changing the way in which we spend health and social care resources, as the hon. Member for Castle Point (Bob Spink) rightly said.

As we reform services, we must strive to give people more choice, convenience and control over their care, to put quality at the heart of our services, and to take more early, preventive action to keep them healthy and in their own homes, which is where the vast majority of people want to be. That is what our Personal Care at Home Bill is all about. Through this Bill, we want to provide support to more than 400,000 of the most vulnerable people in our constituencies, including people with dementia, to help those with the greatest needs, who require intimate personal care in all aspects of their daily lives. In many cases, they will already have paid significant sums out of their own pocket towards the costs of their care as their condition has deteriorated. Their family and carers will have faced considerable pressure in recent times as they have battled to get the help that they need or sought to balance the demands of their own lives with looking after a loved one. The Bill will provide powers for people to receive intensive support to prevent them from developing more serious needs. It will help them remain healthy and independent in their own homes and extend their quality years of life.
The Bill has two clear aims. The first is to end the lottery in home care for the most vulnerable people in our communities, and the second is to pave the way for a bigger reform of social care in the next Parliament and the creation of a national care service. There has been a long process of reform since 1997. We have committed unprecedented levels of grant increase to fund investment in local council services, achieved real success in improving service quality and introduced radical reform to personalise services, including individual budgets that give people control over their own lives.

However, we know that a more radical approach is needed. The people with the highest needs still face the greatest costs, and we now have a chance to build a better future for them. People need and expect health and social care services to work more closely together. They want seamless services, and they do not want to be passed from pillar to post before they receive them.

Rob Marris: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that one major reform that we have introduced, which has been little heralded, is that when one of a married couple has dementia, for example, and sadly needs to move into a residential care home, there is no longer a requirement for that couple to sell their home at that point? This Government changed the National Insurance Act 1948, effective from April 2009. The myth is still going around that if a man goes into a residential care home, his wife has to sell the house and move out, but that is wrong. That is no longer the case, which was a major and positive reform from last April.

Andy Burnham: My hon. Friend is right that a myth is put about that we have done nothing and that there has been inertia for 10 years. There has not. We have reformed our social care system to make it fairer and taken steps towards the fundamental reform that I am saying is necessary. He is right that the house is disregarded when two people are involved, and he will know that we have gone further and introduced the deferred payments scheme, so that if the other person goes into a care home too, the house does not have to be sold immediately during their lifetime; that can be considered later.

Those are two important reforms that are glossed over by some. However, we want to go further, and that is the case that I am making today. On their own, those reforms are not enough. If we do not do more, we will face a generation of older people who experience greater unfairness as they approach care. As good as those changes were, I am prepared to accept that they will not do the job completely.

The Government’s vision is of a national care service that is fairer, simpler and more affordable, that is underpinned by national rights and entitlements, that ends the postcode lottery in care and that is personalised to individual needs. The vision is a system with quality at its heart, in which people get the care and support they need wherever they are in the country. The national care service is about helping people live their lives in the way that they want to, putting their needs and wishes first, helping them keep up relationships with family and friends and live in their own homes as long as they can, and where possible helping them continue to work and contribute to their community.

Reform of the care and support system and the shift towards prevention is the only fiscally responsible strategy for the long term, but it is also the only morally responsible strategy. I intend to publish a White Paper in the very near future setting out the future of care and support in England. We are working to improve the services that are available now and transform them in the years to come. As we take our first steps in this new decade, we are beginning to create the momentum that is necessary to deliver once-in-a-generation reform.

1.54 pm

Greg Mulholland (Leeds, North-West) (LD): I echo the words of the Secretary of State by warmly welcoming the chance to debate this important issue. I congratulate the hon. Member for Eddisbury (Mr. O’Brien) and his team on bringing the matter forward. This is a particularly important time to talk about this range of conditions—we need to remember that that is what dementia is—that have such an impact not only on the individuals who are unlucky enough to suffer from them, but on their families, carers and friends and on the communities that they live in.

Here we are, nearly a year after the announcement and commencement of the national dementia strategy, which we all welcomed as a big step forward in how we, as a country, deal with dementia. It is right and proper that we now consider the matter and where we are up to, just before we get into the campaign proper, because whoever is in government after the next election must be firmly committed to seeing the strategy through its whole 10-year period. We are certainly happy to make that commitment, as I am sure Members of all parties are.

The comments of Professor Sube Banerjee to the Public Accounts Committee were an extremely powerful way of describing the effects of dementia. He said that it was “one of those rare diseases that people actually consider worse than death.”

We all know that dementia is becoming more and more prevalent in our society. Already about a third of people in care homes suffer from it, and the latest estimate is that there are approximately 600,000 people with dementia in England. However, as the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Jeremy Wright), who leads the all-party group on dementia, has made clear, we simply do not know the actual number. That is partly because of the challenge of early diagnosis and partly because of the challenge of getting people to present to doctors when they fear they may be in the early stages of the condition.

Mr. Hoyle: The hon. Gentleman is making a very good point. May I say to him that there is a stigma among relatives, who want to protect someone in their family and do not want to admit that there may be a problem? Does he agree that we need to provide more help and support and welcome the job that carers do?

Greg Mulholland: I do, and that is a very important point. I hope that our regular debates on the matter and the strategy itself will do something to deal with that stigma. We can only imagine the trauma and devastation of someone facing the possibility that they or a loved one may be facing the condition, and the effect that it will have on their life in the coming years.

Mrs. Moon: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that part of the difficulty that we have, and part of what we must accept in the debate, is that dementia is not an entity but a spectrum? Someone may function quite
well on one day but not on another. Depending on their medical condition, their situation may fluctuate. It is dangerous to write off somebody who has been diagnosed with aspects of dementia as “demented”. We have devised the capacity assessment, but that should be utilised only in conjunction with supportive carers who know the individual and their fluctuation.

Greg Mulholland: I alluded to that in my introductory comments by pointing out that dementia is not one condition and that a number of conditions come under that umbrella, but the hon. Lady is absolutely right that dementia affects people in different ways. Many people in the early stages can lead full lives and can work. I have been pleased to work with the author Terry Pratchett, particularly on research into dementia, which, as Ministers will know, I have campaigned on. Terry Pratchett is still writing, going to our party conferences and getting the message across, and it is very important that we do that. Nevertheless, the fear and stigma will still exist, for Terry and for everybody else. They simply do not know what is around the corner, how it will affect them and how long they may live. The hon. Lady is right that that presents all with a challenge in considering how to deal with the matter in the health and social care system.

I echo the comments of the hon. Member for Eddisbury in paying tribute to everyone currently involved in dementia care, which is a particular challenge. Of course, the wonderful people who work in our health service and in our care homes always face challenges, but those who deal with the problems of people with dementia, particularly in the latter stages, deserve our tributes for all they do for those most vulnerable people in our society. I also echo the tributes to the all-party group, of which I am a member, and especially to the leadership of the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth.

The national dementia strategy for England was launched, rightly with a fanfare, last February. It made clear recommendations for improving dementia care under the key themes of raising awareness and understanding, of early diagnosis and support and of how to help people living with dementia. The National Audit Office report—HC 82—has now been published. Although it acknowledges that progress has been made in some areas, it expresses the concern that dementia services are not given the priority that they were promised a year ago—and, crucially, the priority that they need for the excellent strategy to take hold in the early stages. All hon. Members want that to happen.

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): My hon. Friend has alluded to a concern that many of us share: although we welcome the funds that have been delivered through the national dementia strategy, the £1.5 million provided to the primary care trust in Cumbria does not appear to have resulted in any additional services for people suffering from dementia or for their carers. Organisations such as the Alzheimer’s Society want clear, tangible, additional services to be provided for those people rather than the money being used simply to plug existing budget gaps.

Greg Mulholland: My hon. Friend rightly makes the point that making a difference on the ground, in those PCT areas, is important. Without getting into the ring-fencing debate, as we often do, can the Secretary of State give us better assurances and tell us that the money is being spent, simply by asking PCTs to report back and tell us what they are doing? Every PCT that has been given the money has a responsibility to ensure that it delivers. That is a challenge for PCTs, because of their budgets, but it must happen for the strategy to work. When there is evidence on the ground that the money does not appear to make a difference to local dementia services, sanctions must be put in place so that the Secretary of State can take action. If PCTs are failing to deliver the strategy, the Secretary of State—whoever he is—should be able to say that that is unacceptable and that it will not provide appropriate care in the area.

Early diagnosis is one of the biggest challenges in the strategy. According to research from the House of Commons Library, people wait for three years, on average, before reporting symptoms to their doctor. That problem cannot easily be solved, but it is clear evidence that education must be a key part of the strategy, particularly through health professionals and GPs, to communicate to people that they should go to see their doctor and get a diagnosis. To revert to the point that the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mrs. Moon) made, early diagnosis and care from that stage can make a great difference to the condition's progression.

The Secretary of State mentioned the concerns about local leadership. The point has been strongly made that local leadership is simply not there. Without that, the strategy will not succeed. It is not only about money, but about leadership. I urge him and the Minister to stick to the deadline of March—I welcome the fact that he has set it—for having it in place.

We need further and appropriate meshing of our health and social care systems. It is a policy challenge to which there are no easy solutions, but interesting pilots are going on around the country. The artificial divide that often exists between health and social care cannot be more meaningless than in the case of dementia. It would be good if we could use the national dementia strategy to make progress on better meshing health and social care, so that the system becomes seamless for people, whether they need something that is currently defined as “care” or something that is defined as “health care”.

Mrs. Moon: One of the key ways in which that joint working can be effective is when an elderly person with dementia, who has a care package at home from a care agency, needs to be admitted to hospital and the ward staff are willing to accept the help, support, advice and guidance of those carers from the agency, who know all about the management and needs of that individual. Sometimes there can be a breakdown of communication between professional care staff in hospitals and those at-home. A greater willingness to listen is key to how the care to which people respond at home could result in treatment in hospital being eased.

Greg Mulholland: The hon. Lady makes an important point, which clearly shows that we need to learn from experience on the ground how we can improve matters. I shall speak shortly about the particular challenges of dementia care in hospitals.
Training is another key part of the strategy. According to the dementia care services market briefing last year, a third of care homes that specialise in dementia—I am not referring to those that do not—not do provide their staff with dementia care training. When the Minister responds, will he give us an update on progress on training? If our care professionals—people who deal with those with dementia—do not have the proper training and education on dementia, many of the good aims in the strategy simply cannot be brought to fruition.

Dr. Palmer: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there are two kinds of care training: one for people who are engaged in intensive care support for those suffering from the illness and the other for general hospital staff, who may encounter patients who have another illness but who also have elements of dementia? The latter also need training in how to respond appropriately.

Greg Mulholland: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point, with which I agree. Anyone in the care or health sector who may come across people with dementia needs education and training about how to look after people with that range of conditions.

Mr. Swire: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is important to consider expanding the role of Admiral nurses, of whom there are 65 or 70 currently in England? The nearest one to Devon is unfortunately based in Woking, but they do a remarkable job, and the body should be expanded.

Greg Mulholland: That sounds like an interesting scheme, albeit one of which I am not particularly aware. Again, it is the sort of thing that should be fed into the strategy and the debate, so that we can learn from best practice throughout the country.

The Alzheimer's Society expressed its disappointment, which I share, that the recently published operating framework for 2010-11 does not explicitly refer to dementia.

Andy Burnham: The hon. Gentleman is making an excellent speech, but to correct him, the recent operating framework mentions dementia services.

Greg Mulholland: The information came from the Alzheimer's Society. My point is that primary care trusts must view the services as important. The Government have set out their stall with the strategy, the Opposition have had a chance to set out theirs today, and I am doing it for the Liberal Democrats. However, if strategies do not filter down to PCTs, we will not have the services that we need on the ground.

Jeremy Wright: May I return briefly to the operating framework? The Secretary of State is technically right that dementia is mentioned, but it is mentioned extremely fleetingly, and the importance that the Government have given to it is not in any way reflected in the priorities of the strategy.

Greg Mulholland: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that helpful intervention. I do not want to get sucked into the rather bad-tempered debate about tiers 2 and 3. The national dementia strategy is clear in its prioritisation, but is that filtered through to all levels of the NHS, which it must be if it is to be delivered?

It was promised that every town in the UK would have access to a memory clinic—that was how the promise was phrased—but it is clear from the NAO report that that will not happen. The hon. Member for Chorley (Mr. Hoyle) used a different word, and spoke of memory centres, but the hon. Member for Eddisbury spoke of memory services—[Interruption.] He pointed out that the rhetoric was now memory “services” rather than “centres” or “clinics”. We need to be clear where that promise is going. Let us face it: what we are talking about is everybody in every town having appropriate access to specialist services to deal with memory dementia.

Mr. Hoyle: Just for clarification, I treat a “clinic” and “centre” as the same—the provision of services is the important thing. Obviously, a major centre such as Chorley would be an ideal location.

Greg Mulholland: I am sure that it is. I am sure that Chorley is the ideal location for many things—[Laughter.] To make a serious point, I was not trying to catch the hon. Member for Eddisbury out on the words that he uses; I am simply asking the Minister whether people in every town and city, including Chorley and Leeds, will have access to those services in the way that was promised.

Funding is a challenge for us all. We recently had a good debate on the Personal Care at Home Bill, but care for people with dementia in itself presents a huge challenge within the overall discussions on funding for social care. Dementia already costs England alone £15.9 billion a year, which will rise sharply year on year. The King’s Fund has predicted a total cost of £34.8 billion by 2026, which is an increase of 135 per cent. Dementia currently costs the country £539 a second. An amount of funding was clearly set out in the strategy—a figure of £2 billion over the years of implementation—but where precisely are we going to identify efficiency savings to secure that important funding? Without that, the strategy will fall by the wayside, so we must face that funding challenge.

I say that within the wider context of the debate on the funding of long-term care, which I have been happy to be involved in. I have spoken many times in the House on that and have held many meetings with many of the organisations involved. Dementia funding is particularly complex, partly because it so clearly breaches the artificial divide between health and social care—there are huge costs for both the NHS and local councils. We also know that as life expectancy rises and care costs increase in total, families face uncertainty about what their costs will be and how best to plan for them. That is a challenge that we have yet to face.

I welcome the Secretary of State saying that the White Paper will be published soon. I do not know whether he can commit to giving any more of a clue as to what “soon” means, but we are running out of time before we get into the campaign—there was a little too much campaigning in some of the earlier contributions—and in this Parliament.

Andy Burnham: By June.

Greg Mulholland: That is very helpful. You heard it here first, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If there is nothing by 3 June, we will be asking the Secretary of State to resign.
To echo an earlier point, the Liberal Democrats are firmly committed to sitting down with both the Conservatives and the Government to find a process and a solution to the problem of funding for social care. We all need to commit to doing that in the next Parliament. The publication of the White Paper will be the time to start that process, but it will happen mainly in the new Parliament.

On funding for dementia, the Alzheimer’s Society has pointed out that dementia services provide excellent value for money, which is an indication that too often we do not consider the value of preventive care. In its 2007 report on dementia, the NAO highlighted that significant money was wasted because of an inadequate response to dementia, which we must take seriously.

I am not going to discuss the debates on the Personal Care at Home Bill that took place two weeks ago, because the matter has been dealt with, but people with dementia, and certainly people who have dementia in its latter stages, are in the category of people who will receive care at home. However, many people with dementia are cared for by spouses, partners, friends or neighbours. I made this point in the debate on the Bill, although not specifically with regard to people with dementia, but many people may not be in the Government’s figures and may not yet have come forward to say that their loved one qualifies for, and would like to receive, personal care at home. That is a note of caution, because the cost to local authorities may have been underestimated. We need a more robust assessment to include those who might wish to receive personal care at home who are not yet accounted for in the figures.

When I first read the motion in the name of the hon. Member for Eddisbury and the Secretary of State’s amendment, I was pleased to see that both contain a clear commitment to dealing with anti-psychotic drugs, which are sometimes known as the chemical cosh. My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Mr. Burstow), who has led on this issue over a number of years, has highlighted that totally unacceptable and too-prevalent practice. According to the Alzheimer’s Society report, 77 per cent. of nurse managers and nursing staff said that anti-psychotic drugs were used always or sometimes to treat people with dementia, which is huge figure. I hope it is decreasing, and it would be good to hear about progress.

We want a clear commitment not only to review the use of anti-psychotic drugs, which is included in the amendment, but to stamp it out when it is not appropriate. Those drugs have been shown to shorten life, and slow response times, mobility and cognition—of course, they do nothing to treat dementia itself. People are up to three times more likely to have a stroke while under the influence of the drugs. It is frustrating that we are still talking about the matter in that way. I would like a little more from the Minister. Never mind a review; let us have action to stamp it out. Let us educate people and ensure that our most vulnerable people are not being inappropriately treated.

Earlier in the debate, someone mentioned inappropriate treatment by the use of a feeding tube. We had the report earlier in the month from the Royal College of Physicians, which said that the procedure should be used only as a last resort, but was all too often being used inappropriately in care homes. The report suggested that the practice could be due to staffing constraints and budgets. Dr. John Saunders, the co-chairman of the working party, said:

“In the demented patient it does not prolong life, the treatment is inappropriate and futile. It is actively unethical and dubious.”

I am sure that we all agree with that, but it is thought that up to a fifth of patients with feeding tubes have them inappropriately, because either the tubes are futile or the patient could eat normally if given proper care and assistance. It is an absolute scandal that that is still going on in care homes. I ask the Minister to respond on this point and tell us whether any progress is being made. I hope that he will be able to tell us that greater progress will be made.

I was amazed to learn that it is estimated that a quarter of long-term patients in hospital have some form of dementia. The medical evidence shows that the longer people with dementia are in hospital, the worse the effect on their symptoms of dementia and on their general physical health. Of course, discharge to a care home or their own homes then becomes more problematic, and there is the danger that anti-psychotic drugs are more likely to be used.

I join the right hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) in paying tribute to Neil Hunt for his leadership of the Alzheimer’s Society, which has produced an excellent report called “Counting the Cost”. Neil Hunt has said that the NHS is not facing up to the challenge of dementia and that there is a need to improve the care given to sufferers.

The report finds that supporting people with dementia to leave hospital one week sooner than they currently do would result in savings of at least £80 million a year. Such an approach differs from the usual approach taken in health and social care, but we all need to identify such savings if we are to continue with the commitment to the national dementia strategy that we all want to see.

The issue of research is not directly mentioned in the motions today, but I agree with the comments made by several hon. Members that, alongside the issue of care, we need to look at the issue of research. The cost to the NHS of dementia is more than that of cancer, heart disease and strokes put together, but the budget for research is a fraction of that for cancer. We need to listen to Terry Pratchett and the Alzheimer’s Society and find ways to provide better care and enable people to function and work for longer through scientific breakthroughs. I ask the Minister for reassurance that we are making progress—even if it is only slow progress, given the recession—towards the £96 million research budget that the Alzheimer’s Research Trust estimates is necessary to tackle this appalling range of diseases.

2.24 pm

Dr. Nick Palmer (Broxtowe) (Lab): I have some personal connection with this issue. My late father suffered from dementia, and my mother and I were his carers until he died aged 75. Before I discuss general policy issues, I shall make a few extrapolations from my personal experience.

I am aware that people are fearful of dementia, partly because it is not at present curable and partly because they fear many of the aspects that we have heard about
An important policy point that arises out of that experience was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mrs. Moon), who referred to the spectrum of dementia, from serious cases, with sufferers who are totally dependent, to cases in which people are able to make decisions about their own lives. My father remained aware of his condition throughout his life and he was able to discuss with us appropriate protective measures and the trade-off between too much risk and too much interference with his enjoyment of life. For instance, he never went out on his own, because he was afraid that he would not find his way home, but that did not mean that he just stayed at home all the time. When he could, he went out to enjoy the pleasures of the outside world.

The condition is not a steady state. People often imagine that once someone has dementia they experience a steady slide downwards, one day forgetting one thing and the next day forgetting two things, and so on. As my hon. Friend also pointed out, it is not like that. Sufferers have good days and bad days, just like the rest of us. It is important that carers, whether professionals or relatives, recognise the good days so that they can take a step back and be less intrusive, to give the sufferer a bit of space, a chance to explore what they can do and to use what capacity they have. On other days, the sufferer will need more support, and the carers will need to move in closer. That recognition can be difficult, and is part of the training that has been mentioned already today, especially in the sensitive speech by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Greg Mulholland).

Mr. Swire: I am following the hon. Gentleman's speech with considerable interest. Does he agree that one of the problems for carers, especially family carers, is their uncertainty about the future of the sufferer? That is why some form of proper respite care is so critical, so that carers have a chance to recover a piece of their own lives.

Dr. Palmer: The hon. Gentleman is right. From talking to other families in that situation, I know that it is common for the carers to suffer much more than the sufferer, although that was not the case for my family. The person with the condition will sometimes have a diminished recognition of just how bad the situation is, but the carers can see something tragic going on, and it is important that they get support. An element of day care support is also important for the person suffering from the illness, which relates to the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (John Mann) about what is happening in Nottinghamshire.

The general problems that we face include, first, the widespread dread of Alzheimer's and dementia, which we must anticipate will continue to increase as it seems to be a function of greater longevity. If someone dies at 80, they probably will not have Alzheimer's—they might, but the probability is much lower. If someone lives to 90, the probability is significantly higher. The excellent report by the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, on which we all often depend, states that 47 per cent. of the British population know of a family member or close friend with dementia. In a great many cases, therefore, that dread is fed by personal experiences. Indeed, I would assume that some of us in the Chamber will eventually fall victim to dementia. We need to be aware of that.

On this issue, there is real public support for effective action so far as it is possible. I shall be partisan for a moment: as my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (John Mann) said, Nottinghamshire county council proposes to sell off all its care homes, including Bramwell, in my constituency, which specialises in Alzheimer's care. It has conceded, in discussions with me, that the effect might be to dissipate the centre of expertise that has been built up there, because the private buyer may choose to merge it in due course with another home and so lose that focus. That seems to be undesirable.

In the local debate, a number of constituents have said that, although in other respects they are 100 per cent. behind the Conservative council and have always been Conservatives, on this issue they think that the council has got it wrong—to the point that they might not vote Conservative if it persists with its policy. We are all politicians, so this issue becomes partisan. However, even those parts of the electorate that are otherwise keen to save public money, by reducing council tax and so on, make an exception here: they feel that it is valuable to have some local centres of expertise, because any one of us or our loved ones could fall victim to Alzheimer's or dementia and so need such a centre. If we do not, and if we spend a bit of council tax on it but find that we do not need it, we should count our blessings.

Jeremy Wright: I will not, of course, engage with the hon. Gentleman on the details of what is happening in Nottinghamshire, which I do not know anything about. However, I assume from what he says that his case is not that there are not excellent examples of good quality dementia care in the private sector.

Dr. Palmer: That is correct. I also would not say that every public sector home is a model in its treatment of Alzheimer’s. I am basically saying that it is important that each area has available centres of excellence, and that should be a responsibility of local councils. We can debate how they can achieve that, although to some extent that is a secondary matter, but they should not pursue policies that result in the absence of such specialist knowledge.

The second general issue is the conflict between localism and national strategy. We tend to tiptoe around this matter; we all try to have it both ways. We are all in favour of localism and against postcode lotteries, but they are the same thing, are they not? If we have local decision making, we will get variations—one local authority will decide one thing, and another will decide something else, and for the sufferer, that will mean a postcode lottery. If they happen to live in an area where their condition—this does not apply just to Alzheimer’s—is given greater priority, they are in luck. On the other hand, if we try to Govern it all from the centre, the sense of local responsibility and local decision making is lost. There is a tension there that we have to be honest about, and I shall come back to that in a moment.
Mr. Stephen O’Brien: The hon. Gentleman has made an important point with which we are all wrestling: how one can put portability into effect, on the ground, so that if one had to move between areas, there would not be a postcode lottery—as he put it—in the delivery of services. I hope that he has something to say—he might have been coming to this—about how a national standard assessment of care need might look. The Government have yet to answer that important question.

Dr. Palmer: I agree with the hon. Gentleman; that is an important point, although, to be honest, I did not include it in my speech notes. However, I am glad that he has raised it, because it will become increasingly important. Often, somebody with difficulties will move home to be closer to relatives able to give support. The continuity of support then is extremely critical.

What should we be trying to do next? First, I would like to come back to my response to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Jeremy Wright). We need to develop and protect centres of expertise in each area. We can debate how large the area should be. In 2006, we had up to 131 memory centres—we probably have a few more by now—in England alone, I believe. That is a reasonable number. We can debate just how dense the network needs to be, but basically it ought to be possible for people in each area to have access to expertise. If, at some point, someone needs to go into a home, it should not be so far away that those who have cared for them until then can barely visit and so supply the support.

I believe that this is one policy area in which it is appropriate to have a national target, if I may use the dreaded word. It is appropriate that the Government place an obligation on each county council to ensure that within the county there is at least one centre of expertise for Alzheimer’s and dementia. If we do not do that, we will see what is happening in Nottinghamshire—under the pressure of costs and other considerations, councils will prioritise other matters. Centres of excellence are so important at the moment, partly because the limited support that we can give to those with dementia is an expert skill. The POST report states that the memory services that have been introduced have been shown to be “clinically and cost effective”. It is one of the rare and precious elements in our approach where we have something that actually works, and unless we can apply it locally, people locally will miss out. It is appropriate, therefore, regardless of one’s ideology in other areas, to say that the Government should require each county council to provide and maintain one such centre of excellence.

If, and when, adequate or good treatment is developed for dementia—the pharmaceutical industry is making enormous efforts, because obviously it has an interest in finding a treatment—those centres will be all the more important. What a tragedy it would be were we suddenly to find that we had a treatment but had thrown away the infrastructure to deliver it and that in some counties we no longer had that expertise. Obviously we could build it up again, but in the short term we would miss out, and that would be a genuine tragedy for the people involved.

Jeremy Wright: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way again. I wonder whether he agrees that the likelihood is that the treatment that he is talking about will not be deployed through the network that he is describing unless we spend more money on research. Would he like to comment on that?

Dr. Palmer: Yes, we are part of the world community on that. It is entirely appropriate that Britain should play as full a part in research as it can. It might be that the important breakthrough will be made somewhere else and that we will develop it—that is the way things happen in medical research. Private research is intensive, because the first company to develop a treatment will do well out of it, and frankly I would not begrudge any company that success, because it would be doing a lot for humanity. I therefore accept the hon. Gentleman’s point, but we should not create illusions either. Even if we can treat such conditions, it might be that as people live longer and longer, the prospect of our mental capacity on average gradually declining will inevitably be an invisible rider beside us. It might be that although we can alleviate the problem, we will never completely remove it.

Mr. Swire: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way to me a second time. Does he agree that, alongside the advances in medical science, which we all hope will accelerate, part of the Government’s national dementia strategy that deals with the training, the education and often the re-education of GPs in the early diagnosis of dementia in its first stages is also critical?

Dr. Palmer: Yes, and I can see that the hon. Gentleman’s brain is in an excellent state, because he has anticipated what I was about to say. My next point was that we need to educate GPs, the public and non-specialist health and social care staff to recognise and respond to the signs of early onset, and to distinguish accurately between normal absent-mindedness, which is not totally unknown even in this place, and the clinical symptoms of dementia. I see that both ways in my constituency work: I see people who are convinced that their partners have Alzheimer’s when they perhaps do not and people who are shutting their eyes to it. Because we know that early recognition combined with memory services can delay the need to enter a care home, it is a cost-effective approach, which is important to the individuals affected.

As an immediate measure, we need to help people to stay at home while they can, if they want to, with support for their carers—this relates to the point that the hon. Member for East Devon (Mr. Swire) made earlier. For most sufferers, there is a trade-off between the risks of being at home in a less guarded environment than a closed mental illness institution and the benefits of being in a familiar environment that they have cherished for many years, surrounded by people they know—and hopefully love—and of drawing comfort from that environment when their faculties diminish. We should not take away that choice.

We are very risk-averse as a society. If somebody with dementia who lives at home has an accident—because they wandered on to the streets, got lost and were knocked down by a car, for instance—there are always questions asked. People ask, “Where were social services?” “Where were social services?” “Where were the relatives doing?” However, there are risks in every part of life, including being in a closed ward. There are risks to people’s mental state and, basically, their happiness,
so we should not take away people’s capability to make rational decisions just because their memory is failing. In many cases it might be possible to have a serious discussion about that. The Personal Care at Home Bill is an important contribution to that, because if free personal care is available at home in the most critical cases, in many instances it will tip the balance between early admission and admission a little later. That will not only help to reduce costs, but be beneficial for the individual concerned.

Finally, what is our long-term vision? In the long term, we hope to see effective treatment. Perhaps we will never have a complete cure for mental decline, as I have said, but we should aim for a continuous spectrum, which starts at the point at which the first symptoms are recognised and accepted as a normal part of life—as one of the things that can happen when one gets older—in order to ensure that initially relatives, friends and carers are brought to accept what is happening as something natural that they can deal with; that if and when the symptoms start to get worse, there is additional care support from the local authority of the kind envisaged in the Personal Care at Home Bill; that if that person’s condition continues to deteriorate, we have day care facilities and support for carers, so that that period is less traumatic than it often is today; and, if that individual eventually needs to go into a care home, that the home still treats him or her with the respect and dignity that he or she deserves.

My father said in his final years that he had never been happier. I would like to think that in future that would be true for the majority of sufferers.

2.47 pm

David Tredinnick: I see the hon. Gentleman nodding his head. This is an important debate at an important time. I do not want to speak for very long, but I would like to cover some of the problems and talk about Leicestershire and some of the possible solutions, because we have heard about aspects of care, but not a lot about the solutions for people who have the condition. I therefore hope that I can add something.

I echo the earlier remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Robert Key), who talked about amnesia, not dementia. The Government’s attitude to this subject has something in common with their attitude to energy, in that they appeared to suffer from amnesia in their policy on both dementia and energy for about the same length of time. For about 11 years, we did not have an energy strategy, and we certainly did not have a dementia strategy. It is amazing that the Government could have been in power for so long and then, as it were, stumbled across the issue so late in their tenure of office, which many of us suspect is almost over. The Minister of State is shaking his head, so we had better not go down that route, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Indeed, I can see you shaking your head, too. We have had various statistics—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Michael Lord): Order. I was shaking my head about not going down that route, not about other matters.

David Tredinnick: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The figures show that nationally there are about 700,000 people with dementia, but the number will double and rise to about 1.5 million. In Leicestershire, the county I represent, the figures for 2008 were about 8,000, and by 2025 it is reckoned the number will be 14,000. In my constituency, the Hinckley and Bosworth figures are 1,231 for 2008, rising to 2,114. There is no doubt about the scale of the problem. It is not surprising given that we have an ageing population.

One of the key problems is the mismatch between the availability of funds and those who are required to supply the services. I hope to develop that point. Conservative-controlled Leicestershire county council has done a very good job in that respect, but it has not been provided with the funding that would have been reasonable to supply the services it wants to offer.

I shall not try to cover everything. When I first came into the House, I remember a senior Member telling me—about somebody else’s speech—that there was too much pudding in it. Three points in a speech is probably a good thing, particularly when other Members want to speak. My last point is about the negative impact of anti-psychotic drugs. The issue was also raised by the Secretary of State and commented on by the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Dr. Palmer), the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Greg Mulholland), who is no longer in the Chamber, and others.

Anti-psychotic drugs can cause strokes and they can cause elderly people to fall. I very much welcome Professor Sube Banerjee’s review of anti-psychotic drugs. The Minister may say something about it later on, as he was prompted to do so earlier. It is a major issue and I hope to suggest some other products that might help in such cases, although I have to be careful as I may be corrected by the doctor on the Labour Benches.
I was intending to say that not enough planning had been done. However, I was pleased to hear about the forthcoming White Paper, which I think will be helpful. Leicestershire county council is a top-performing authority, with an established home assessment and reablement team helping older people to stay independent, living in their own homes for longer and reducing the numbers going into residential care. I speak for the county when I say that it takes great pride in that. It also has a specialist dementia team to help keep people independent with the use of various forms of assisted technology. Leicestershire county council has achieved that despite its low Government grant. As a county, we are right at the bottom of the pile.

Despite various reviews during the tenure of the Labour Government, Leicestershire’s funding is right at the bottom. We come back to the shire county versus inner city arguments. There are many different formulae but we do not get a lot of money. The grant covers only 28 per cent. of our social care budget. Nationally, there is a £6 billion shortage in social care, so it is regrettable that in general the Government have offloaded a lot of financial responsibilities to counties. No doubt, that is part of the reason why there are pressures in Nottinghamshire. I shall not go down the route of discussing the policy of privatising some of the homes there, mentioned by the hon. Member for Broxtowe. Not all privatisation is bad. Sometimes we can achieve efficiencies. In the past, we have seen private organisations develop ideas that may not have come about in the public sector.

Dr. Palmer: On a point of information, Nottinghamshire accepts that it has done well from the local government settlement. The council wants to freeze council tax, which is a political issue. Incidentally, I am a doctor of mathematics so the hon. Gentleman should not ask me to operate on him.

David Tredinnick: In that case, I am not sure whether I insulted the hon. Gentleman or paid him a compliment. The hon. Gentleman spoke about his county. My recollection is that Nottinghamshire was not always under Conservative control, although I may be wrong. Perhaps the incoming Conservative administration is trying to put right the complete shambles that existed previously. I shall give way to him if he wants to comment on that, but he seems happy to retain his seat. I am not surprised—

David Tredinnick: Perhaps amnesia got to me in that case, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I approve of the policy of free personal care for the critical band, but where will the money come from? It has to be provided by local authorities so it is just another addition. I am happy to stand corrected, but—

Phil Hope: The hon. Gentleman said he would stand corrected, so I want to correct him. The Personal Care at Home Bill is costed at £670 million; £420 million of that will come from the Government and from NHS budgets.

David Tredinnick: I thought the Minister might have come up with a different figure, which is the difference the measure will not provide. That still has to be paid by local authorities.

Phil Hope: I am happy to give the hon. Gentleman that figure, too. The sums are not that difficult. It does not take a doctor of mathematics to do them: £670 million minus £420 million gives £250 million. Local authorities can find that sum through efficiency savings in their delivery of care services for people in the most need, not least by reducing the numbers who have to go into residential care, because they will be supporting people living in their own homes, which is where they want to be.

David Tredinnick: Although I applaud the fact that the Government have made money available, the serious point is that there is a shortfall nevertheless. A feature of the Labour Government is that they have tended to offload central Government costs to local authorities, which has caused problems for those authorities.

Other Members mentioned the lack of memory clinics—a broken pledge. I am glad to hear that action will be taken on memory clinics. My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Mr. Leigh), the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, referred to some of the issues raised by officials his Committee had interrogated. He might have added that the National Audit Office has said that “vast amounts of money have been wasted and there were doubts over whether funding would be found to improve services.”

Conservative-controlled Leicestershire county council has invested local tax payer’s money to provide services to improve social care, which has not all been matched by central Government, which is regrettable. The Leicestershire budget, raised through council tax, contributes 82 per cent. of the total cost of adult social care, even before implementation of the measures in the Personal Care at Home Bill.

Phil Hope: I may be mistaken and the hon. Gentleman may be able to correct me, but I understand that Leicestershire announced it would be making one in 10 of its work force redundant. Does he really think that will help people with care needs?

David Tredinnick: We come back to the argument about delivery of service—who does it and whether it is necessary. We have heard that in Nottinghamshire some of the services are to be outsourced. I had better not go down the route of discussing the numbers in employment in Leicestershire, as I have not been briefed in this
speech to make those remarks, but I take on board what the hon. Gentleman said. Leicestershire county council has provided services for older people with mental issues. Funding workshops have been set up recently for carers and users.

I can confirm what other hon. Members have said about the money from the national dementia strategy that was sent to primary care trusts. It is certainly the case in Leicestershire that, because that money was not ring-fenced, it has been spent on other things. PCTs were told that the money for the strategy was not included in their baseline figure—to use the correct terminology—and that is regrettable.

I think that the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West mentioned statistics and the lack of information. These are critical issues. Solutions have been proposed in the Personal Care at Home Bill, and we have heard about plans for improvements for carers, but we have not heard a lot about what can be done to extend the period in a person's life before dementia gets a grip, when they are not forgetful. There are certain measures that could be taken—they are not necessarily seen as mainstream medicine—and I want to focus on three of them.

The first, which has not been mentioned, is the lack of water. There is a serious problem with getting elderly people to drink enough water. I have raised this matter in the House before, over the years. I am very pleased to see that the Minister has grasped the jug and is pouring himself yet another glass of water. I did not know that I had such powers of persuasion, or that I could get such an instant response from a Minister. The fact is that many elderly people do not drink enough water, although they might drink other things. This creates problems for the body. Simple strategies were applied in studies carried out in India, and it was found that people's susceptibility to illness diminished in direct correlation to the amount of water they consumed.

The second factor is diet, and particularly the importance of antioxidants and eating fresh fruit. Some foods are specifically effective in treating these problems, one of which is blueberries. I have been making this case for years, not only for blueberries. I can see the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (John Mann) smiling, but this is true. Studies have shown that some fruits are effective in this regard. We do not have enough information, however, and I want to appeal for more information on diet and on certain foods.

Thirdly, we should also look at some of the herbs that are effective in treating this problem. I am indebted to the Alzheimer's Society for providing me with a briefing on this subject. Many people have benefited not only from using antioxidants and improving their general nutrition but from using herbs prescribed by professional herbalists. There is a problem, however, because the Minister's Department has still not produced its proposals for the regulation of herbal medicine and acupuncture. They have been sitting in the Department for far too long, and it would be helpful if he could give me a date when they are to be published. It would be a great tragedy if they were not published before, shall we say, early May, or even April. The Minister and his Department would really be funkimg it if they left this for the incoming Government. They should at least tell us what they think, and come up with some kind of policy statement.

I shall not go into details about the various plants used in herbal medicine. Related to that, however, is Chinese acupuncture, which has also been found to be very effective in this regard. I am reflecting the views of the Alzheimer's Society on this. Whatever I happen to believe, the society believes that there is evidence of the effectiveness of acupuncture. My own knowledge of the subject suggests that it is perfectly possible to achieve results by adjusting meridians.

Studies have been carried out in Japan on the effectiveness of certain herbs. A product known as kanpo—a mixture of a Chinese herb called choto-san with other substances, including about 11 medicinal plants—has been the subject of investigation. A research study found an improvement in patients with vascular dementia who took that particular combination of herbs over 12 weeks, and decided that further research on the preparation seemed warranted. I should like to make a secondary point on the general regulation of herbs. The regulation process is considering individual herbs rather than the combinations, yet many doctors prescribe a combination of herbs. The Minister should take that into consideration.

In addition to the range of herbal medicines and products available, aromatherapy has also been helpful in treating patients using massage techniques and certain oils. Again, this should be looked at with great care. Other methods include music therapy: playing certain kinds of music can be helpful for people with this condition.

I appeal to the Minister to have an open mind on this. He should think about these alternatives, because they are effective, and they are supported by the Alzheimer's Society. I also look forward to his announcing the date for the publication of the proposals for the regulation of acupuncture and herbal medicine, when he winds up the debate.

3.7 pm

John Mann (Bassetlaw) (Lab): We have heard the policy of the Opposition Front Bench. The hon. Member for Bosworth (David Tredinnick) used the analogy of pudding in relation to certain speeches. The Opposition's policy seems a bit like a jelly: it can take any shape, it can be colourless, and it can be moulded in any way they want. We can never be quite sure what is there. Having heard their attempts at policy, I think it would be helpful if they were to inform the House about what action they would take.

It is appropriate to judge political decisions on changes to systems and laws, and on priorities relating to the allocation of resources, according to experience and to what people actually do. I cite as my example the county council of Nottinghamshire. Since June, it has been Conservative-run. Not only that, but three of the county councillors wish to become Members of this House at the next election. Nottinghamshire county council therefore represents a microcosm of what Conservative policy on dementia care would be, because we can see what is happening in that county and my own constituency now, before the election.

The Conservative administration in Nottinghamshire, led by the appropriately named Councillor Cutts and backed by the non-executive cabinet members—all of whom, coincidentally, happen to be prospective parliamentary candidates for the Conservative party—have
put forward policies on dementia care, and those policies involve cuts. They wish to privatise residential care. In my area, that involves James Hince Court, a specialist residential dementia care centre in Carlton in Lindrick. It is an excellent centre. It could do with a little more refurbishment, but the quality of care, the professionalism of the staff and the responsiveness to the families are all superb. It has been externally validated as being superb, and my observation and that of the families involved is that it is superb.

A second example is Westwood. It is a very new facility in my constituency, which deals not exclusively but partially with dementia care. The Tory administration wishes to sell it off to the private sector. A third example is St. Michael’s View. I was there last Friday at a meeting of residents—some suffering from the early stages of dementia and some the later stages—and they and their families are unanimous that that excellent facility should remain in the public sector. Why do they oppose the plans of that Tory administration—those would-be sitters on Conservative Benches? The reason is simple: they have experienced the private sector. Most of them moved from the private sector into the public sector. Strangely, private sector care homes have a lot of vacancies; one in my constituency has 31 vacancies. However, there are waiting lists, including of people I know, to go into the three excellent public sector centres, as there are for the other ones in Nottinghamshire. Having sampled, tried, felt, known and paid the private sector, people prefer to go into the public sector.

The second reason why people prefer public sector homes to private sector ones is that the private sector does not provide a day care facility, where people come in, have a cup of tea and use the expert provision of the staff, but do not stay overnight or pay anything significant towards the overheads. For the private sector, that does not pay. Some of our memory clinics, as they are called, are in public sector residential care centres, where properly trained, expert staff also provide specialist dementia care in a day care facility. That is why families like those centres and are adamantly against Tory privatisations, or, if they cannot be privatised, closures that will undoubtedly follow from their spending plans.

What is the response to a major public campaign led by families against such absurd privatisations and day care cuts? Those Tories—would-be Tory MPs and others—propose in their budgets to increase significantly, by about 60 or 70 per cent., the cost of going to day care. They want to cut meals on wheels in the same way—by increasing prices. As has been outlined, they want to cut many other services relevant to dementia care, such as 20 specialist occupational therapist posts. Those are vital jobs that support the elderly and those with dementia. That is the Tories in action. That is what we will see should there be a Tory Administration nationally.

What is the Tories’ response to the public outrage? They say that they will suspend the privatisation for one year. Is it possible that that extends over the election on those decisions. I have given the view of the families, but let me give the public view. I sampled that a week ago, when I rang 5,500 of my constituents on an official opinion poll, under market rules to ensure that it was not biased. It gave them a choice: did they agree with the privatisation of care homes? Ninety-eight per cent. were against such privatisation. That is what the Conservative party will bring if it ever gets into power. It dares to suggest that it stands for those with dementia, yet fails to condemn the Tory county council in Nottinghamshire and its disgraceful attack on elderly people, that vulnerable part of society, and their families. That is an insult to our intelligence. My community in Nottinghamshire is fighting back to put the Tories where they should be, and to beat them on those decisions.

3.18 pm

Mr. Hugo Swire (East Devon) (Con): Last year, Mr. Paul Cann, the director of policy and external relations for Help the Aged, described dementia as “fast becoming the hidden epidemic of the 21st century”.

Mr. John Mann
The more debates that we have in this place on the matter, either in Government time, or, as in the case of this afternoon, in Opposition time, the better. The subject needs to be aired and taken extremely seriously and should, on the whole, be non-partisan and non-political, difficult though that is to believe at times.

One does not need the mathematical skills that I attribute to the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Dr. Palmer) to work out that, looking at isolated demographics, the problem is set to grow rather than recede. In my constituency, 29.5 per cent. of the population is retired, against a national average for the rest of England of 17.3 per cent. In my constituency, I have the retirement destinations, as they are called, of Budleigh Salterton, Sidmouth, Exmouth and so on, so the pressures on local services are huge and set to worsen.

The Government’s national dementia strategy, which is a year old, is, of course, a good thing. I welcome it, although it is belated. It contains important elements that need to be expanded. In the limited time available to me, I shall try not to go over ground covered in this comprehensive debate, but I say, again, that early diagnosis is crucial in the treatment of dementia. The more these memory centres—or clinics, as some hon. Members have erroneously called them—can be rolled out across the country, so much the better. The savings that an early diagnosis can make, in terms of both human suffering and the economy, are huge and should not be underestimated. We have, again, touched on better training for GPs. Some GPs are crying out to be retrained or trained in spotting the early signs of dementia, and they should be assisted in that without delay.

I wish briefly to discuss research into dementia. The hon. Member for Broxtowe said that we are in a global research environment and that the Government should, on the whole, be non-partisan and non-political, difficult though that is to believe at times.

I wish to discuss a subject that we have not spent enough time on: objective 7 of the Government’s national dementia strategy, which is on “Implementing the Carers’ Strategy”. It states:

“Family carers are the most important resource available for people with dementia. Active work is needed to ensure that the provisions of the Carers’ Strategy are available for carers of people with dementia. Carers have a right to an assessment of their needs and can be supported through an agreed plan to support the important role they play in the care of the person with dementia. This will include good-quality, personalised breaks. Action should also be taken to strengthen support for children who are in caring roles, ensuring that their particular needs as children are protected.”

The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mrs. Moon), who is not in her place, talked about the spectrum of dementia. The hon. Member for Broxtowe, in a personalised contribution, talked about the good humour that the sufferer often has. What unites the carers is that they are often the ones who suffer most in all this. An estimated 600,000 people in the UK are acting as the primary carers for people with dementia. Two thirds of people with dementia live in their own home and one third live in a care home, thus the majority of people with dementia are probably being cared for either by professional carers or by members of their own family. It is estimated that the saving to the taxpayer is about £57 billion a year, but with that often comes a cost to the carers. Evidence has been found of carers dipping into their savings that they have put aside to help care for the person with dementia, which reduces what they have to look after themselves in later life.

It has also been found that 65 per cent. of people with a caring responsibility do not identify themselves as a carer in the first year of care—such people are often referred to as the “hidden carers”. It is not just that category of people who are hidden carers. An awful lot of people who still believe in the family and look after their partner—their husband or wife—would never dream of regarding themselves as carers. Such people regard themselves as being a husband and wife and it being part of their duty to look after their lifetime partner. They also deserve our support.

Interestingly, and sadly, about one in five of the nation’s 4.4 million careers of working age have to give up their employment in order to care. Many carers of people with dementia are older people who have physical frailty and health conditions of their own. At a dementia seminar in Exmouth earlier this year, I met one lady—she was not complaining and did not necessarily want more help from the state—who has looked after her husband for 20 or 30 years, which is a life sentence. She does not regret it in any way, but she is becoming increasingly frail and in need of support. Such people are often the unsung heroes and heroines of this tragic tale.

Nearly 45 per cent. of working age carers say that they would like to work, but 38 per cent. say that they cannot work unless the right care services are in place for them. Between 40 and 50 per cent. of working carers say that a lack of flexibility and sensitivity in the delivery of services hampers them in obtaining support.

I touched on the question of child carers earlier, and it is incumbent on us to take that issue seriously. Children who end up as carers often get overlooked, but their own education and passage into adulthood gets compromised in some way. I have also alluded to Admiral...
nurses, who are fantastic. We need more of them, as they do a magnificent job, but I shall not dwell on that point.

I wish also to discuss respite care, which has been mentioned again today. Carers of people with dementia, probably more than any other category, need respite, if only to take some time off to go for a walk with the dog, to have their nails done or to go to the hairdresser. They just need to have a little bit of the life that they once had back, as that will, in turn, make them better carers. However, too often, we have seen day centres up and down the country close. The other day, I went round Stowford lodge in Sidmouth, in my constituency, which is used as a day care centre by people with dementia. Some of its bedrooms were being used as storerooms, but that is criminal. Surely this country should have a system in place whereby any beds in a purpose-built care centre should be available for overnight respite. It is incumbent on all political parties—this is a challenge for not only the current Government, but any future Government—to find a way to finance this properly in order to care for these extraordinarily vulnerable people.

Charges hit people with dementia hardest for four reasons: care is more expensive in care homes and two thirds of people in them have dementia; more dementia care comes from social services, and that is means-tested; people can need care for extended periods; and end-of-life care for dementia often takes place in a care home, rather than in a hospice or hospital. It is worth making the point that if somebody with cancer needs chemotherapy or surgery, or if someone with heart disease needs a heart bypass, that is provided free on the NHS, but if someone has a disease of the brain that causes dementia, their care is often provided by the local authority and is means-tested.

I do not want to revisit the case of my constituent, Mr. Mejor, on which the Minister accused me of being ignorant.

Phil Hope: The hon. Gentleman has to be very clear. I am interested to hear what he will say about this, as he intervened earlier on other colleagues. It is quite clear that, if a couple are in their own home and one of them goes into residential care, the home is disregarded when it comes to assessing the means of that couple, because somebody is still living in the home. It is only when the second person goes into residential care—if they both have that misfortune—that the home will be assessed. A deferred payment scheme should operate, and I hope that such a scheme operates in his area, which would mean that that home would not have to be sold until neither of the couple remain alive. Those are two different points, one of which was made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in response to an earlier intervention. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that knowing that fact—in other words, not being ignorant of it—might help him to represent his constituent’s case.

Mr. Swire: I am most grateful to the Minister. My constituent, and everybody in East Devon, will be most interested to hear the Minister virtually make a commitment that there is no way that the Mejors can lose their home in this sorry episode. That is a magnificent thing, if that is what he is announcing this afternoon. The reality is that the case will be heard again at the beginning of February. I hope that Mr. Mejor will receive a continuing means assessment, because he needs it, as far as I am concerned. He has at home an elderly parent and a daughter who has had to sell her home in order to care for her elderly parents. However, the truth is that if his case fails, it will be up to local social services to assess his needs, at which point charges towards the £800-a-week place in the Linksway nursing home can be re-examined and reassessed. That is, I think, the threat.

The Government are leaving this country in a sorry economic state, but I think, more than anything else, people want honesty now from their politicians. Surely, in all honesty, we need to acknowledge the problems that we have with the demographics, with the rise in people’s ages and with the problems that those changes present with mental disease. Surely, at the end of the day, whatever the cost, it is our duty as legislators to protect those who are most vulnerable in society—those who are coming to the end of their lives and those who have, so often, selflessly cared for them.

3.31 pm

Jeremy Wright (Rugby and Kenilworth) (Con): I begin by joining the tributes that have been paid to Neil Hunt, the departing chief executive of the Alzheimer’s Society. He has done a great deal, as most people involved in this issue know, to drive the subject up the political agenda to where it rightly deserves to be.

I also regret the absence from this debate of David Taylor. I know that he would have been here to contribute, as he always did on these issues. He was a well-respected and assiduous member of the all-party group that I chair, and he will be missed in this debate, as he will be in many others.

The numbers that we discuss whenever we talk about dementia are staggering. Hundreds of thousands are affected now, millions will be affected in the future and billions are being spent on the treatment and management of dementia at the moment; it is possible to become immune to those numbers and to forget the scale of the challenge that we face. However, some numbers still have the capacity to shock. The review of anti-psychotic medication undertaken by Professor Sube Banerjee recently reported to the Government and is, I think, one document that contains such figures. To know, as we stated in the all-party group’s report on this subject some time back, that there is a substantial degree of over-prescription of anti-psychotics among people with dementia is one thing, but to hear from Professor Banerjee that he thinks that some 140,000 people are wrongly on those drugs—the deleterious effects of which have already been discussed in the debate—and that, worse yet, an additional 1,800 deaths a year result from that excessive prescription, as do 1,600 or so strokes and the like, truly, in my view, puts this scandal into its proper context and underlines the need for action.

I, like others, welcome the appointment of a national clinical director in dementia. That is a positive move forward, and I hope that the Minister will confirm that one of that clinical director’s first priorities in office will be to address this serious issue. One suggestion from Professor Banerjee to deal with the trouble caused by the over-prescription of anti-psychotics is to address the fundamental issue of training. The Minister knows,
not least from the other report produced by my all-party group, how strongly I feel about that subject and how central it is to the issues of dementia care in general. I shall not dwell on it now—I do not have time—but I simply repeat a request that I have made to him in the past, which is that he should keep it very much at the forefront of his mind, that we should set up substantive mechanisms to ensure that qualifications are available for those in the caring profession, that career paths should be set out in specialist dementia care and that everybody who has contact with those with dementia, which includes a large number of people across a variety of fields, has some understanding of the condition that is being dealt with.

I concede that training features as part of the national dementia strategy. I repeat my welcome for the strategy, as it is a very positive move forward and contains a great deal that needs to be done. The Secretary of State was right to say that we should not expect everything to be done by now, less than a year into a five-year strategy. I accept that it will take time to complete, and the Government have been right to say repeatedly that dementia is a priority for them. It is a national and a Government priority, but in this debate we should ask what that means. For example, does that mean that more money will be made available for researching a condition that has become a Government priority? As others have said, it is not apparent that that is what it means. The level of research has not increased at all, let alone dramatically. Greater priority should be given to dementia research; if it is not, we will not be able to address that widespread problem in a fundamental way or start to reduce the costs to the Exchequer that it incurs.

Does a Government priority on dementia mean that the Government will take action more quickly, or that they will radically change the operation of the relevant systems in the fields of health and social care? Does it mean that the Government will spend substantial amounts of new money specifically on this priority? I regret to say that I do not think that the evidence suggests that making dementia a Government priority means any of those three things, as I shall briefly explain.

First, have the Government been quick to set our their response to the challenge? Although I welcome the national dementia strategy, it was promised repeatedly—from August 2007 right up to its publication in February 2009. An implementation plan with any significant detail came only later still. I have said that the review of anti-psychotic drugs is welcome and important, but it was originally promised a long time before the strategy. The review was finally published on 12 November of last year, some seven months after the strategy was published and some two years after it was originally promised. Those delays do not have the hallmark of action that is a Government priority.

Secondly, has making dementia a Government priority initiated radical change in how this country’s health and social services are run? The context is important here. This is a Government who set considerable store by central control. They set targets that they consider important, and which those delivering services must meet.

Earlier, the Secretary of State said that the Opposition cannot have it both ways, but neither can he. If the Government believe that that is how the health service and social services should operate—with a great degree of central control exerted by means of the levers attributed to Whitehall—then they cannot simultaneously refuse to pull those levers and say that doing so is not their department.

Reference has been made to the NHS operating framework, the mechanism by which the Government communicate their priorities for the NHS. Due to the delays that I have described in bringing the dementia strategy forward in the first place, the Government missed the boat entirely in the operating frameworks for 2008-09 and 2009-10.

As we have discussed, those frameworks set out three tiers of priorities for the NHS—the things that all PCTs must do, national priorities for local delivery and priorities to be set locally. Dementia is not mentioned specifically or substantively in any of those tiers. Worse still, the 2009-10 framework published in December 2008—before the strategy was published, but after the substantive work that there must have been to enable the Government to know what they were seeking to achieve—stated that there would be no new national targets in the NHS until the next spending review. We are, of course, still waiting for that review. Even in the 2010-11 version of the framework that was published in 2009, there is only a brief reference to dementia, and that was about the improved outcomes and efficiencies to be gained by early diagnosis of the condition.

It is not true either that GPs, as part of the NHS, are being asked to do a great deal of specific work on dementia. The existing qualities and outcomes framework has only two criteria relating to dementia, and they are about maintaining a register and having 15-monthly reviews. I accept that those criteria are important, but they are not as fundamental as perhaps they should be. That is a good Government priority, and it is a substantial issue that should be addressed, but there is not much evidence of their doing so in the control mechanisms that they have put in place for the NHS. There is no evidence of a speedy response or of significant changes in the systems that deliver care.

What about the money? Have the Government given substantial extra resources to those who deliver care and said that those resources must be spent on the new priority of dementia care? Again, the answer is no. There is no ring-fencing, and there is no reporting requirement for PCTs to tell the Government whether, in fact, they have spent the £150 million allocated over two years across the country on dementia care. We must ask, in all common sense, how confident we can be that cash-strapped primary care trusts facing an array of different Government targets are necessarily going to spend all that money on dementia care. We have to wait for the Government’s audit to find out, but I am not immensely optimistic.

If the Government priority does not mean urgent action, if it does not mean substantially changing the systems, and if it does not mean substantially increasing the resources allocated specifically to the problem, what on earth does it mean? The danger is that the Government have set up tremendous expectations by rightly isolating dementia as a huge challenge that we must confront. If a Government priority is nothing more than a soundbite, and if a national dementia strategy is nothing more than a title, we run the risk of not only disappointing the hundreds of thousands of people with dementia
now, their carers and the people who love them, but disappointing millions more in future and failing to face up to the challenge that we must face up to in the next few years. If the Government, who are running out of time, are unwilling to take on the challenge and take the necessary action, I fear that it will fail to the next Government to do so.

3.41 pm

Mr. Shailesh Vara (North-West Cambridgeshire) (Con): It is a pleasure and privilege to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Jeremy Wright).

Let us be clear about one thing. When we talk about dementia, we are effectively talking about people who have given the best years of their life to contribute to society and to make sure that the rest of us are in a better position than they were when they were living active lives. It is only right and proper that we, in turn, should look after them and treat them with the dignity and respect that they deserve. Sadly, however, that is not always the case. In fact, analysis shows that Britain is in the bottom third of European countries for diagnosis and treatment of dementia—below almost all northern and western European nations.

There are a number of reasons for that, including the stigma attached to dementia. It is not right that in the 21st century people should still be afraid to admit that they have dementia or that they have relatives with dementia. I was pleased that the Secretary of State said that there is going to be a publicity campaign to highlight the issue of dementia, and to reduce the stigma attached to it. I very much hope that it will highlight the early warning signs—for example, confusion, forgetfulness, problems with speech and so on. If someone thinks that they have those symptoms, they might take advice, and go and see a doctor.

Early diagnosis is a good way of dealing with the problem, and we have heard a great deal about the need for specialist doctors and other medical professionals to provide that. At present, as we have heard, one in three people receive formal diagnosis at any time in their illness. That statistic has simply got to change. We need to ensure that far more people experiencing the onset of dementia know that that is the case, to allow them to plan for the future, when the illness will undoubtedly become worse. It means that families can become involved, especially in making plans for people who wish to receive care at home. It also enables people to talk to medical experts and social care services.

One of the crucial themes of the debate has been the repeated mention of support for families. May I add my appreciation of the superb work done by hundreds of thousands of family members throughout the country in supporting their loved ones who are suffering? In many cases the care is given at home, which eases the pressure of looking after somebody who is suffering, another, dementia touches the lives of half the population, age of 80, and predicted to rise further. One way or another, dementia touches the lives of half the population, close friends or family suffering the effects.

We have heard a great deal this afternoon about the importance of early diagnosis, early treatment and intervention, and proper and effective support for the person with dementia and so for those caring for people with dementia. Rehabilitation has not been mentioned much in the debate, but it is extremely important for those with dementia to be able to carry on and be as active as they can. All these aspects are vital, but what is needed is more than a strategy, although that would be welcome. Effective implementation is needed, which I do not believe the Government truly understand.
I was a bit disappointed that the Secretary of State took the debate at such an early stage into party politics—[Interruption.] No, it was he who mentioned it first. He confused priorities with targets, but we do not need targets; we need outcomes. We need implementation that will make a real difference to people's lives—implementation that improves the outcomes for people suffering from dementia.

I was also surprised and very disappointed, actually, to hear the truly scurrilous remarks and unfounded allegations about an influence on our policy making. There is no such influence, and no conflict or possibility of conflict; everything that we do is open and fully disclosed. The hon. Member for Bassetlaw (John Mann) is no longer in his seat, but before he throws stones across the House, he should more appropriately ask his own Government about the money that independent sector treatment centres received for not doing operations.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Jeremy Wright), who has made not only a valuable contribution today but a significant impact in raising awareness of dementia through the all-party group on dementia and his interventions in many other debates. The hon. Member for Broxtowe (Dr. Palmer) shared his very personal experiences, and his concluding remarks about a continuous spectrum of care and treatment were apt and particularly pertinent.

My hon. Friend the Member for East Devon (Mr. Swire) mentioned, in particular, the needs of carers and the hidden carers, including our child carers, who are often forgotten in the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for North-West Cambridgeshire (Mr. Vara), whose contribution was sadly cut so short, rightly spoke of the need to treat people with dignity and respect, and I pay tribute also to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mrs. Moon), who made a number of insightful points. My hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (David Tredinnick) raised a number of issues that are important to many of his constituents, not least his concerns about the funding shortfall for his local authority.

The National Audit Office report said that £8.2 billion has been spent inefficiently on dementia care every year. It found that although some steps had been taken and some improvements made, much more needed to be done to improve care and save literally millions of pounds. It found also that more than half of GPs surveyed had not had adequate training, and that one third remain unconfident about diagnosing dementia. Only one in five said that a senior clinician had taken the lead for improving dementia services in their hospital; and only 15 per cent. of psychiatrists said that their primary care trust had invested extra funds in the service.

Nurses, the report continued, received no information on the strategy; joined-up health and social care working is patchy; people who are admitted to hospital increasingly have longer stays and end up in residential care prematurely; only two strategic health authorities are actively working with the care home sector; there has been no improvement in GP knowledge and awareness in the past five years; dementia is not included in the core requirements for nursing degrees; it is not a priority in the 2010-11 operating framework; and it is not part of a national set of priorities against which the performance of organisations has been measured.

The fact that literally billions of pounds is spent inefficiently is truly appalling, and never has there been a greater need to ensure that all money is spent effectively and efficiently, and that above all else it is directed to and centred on the people who need the care. In the meantime, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Greg Mulholland) pointed out—

**Rob Marris**: Friend?

**Anne Milton**: The hon. Member, perhaps I should have said. The savings made from families, friends and charities, who deliver probably the majority of care, are huge, and I pay tribute to those charities and carers—the unsung heroes in our communities—without whom the care of people with dementia would surely suffer.

We are still not clear about where all the funding will come from. In their briefing for this debate, Age Concern and Help the Aged state that the Government's Green Paper is “worryingly vague…leaving many frail and disabled people anxious about the future of the benefit.”

As for the carers strategy, as my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. O'Brien) said, £50 million given out for respite care never reached the frontline. Despite many good words in the dementia strategy, we still do not know where three quarters of the £1.9 billion is coming from. We in this House need to know, older people and their carers need to know, and the public need to know. The National Audit Office pointed out that even in the costings that we have there are still no comprehensive data on what dementia services will cost. Perhaps the Minister will tell us when the updated impact assessment will be published.

We have heard a lot about drug treatment and anti-psychotics. More than a decade ago, the Royal College of Physicians warned that too many people in care were spending their final months and years in a state of suspended consciousness, occupying a half world and waiting for death to come. It highlighted the use of the liquid cosh to keep older people with challenging behaviour easy to manage by using high doses of anti-psychotic drugs. That was unacceptable 10 years ago, and it is unacceptable today. There is clearly a need for increased training and awareness of the use of these drugs and, perhaps more appropriately, their misuse.

Malnutrition has also been mentioned, and we have recently seen the appalling scandals with people literally starving, and tube feeding being used in care homes. In 2007, the *Nursing Times* reported that nine in 10 of the 4,000 nurses it polled said that they were forced to take on increasing administrative work. The nurse of the year resigned in anger at the time wasted on NHS bureaucracy, talking about layer upon layer of red tape. Without a doubt, there are training needs, but there is also, never more than now, a need to allow nurses to nurse and look after the people in their care. Nurses and care staff need training, but they also need time to look after people's nutrition.

Many older people with dementia end up spending much of their time in a combination of care settings—in acute hospitals, and in community hospitals where they still exist—being looked after by a wide variety of nursing staff and care staff, as well as in their own homes. Ferguson wrote:

This morning I would ask you to look with me at that no-man's land between Hospital and community. For most people Hospital care is not more than an episode, albeit an important
one, in a much longer chain of events and Hospital care must be viewed, not in isolation, but as an integral and closely integrated part of health and social care."

That was said in 1967, and those words hold good today. We need integrated health and social care delivered as part of a chain of events; no more inappropriate use of anti-psychotic drugs; time for nurses to nurse, freed from the burden of paperwork; proper training of staff at every level; proper education to end stigma; recognition of the need for the right levels of research, and how we deliver that; and a clear and unambiguous focus on outcomes. What defines us as a civil society is how we care for and look after older people in our communities.

This has, on the whole, been an excellent debate. Although at this time party politics boils to the surface, the solutions lie in a consensus and in having the right policies and strategies that deliver the very best outcomes and the very highest standards of care for some of the most vulnerable people in our society. I urge all Members in all parts of the House to cast aside party politics and support the motion.

3.59 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Health (Phil Hope): A few months ago, I visited a new memory clinic in south London that is an outstanding example of what our dementia strategy is all about. While I was there, I spoke to a married couple. The wife had been diagnosed with dementia and the husband was looking after her. They told me how they felt relief at finally getting the diagnosis and an explanation for what was happening to them, and said that since then, they had been more active and doing more things together than they had ever done. They were playing a fuller part in their community and seeing more of their family. The picture that they painted was of a couple living well with dementia, not dying of it. They had the knowledge and support that they needed to enjoy a good quality of life—life with a zing—and they were making the most of it.

Thinking about that couple, I am pleased that Members such as my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Dr. Palmer) and my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mrs. Moon) talked eloquently about those living with dementia. They painted a picture not of inexorable decline but of people being able to live well and die well with dementia when the time comes.

To find the right response to the challenges that exist, including the demographic challenges, we must start with the right attitude. We must open our arms to an ageing society, not wring our hands. We need to be positive about how we can help older people not simply to get by, but to flourish and live full lives in times of both health and illness.

The title of the Conservative motion, with its reference to "the elderly", sums up how far the Opposition have to go in their thinking. It is a label that conjures up a stereotype of decline and dependency. In contrast, we are optimistic about what older people can do and what we can do for older people. We see an ageing society as a challenge, but also as a massive opportunity. It comes down to four things. First, we need better general support for all older people, so that they can enjoy their lives to the full. Secondly, we need more targeted support, allowing older people to live well and to live longer in their own homes if they become frail or unwell. Thirdly, we need stronger health and care services so that older people are safe and well supported. Fourthly, we need a deeper cultural change across public services and society at large, so that people are viewed as an asset and treated with dignity and respect.

As a Government, we have made it a priority to provide additional support to every older person. Other Members have not mentioned this, but we must not forget the entitlement to a free national bus pass and free sight tests, or the winter fuel payments to help older people, particularly in the winter that we are experiencing. There is also extra help with pension tax credits. We are banning age discrimination in health and social care and building a society for all ages. We have appointed a new national clinical director not just for dementia but for older people, Professor David Oliver, a leader in older people's health care who knows how public services work. His influence will be critical in enabling us to ensure that all older people get the services that they need as individuals.

We have debated in the House free personal care for people living at home with the greatest needs. It must be a shared view throughout the House that older people must be supported to live well and live longer in their own homes. Our work on prevention has been hugely successful, and we have seen best practice on matters such as preventing older people from falling over and getting fractures and improving access to services such as affordable foot care. There has been new guidance on intermediate care and new support for services such as audiology and telecare. Research has now proved that if we put a pound into prevention, to provide people with help in their own homes, we save £1.20 in acute care by reducing the number of people going into it.

Our Personal Care at Home Bill will provide extra help to keep older people with the highest personal care needs in their own homes, and it has been widely accepted. It went through this House without opposition on both Second and Third Reading, and it is now to be debated in the House of Lords. It means that people who have had to run down their savings to be looked after in their own homes can now look forward to having the peace of mind of not worrying about whether they can pay for their care when they are at their highest level of need.

Today, we have debated the dementia strategy—a national strategy, with an implementation plan, headed by our new national clinical director for dementia, Professor Alistair Burns. Our regional deputy directors oversee the strategy’s delivery locally, and guidance for local commissioners has also been published, as our clinical director audits the services that are being delivered, including local memory clinics, memory centres and memory services.

Mr. Hoyle: I am pleased that my hon. Friend mentions memory clinics or surgeries. He will be pleased to know that the Tory candidate in Chorley is gathering signatures in support of the Labour Government’s proposals. What does he think about that?

Phil Hope: I am always pleased when Conservative candidates campaign for Labour policies, but I would tell voters in Chorley to get the real thing and vote Labour, which designed and will deliver the policy in the years to come.
It is a Government priority to deliver our national dementia strategy. It was interesting that when Conservative Front Benchers were challenged about their criticism of us for not giving it priority, their promise to make it a priority disappeared within almost two minutes of its being announced at the Dispatch Box. They will not make it a target or a vital sign. They will not put it in the national operating framework or mandate it locally; their words are exactly what we expected—pure fluff. They are all spin and no substance—no change there. What did they say on the airbrushed poster about support for the NHS? We have seen some airbrushing today.

**Mr. Andrew Lansley** (South Cambridgeshire) (Con): The Minister is currently responsible for the dementia strategy. I hope that we will be responsible in future.

For now, the question to him is why the operating framework, which was published last month, did not mention the dementia strategy in the national priorities for local delivery. It is not even mentioned in the vital signs. Even it were a matter simply of saying, “We’ve given the PCTs the money; it is a national priority to do something with it”, why did not the Minister get anything into the national priorities for local delivery?

**Phil Hope:** It is good to see the hon. Gentleman taking part in the debate; we thought he had decided to leave us for a while. Of course, the strategy is in the national operating framework—it was in last year’s and it is in this year’s. Given that he aspires to be Secretary of State for Health, he should answer a couple of questions. How many meetings has he had with Nurses for Reform, which would like to sanitise the NHS? We know that the Leader of the Opposition has held such meetings. Would the hon. Gentleman like to tell us whether he has done so? No, he will not stand up and reply. He has received donations—questions have been asked about that and a conflict of interest today. We have heard Conservative Members claiming that there is no conflict of interest. Is that true?

**Mr. Vara:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. When contributions were mentioned earlier in the debate, the Speaker was in the Chair and the Minister was in his place and listening. The Speaker specifically advised that such issues should be referred to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards and not brought up on the Floor of the House. Will you kindly advise me on what should be done when a Minister, who heard that, ignores the Speaker’s comments in the same debate?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Sylvia Heal):** I was aware of the earlier point of order and accusations. For the benefit of Members, I will repeat Mr. Speaker’s response because that is probably the most appropriate thing to do.

**Mr. Stephen O’Brien:** The Minister should withdraw his comments.

**Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.** I shall repeat the ruling that Mr. Speaker made earlier in the debate. He said: “I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his point of order. I will respond as follows, and I hope this is helpful to the House.

First, of course, responsibility for the registration of interests rests with individual Members. Secondly—I listened very carefully to what the hon. Gentleman said—if any Member has anxieties or is discontented about the conduct of another Member, the Member who is dissatisfied should complain to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. At this very tense and competitive time, I should hope that Members would not air these matters on the Floor of the House when they are matters not for the Chair, but for the Registrar of Members’ Interests and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards.”

I repeat that for the benefit of all Members.

**Phil Hope:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Other questions were raised about points of detail. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Jeremy Wright) spoke of the importance of research into dementia. I can assure him that with a £1 billion forecast spend in 2010-11, assuming this Government are returned to spend that cash, I have funded a research network, and we want better bids for research funding for the benefit of research.

**Rob Marris:** Speaking of the Leader of the Opposition, does my hon. Friend agree that a politician who puts out photographs that have been airbrushed to remove the wrinkles of age shows contempt for older people?

**Phil Hope:** Airbrushing a face is one thing, but airbrushing policies is another.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. Perhaps the Minister would like to respond to the debate rather than that intervention.

**Phil Hope:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I was talking about dementia research when I was intervened on, but I take your guidance.

On the use of anti-psychotic drugs, I can confirm to the House that over-prescription of such drugs is unacceptable. The review of those drugs that I commissioned was comprehensive in taking things forward. I can confirm that the national clinical director for dementia will oversee matters, ensuring that every PCT sets targets for reducing the use of those anti-psychotic drugs. We must improve the way we look after people with dementia.

It is vital that we treat people with dignity and respect. I am delighted to say that we have a social movement of more than 12,000 dignity champions taking forward—from the bottom up, not just from the top down—the needs and values of, and support for, older people. As we move towards a national care and support service, we have a clear choice. On the one hand, we could retreat to the traditional views of care, and the old models and assumptions about the elderly, and to lumping older people into the same old box, not treating them as individuals, offering no alternative but to go into a care home, and making no real effort to keep people independent; or we could choose a different future, in which age is valued and not dismissed—

**Mr. John Baron** (Billericay) (Con) claimed to move the closure (Standing Order No. 36).

*Question put forthwith.* That the Question be now put.

*Question agreed to.*

*Question put accordingly* (Standing Order No. 31(2)), That the original words stand part of the Question.
The House divided: Ayes 162, Noes 275.

**Division No. 63**

[4.12 pm]

**AYES**

Afriyie, Adam  
Ainsworth, Mr. Peter  
Amess, Mr. David  
Ancram, rh Mr. Michael  
Arbuthnot, rh Mr. James  
Atkinson, Mr. Peter  
Bacon, Mr. Richard  
Baldry, Tony  
Barker, Gregory  
Baron, Mr. John  
Bellingham, Mr. Henry  
Benyon, Mr. Richard  
Beresford, Sir Paul  
Binley, Mr. Brian  
Blunt, Mr. Crispin  
Bone, Mr. Peter  
Brady, Mr. Graham  
Brazier, Mr. Julian  
Browning, Angela  
Burns, Mr. Simon  
Burrowes, Mr. David  
Burt, Alistair  
Carswell, Mr. Douglas  
Cash, Mr. William  
Chope, Mr. Christopher  
Clark, Greg  
Clarke, rh Mr. Kenneth  
Cliffon-Brown, Mr. Geoffrey  
Conway, Derek  
Cox, Mr. Geoffrey  
Curry, rh Mr. David  
Davies, Philip  
Davis, rh David  
Djanogly, Mr. Jonathan  
Donaldson, rh Mr. Jeffrey M.  
Dorrell, rh Mr. Stephen  
Dorries, Nadine  
Duddridge, James  
Duncan, Alan  
Evennett, Mr. David  
Fabricant, Michael  
Fallon, Mr. Michael  
Field, Mr. Mark  
Fox, Dr. Liam  
Francois, Mr. Mark  
Gale, Mr. Roger  
Garnier, Mr. Edward  
Gauke, Mr. David  
Gibb, Mr. Nick  
Gillan, Mrs. Cheryl  
Goodman, Mr. Paul  
Goodwill, Mr. Robert  
Gove, Michael  
Gray, Mr. James  
Green, Damian  
Greening, Justine  
Grieve, Mr. Dominic  
Gummer, rh Mr. John  
Hague, rh Mr. William  
Hammond, Stephen  
Hand, Mr. Greg  
Harper, Mr. Mark  
Hayes, Mr. John  
Heathcoat-Amory, rh Mr. David  
Hendry, Charles  
Herbert, Nick  
Streeter, Mr. Gary  
Swayne, Mr. Desmond  
Swire, Mr. Hugo  
Syms, Mr. Robert  
Tapsell, Sir Peter  
Taylor, Mr. Ian  
Taylor, Dr. Richard  
Timpson, Mr. Edward  
Tredinnick, David  
Turner, Mr. Andrew  
Tyrie, Mr. Andrew  
Vaizey, Mr. Edward  
Vara, Mr. Shailesh  
Viggers, Sir Peter  
Villiers, Mrs. Theresa  
Walker, Mr. Charles  
Abbott, Ms Diane  
Ainsworth, rh Mr. Bob  
Allen, Mr. Graham  
Anderson, Mr. David  
Anderson, Janet  
Armstrong, rh Hilary  
Atkins, Charlotte  
Austin, Mr. Ian  
Bailey, Mr. Adrian  
Bain, Mr. William  
Baird, Vera  
Ball, Ed  
Banks, Gordon  
Barron, rh Mr. Kevin  
Battle, rh John  
Bayley, Hugh  
Beckett, rh Margaret  
Begg, Miss Anne  
Bentoon, Mr. Joe  
Berry, Roger  
Betts, Mr. Clive  
Blackman, Liz  
Blackman-Woods, Dr. Roberta  
Blears, rh Hazel  
Blunkett, rh Mr. David  
Borrow, Mr. David S.  
Bradshaw, rh Mr. Ben  
Brennan, Kevin  
Brown, Lyn  
Brown, rh Mr. Nicholas  
Brown, Mr. Russell  
Bryant, Chris  
Burden, Richard  
Burgon, Colin  
Burnham, rh Andy  
Butler, Ms Dawn  
Byers, rh Mr. Stephen  
Byrne, rh Mr. Liam  
Caborn, rh Mr. Richard  
Cairns, David  
Campbell, rh Mr. Alan  
Campbell, Mr. Ronnie  
Caton, Mr. Martin  
Challen, Colin  
Chapman, Ben  
Clapham, Mr. Michael  
Clark, Ms Katy  
Clark, Paul  
Clarke, rh Mr. Charles  
Clarke, rh Mr. Tom  
Clelland, Mr. David  
Clwyd, rh Ann  
Coaker, Mr. Vernon  
Wallace, Mr. Ben  
Waterson, Mr. Nigel  
Watkinson, Angela  
Whittingdale, Mr. John  
Widdecombe, rh Miss Ann  
Willis, Mr. Phil  
Wilson, Mr. Rob  
Winterton, Sir Nicholas  
Wright, Jeremy  
Yeo, Mr. Tim  
Young, rh Sir George  
Younger-Ross, Richard

**NOES**

Bill Wiggin  
Mr. Stephen Crabb and  
Coffey, Ann  
Connarty, Michael  
Cooper, rh Yvette  
Corbyn, Jeremy  
Cousins, Jim  
Crausby, Mr. David  
Creagh, Mary  
Cryer, Mrs. Ann  
Cummings, John  
Cunningham, Mr. Jim  
Cunningham, Tony  
David, Mr. Wayne  
Davidson, Mr. Ian  
Davies, Mr. Dai  
Davies, Mr. Quentin  
Dean, rh Ms Janet  
Dhanda, Mr. Parmjit  
Dobbin, Jim  
Donohoe, Mr. Brian H.  
Doran, Mr. Frank  
Dowd, Jim  
Drew, Mr. David  
Eagle, Angela  
Eagle, Maria  
Efford, Clive  
Ellman, Mrs. Louise  
Engel, Natascha  
Ennis, Jeff  
Farrelly, Paul  
Field, rh Mr. Frank  
Fitzpatrick, Jim  
Fiellio, Mr. Robert  
Flint, rh Caroline  
Foster, Michael Jabez  
(Hastings and Rye)

Francis, Dr. Hywel  
Gapes, Mike  
Gardiner, Barry  
George, rh Mr. Bruce  
Gerrard, Neil  
Gilroy, Linda  
Godsiff, Mr. Roger  
Goodman, Helen  
Griffith, Nia  
Griffiths, Nigel  
Grogan, Mr. John  
Hain, rh Mr. Peter  
Hall, Patrick  
Hamilton, Mr. Fabian  
Hanson, rh Mr. David  
Harman, rh Ms Harriet  
Harris, Mr. Tom  
Havard, Mr. Charles  
Havard, Mr. Dai  
Havard, Mr. Dai  
Havard, Mr. chai

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
Mr. Stephen Crabb and  
Bill Wiggin

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
Mr. Robert  
Mr. Stephen Crabb and  
Bill Wiggin
That this House wishes to see the quality of life improve for the 700,000 people in the UK with dementia; pays tribute to their families and carers and all those who campaign and fundraise for dementia charities; welcomes the Dementia Strategy launched in 2009 which contains a programme of work to transform services for those with dementia over five years and is backed by funding of £150 million over two years; notes that the Government will shortly publish the report of the Nutrition Action Plan Delivery Board; rejects the use of tube feeding on any grounds other than clinical need; welcomes the independent clinical review of anti-psychotic drugs which contains recommendations for the reduction in the use of these drugs for people with dementia; further welcomes the appointment of a National Clinical Director for dementia to promote better care and provide leadership for the implementation of the strategy; welcomes the creation of a Ministerial group to develop dementia research; recognises that the enactment of the Personal Care at Home Bill will help some 400,000 people with the highest need; supports the Government’s proposals to create the National Care Service, the first national, universal, entitlement-based system for care and support in England; and create the National Care Service, the first national, universal, with the highest need; supports the Government’s proposals to create the National Care Service, the first national, universal, entitlement-based system for care and support in England; and
dignity of those in care at the heart of services.

Acknowledges that the Government’s Dignity in Care campaign is entitlement-based system for care and support in England; and

That the proposed words be there added.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 31(2), That the proposed words be there added.

Question agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to.

Resolved.

That this House wishes to see the quality of life improve for the 700,000 people in the UK with dementia; pays tribute to their families and carers and all those who campaign and fundraise for dementia charities; welcomes the Dementia Strategy launched in 2009 which contains a programme of work to transform services for those with dementia over five years and is backed by funding of £150 million over two years; notes that the Government will shortly publish the report of the Nutrition Action Plan Delivery Board; rejects the use of tube feeding on any grounds other than clinical need; welcomes the independent clinical review of anti-psychotic drugs which contains recommendations for the reduction in the use of these drugs for people with dementia; further welcomes the appointment of a National Clinical Director for dementia to promote better care and provide leadership for the implementation of the strategy; welcomes the creation of a Ministerial group to develop dementia research; recognises that the enactment of the Personal Care at Home Bill will help some 400,000 people with the highest need; supports the Government’s proposals to create the National Care Service, the first national, universal, entitlement-based system for care and support in England; and acknowledges that the Government’s Dignity in Care campaign is working to engage local people in a social movement and to put dignity of those in care at the heart of services.
Out-of-Hours Care

Madam Deputy Speaker (Sylvia Heal): I inform the House that Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Before we start the debate, I should remind the House that an inquest is still taking place into the death of Mr. David Gray and the role in that death of Dr. Daniel Ubani. The House’s sub judice rule prevents us from debating the matters awaiting decision in the courts. There must, therefore, be no direct reference to that particular case this afternoon. When the inquest is over, there will be opportunities for Members to raise the issue and the lessons learned in the House. May I also advise the House that an eight-minute time limit will be imposed on Back-Bench contributions?

4.27 pm

Mark Simmonds (Boston and Skegness) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House supports family doctors as the bedrock of healthcare services in the NHS; recognises the need for high-quality out-of-hours care; believes in simpler, reliable access to urgent care and primary care on a 24 hours a day, seven days a week basis; regrets that the Government’s 2004 GP contract has not achieved this and has in many places divorced GPs from the service provided to their patients; is concerned that services are variable and the burden on accident and emergency services has increased as a result; is deeply concerned by failures in the out-of-hours service and the increasing dissatisfaction of patients; recognises the need for high-quality healthcare services in the NHS; and further calls on the Government to increase funding for out-of-hours care, the service is significantly underfunded, to ensure services are more accessible, accountable and responsive to local needs.

Hon. Members may think that some of the problems are recent, but there have been failings in the Government’s out-of-hours system since 2004. Only 9 per cent. of contracts were in place when the service began. Only 39 per cent. of PCTs ran a competitive tendering process to award contracts and, most concerning of all, failures in out-of-hours services have contributed to otherwise preventable deaths, including that of Penny Campbell in 2005. The House will recall that after that terrible tragedy the Prime Minister said that the NHS must “do better in the future.”

and that round the clock care had to improve, yet there is still no evidence of widespread improvement and in some areas the service is still very poor, as we have recently witnessed.

Additionally, at the inquest into Miss Campbell’s death the coroner found that lack of access to patient notes had contributed to her death. The then Health Minister—now the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport—asked all primary care trusts to review their arrangements for the transfer of information between clinicians, to ensure patient safety and continuity of care. It is my understanding that the review has still not been implemented and that many out-of-hours doctors cannot access patient records. It would be helpful if the Minister could confirm what has happened to the review.

There is growing concern about the quality of out-of-hours care in many parts of the country, as is demonstrated by the increased number of complaints about the out-of-hours service and the increasing dissatisfaction of patients. The Medical Defence Union recently calculated that there has been a 50 per cent. increase in complaints related to out-of-hours consultations, notified by its GP members.

However, the Minister may be pleased to hear that I am mildly encouraged by the fact that the groundswell of concern has led to some action. I understand that the Care Quality Commission is undertaking a review of out-of-hours services, focusing on areas where specific cases have been raised. Early evidence from the inquiry suggests that although primary care trusts monitor response times for out-of-hours services, they do not routinely monitor the quality of care provided or delivery against contractual requirements. It is clear that not all PCTs are aware of the level of service being provided, and in many cases contracts are not routinely monitored, reviewed or robustly assessed. Surely, there should be rigorous monitoring everywhere, looking at the quality of clinical decisions, the efficiency of call handling, and the adequacy of staffing and of doctors’ training, as well as the all-important patient outcomes.

In the vast majority of cases, the contracts were built to national frameworks and were not designed to fit existing services, such as minor injury units, nor to meet the specific needs of local populations. For example, in rural Lincolnshire, where my constituency is, the needs are very different from those in central Birmingham, where I was discussing this very issue with local GPs last week.

Not only does the local quality of out-of-hours service provision vary around the country, the cost varies significantly, too. Of course, it needs to be recognised that the provision of those services is likely to be more costly in rural areas, but there seems to be no correlation between cost and rurality and cost and quality, despite...
costs per patient varying threefold. In 2007, the Select Committee on Health concluded that if every PCT provided its service at the same cost as the most effective service with similar characteristics, £134 million could be saved, which could then be reinvested elsewhere in front-line patient care.

**Sir Alan Beith** (Berwick-upon-Tweed) (LD): The hon. Gentleman recognises that it often costs more to provide those services in rural areas. Does he share my experience? In my area, we have to obtain doctors from a location more than 60 miles away. That is the situation after midnight in north Northumberland and it is simply not acceptable.

**Mark Simmonds** (Westbury) (Con): Does my hon. Friend share my concern about the pressure that this problem can place on casualty departments? They are likely to receive default patients, as it were, who have failed to get adequate primary care services because of the difficulties with out-of-hours cover. They are also likely to have patients referred to them by locums who are not as familiar with local health care facilities as the local GPs. That is placing a great burden on many of our casualty departments, and they are facing a particular problem with elderly, vulnerable and chronically ill people, who really should not be sent to acute hospitals at all, if that can be avoided.

**Mark Simmonds**: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. He is absolutely right to say that there needs to be more co-ordinated and aligned commissioning by GPs to avoid these problems. I shall say a little more in a moment about the additional pressure being put on to accident and emergency units since the 2004 contract and the reconfiguration of out-of-hours services.

**Dr. Andrew Murrison** (Westbury) (Con): Does my hon. Friend share my concern about the pressure that this problem can place on casualty departments? They are likely to receive default patients, as it were, who have failed to get adequate primary care services because of the difficulties with out-of-hours cover. They are also likely to have patients referred to them by locums who are not as familiar with local health care facilities as the local GPs. That is placing a great burden on many of our casualty departments, and they are facing a particular problem with elderly, vulnerable and chronically ill people, who really should not be sent to acute hospitals at all, if that can be avoided.

**Mark Simmonds**: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for that intervention. He is absolutely right. There are similar issues in my Lincolnshire constituency. The most recent case relating to his experience that has come to light in the media was in Suffolk, where after midnight a population of 600,000 is covered by only two GPs. That is not acceptable—it is not the service the public in England expect.

**Mark Simmonds**: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. He is absolutely right to say that there needs to be more co-ordinated and aligned commissioning by GPs to avoid these problems. I shall say a little more in a moment about the additional pressure being put on to accident and emergency units since the 2004 contract and the reconfiguration of out-of-hours services.

**Dr. Howard Stoate** (Dartford) (Lab): I am listening with interest to the hon. Gentleman. As he knows, I am a practising GP. A matter of great interest to me is that of access to medical records out of hours. The situation is currently extremely difficult, because many practices use different types of software, which cannot “talk” to each other or to the outside world. How does he envisage that problem being solved? The obvious way is through the NHS Spine system and the use of summary care records, but what does he think is the best way of ensuring that the out-of-hours service has access to patient records?

**Mark Simmonds**: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that there needs to be much more co-ordination and co-operation on the flow of information. The review instigated by the then Minister of State into the terrible tragedy in 2004 does not seem to have been implemented. We need to ensure that there is a cross-flow of information, so that similar tragedies cannot happen in the future. I believe that some of the solutions that I will outline later will help to alleviate some of the concerns that the hon. Gentleman has, both as a practising GP and as a Member of Parliament.

Increasing concern is being voiced about primary care trusts’ over-reliance on foreign doctors, who might not be familiar with British working practices or have the necessary language and communications to undertake the jobs safely. It is currently possible for a foreign doctor to pass a language test in one primary care trust even though they have no intention of working there, then to transfer to another PCT without a second test being taken. There is no standardised English and communications test for doctors from the European economic area who want to work in England; nor is there a mechanism for identifying those who have failed a test. That can result in EEA doctors providing out-of-hours cover in the UK without having undergone any testing in the area in which they are practising.

This is not new, however. The Government have been consistently warned about the increasing number of failures in the out-of-hours system. In 2000, the independent Carson review of GP out-of-hours cover—the bedrock of the reforms that the Government put in place in 2004—outlined the principle that out-of-hours services should meet patient needs and not be used simply as a holding bay until the GP practice reopens. Too often, however, that is exactly what happens.

In 2004, the Health Committee voiced its concern that many PCTs did not have the skills to commission services. It warned that GPs should not become disengaged from out-of-hours services, yet that is exactly what has happened. The Committee also highlighted the concern that, if out-of-hours cover were withdrawn or changed, or if access to it became more difficult, demand for urgent care would increase in other parts of the system, such as accident and emergency. That is exactly what has happened. Attendances at accident and emergency departments have risen by 10 per cent. in the past four years alone.

In 2006, an investigation by the National Audit Office found that most out-of-hours providers were not meeting all the national quality requirements, particularly on speed of response. That is continuing to happen. It was recently reported that only 6 per cent. of PCTs were assessing out-of-hours calls quickly and safely within the benchmark period of 20 minutes. In 2007, a further Health Committee report commented that “inadequate performance measurement means that some Primary Care Trusts do not know how good a service they are providing for their patients”.

That is still the case: some PCTs are still not monitoring their out-of-hours providers’ performance or reviewing the service regularly.

Most recently, the CQC, in its preliminary observations from its investigation into a specific provider, identified that trusts do not routinely look in detail at the quality of the care. The CQC also found that primary care trusts have not had a consistent approach to the inclusion of doctors on the performance list, which may have led to some of the problems under discussion. If I have time, I will return to that theme later.

That is a damning list of warning signals, which have not been resolved. There is, however, a solution to the problem. A growing consensus exists on what needs to be done to tackle the problem. The Government appear
to be becoming isolated and alone in not recognising the solution to what is, bluntly, currently a mess. Clearly, the Government made a serious error by removing GPs from responsibility for out-of-hours care. We must urgently review the whole system, as well as returning responsibility for commissioning the service to GPs. That will rebuild the link between GPs and out-of-hours services and result in better co-ordination of primary care services.

The GP-patient relationship is vital for the performance of the national health service and for improving patient care and outcomes. The Opposition are not advocating a return to a Dr. Finlay style of medicine, with GPs being responsible for their patient list around the clock. However, we recognise that GPs are closest to the communities and patients they serve and are therefore best placed to lead commissioning for a service that best meets patients’ needs.

Mr. Mark Todd (South Derbyshire) (Lab): May I draw the hon. Gentleman’s attention to the letter from Dr. Laurence Buckman of the British Medical Association, which is reproduced in the Library pack for this debate? Dr. Buckman’s solution is not the one that the hon. Gentleman has just outlined. Does he differ from the BMA on its approach to the problem?

Mark Simmonds: I will come to a comment from the BMA in a moment, but the hon. Gentleman should be cautious: he will be aware that the gentleman to whom he has referred has recently been quoted as saying that the prevalent view among GPs is that the Labour party is the enemy of the NHS. I hope to have an informed debate about out-of-hours care this afternoon, to ensure that Ministers in the Department of Health understand the seriousness of the failings currently occurring.

Norman Lamb (North Norfolk) (LD): I agree with much of what the hon. Gentleman has said about how the system works at present, but what makes him feel that the approach that he advocates will be different and qualitatively better than what existed before 2004? There were serious concerns about how it operated then, and those concerns led to a movement for reform of the system.

Mark Simmonds: The fundamental difference between what we propose and what happened before 2004 is that we do not necessarily advocate compelling GPs to be responsible for caring for their patients 24 hours a day, seven days a week. What we are advocating, and what we believe is essential if we are to improve out-of-hours and urgent care, is the vital role of GPs in commissioning such services, in which far too often they are not involved at present. There is a direct correlation between excellent and good out-of-hours provision and the involvement of GPs in providing the service, which they should clearly be allowed to do if they so wish. Sadly, some of the tragedies in the recent past occurred when GPs were not involved in such provision.

Mr. Todd: May I ask the hon. Gentleman a question? He wants GPs to commission such services, but I very much doubt whether that is what they want. They very much wish to be involved in the governance of such services, and I would wish that to be one of the outcomes of any examination of the service review.

Mark Simmonds: I am grateful for that intervention, but I disagree with the hon. Gentleman. I travel extensively around England to have discussions with GPs and I have encountered genuine enthusiasm for the control of real budgets for commissioning not only out-of-hours care and urgent care, but a wider range of services on behalf of their patient groups. There is no doubt in our minds that the GP-patient relationship is key, that GPs most understand the patients for whom they are responsible and that GPs are, therefore, much better placed to commission their services than primary care trusts.

Norman Lamb: I wish to pursue the point that I raised a little earlier. The hon. Gentleman said that things are different this time because he is talking about commissioning, but I understand that prior to 2004 commissioning was, in effect, being undertaken in many cases; GPs were not providing it directly, but they were making arrangements with other organisations, possibly co-operatives. That arrangement seems similar to what he is proposing now.

Mark Simmonds: We propose that GPs will commission out-of-hours care, but there will certainly not be a compulsion for them to provide that care, unless they have a desire to do so. Prior to 2004, the argument made by GPs and their representatives was that they did not want to provide out-of-hours care because of an issue relating to recruitment into the profession. That argument has gone away, and I detect, from talking to GP representatives and GPs who are practising, a change of view in the past year or 18 months; there is now a recognition that in many parts of the country out-of-hours provision is not working as GPs would desire for their patients and a definite wish to get involved in commissioning. I therefore think that the Conservatives are on exactly the right lines.

As to the solutions, we require not only an urgent review, but the returning of responsibility for commissioning to GPs. That would rebuild the all-important link; as I have said, GPs are much better placed to commission these services, as they understand their patients’ needs most. These services should be commissioned alongside other services, such as accident and emergency services and those dealing with minor injuries, to ensure an integrated model for urgent care, which does not exist at the moment.

Mrs. Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con): The out-of-hours service in my constituency is delivered in a central location in my local hospital—it is delivered right next to the accident and emergency department. That means that people who could be better served by out-of-hours services can be redirected, thus providing them with better care and, importantly, saving the hospital money. Does my hon. Friend think that that is the sort of model that other areas should be adopting?

Mark Simmonds: It sounds as though an excellent model is being used in my hon. Friend’s constituency. We do not think it appropriate to impose from the centre one model to fit across the whole of the country; we think that that is a mistake that this Government...
have made. Different local solutions will be provided in
different local areas. The important thing is that GPs
are involved in commissioning, in ensuring the delivery
of service and in ensuring that the service mechanism in
place is delivering the best patient outcomes for their
particular patient groups.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mark Simmonds: I will give way a little later, but I
wish to make some progress because I know that many
other hon. Members wish to speak in this debate.

The Conservative position increasingly seems to be
being accepted by many other organisations. The NHS
Alliance agrees that GPs are best placed to deliver
out-of-hours care and recognises the importance of
local responsibility for out-of-hours services. The Royal
College of General Practitioners has rightly concerned
about the quality of services and has called for a
“comprehensive review” of out-of-hours and weekend
care and for local GPs to be involved in commissioning.
Even the BMA, which was mentioned by the hon.
Member for South Derbyshire (Mr. Todd), has said in
its briefing for this debate that it believes that local GPs
should be involved in commissioning out-of-hours care.
We welcome that support, because the current system is
unsustainable and is not working consistently everywhere
as it should be. It must be clear to the Government that
the system requires improvement.

I wish to raise one further issue—the performers list.
That list of doctors who are allowed to practise in the
UK is maintained by the primary care trusts. There is a
need for more stringent checks on the clinical and
communication standards of foreign doctors coming to
work in the UK. To be fair, the Department of Health
produced a very good report early last year entitled
“Tackling Concerns Locally: the Performers List system”.
It is sensible, well written and addresses some of the
concerns, but it needs to be implemented—it is not
being implemented everywhere. The Secretary of State and the Ministers need to be
aware of the real concerns of the General Medical
Council, and I have a couple of quotes that I want to
read to the House. The GMC believes
“that the current legal framework is unsatisfactory.”
and that

“the current system does not adequately safeguard patient safety.”

These are very serious issues that the Department and
the ministerial team need to look at urgently.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley) (Lab): The hon.
Gentleman might know that I spent nine years as a lay
member of the GMC. Does he think that if doctors
were commissioning treatment for patients, they would
have any professional responsibility for what happened
to those individuals?

Mark Simmonds: I support the mechanisms that are
in place at the moment—the list that the GMC holds
and the providers lists for which the primary care trusts
are responsible. There have been failings in the past in
that when a primary care trust has rejected a particular
doctor for a failure, for example, to be able to communicate
in English, that information has not been passed on
either to other primary care trusts or to the GMC,
which would then be able to regulate and to strike that
doctor off the list. In the European Union area, when a
doctor is suspended in Germany, for example, that
information cannot be passed to the GMC or to PCTs
in this country.

Mr. Barron: I completely agree with the hon.
Gentleman on the issue of English language testing and the need to
be able to communicate with patients. However, my
question is if a doctor commissions services for a patient,
are they professionally responsible for those services?

Mark Simmonds: Clearly, there has to be a professional
responsibility for the provision of health care that that
doctor has provided, but it must fit a regulatory structure.
That is part of what the GMC is there for.

The Government need to make immediate changes to
improve out-of-hours and patient care. Primary care
trusts must monitor and performance manage their
out-of-hours contracts much more robustly to ensure
that they are offering a high-quality, cost-effective service
to patients. Strategic health authorities must take a
more proactive role in assessing and monitoring primary
care trusts, out-of-hours contracts and performance
management. The national quality guidelines need to
be reviewed, as they are too generic and do not allow
local services to be tailored to local needs. A system in
which GPs lead commissioning would make a significant
contribution to addressing that issue. The performers
list must be reviewed to ensure greater co-ordination
and communication between PCTs and the GMC to
alert them to doctors who are not suitably qualified.
There must also be much greater encouragement and
analysis of patient feedback.

In conclusion, this service is ultimately about patients—
patient care, patient outcomes and patient safety. If we
are to move to a patient-centred national health service,
the level of out-of-hours service provided to the public
must, in some areas, improve dramatically and respond
to the local needs and requirements of patients. Only if
local GPs commission out-of-hours care for their patient
groups will patients receive the service they deserve
24 hours a day, seven days a week. If this Government
do not act, after the next general election—if we are
given the chance—we will.

4.53 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr. Mike
O’Brien): I beg to move an amendment, to leave out
from ‘NHS’ to the end of the Question and add:

“welcomes the improvements in out-of-hours and urgent care
services over the last 12 years; notes that the Carson report in
2000 identified the need for the reform of out-of-hours care which
was carried out in 2004; further notes that by the start of 2004
only five per cent. of patients saw their own GP out of hours;
acknowledges that GP organisations say that they do not want a
return to the system which existed in 1997; understands the
continuing need to improve the quality of out-of-hours care;
notes that the Government commissioned the first national out-
of-hours benchmark to help primary care trusts and providers
improve the quality and productivity of out-of-hours services and
to reduce local variation; recognises the improvement in healthcare
after the introduction of the GP contract in 2004, which has
significantly extended weekend and evening opening of surgeries
for routine, bookable appointments; recognises that over 77 per
cent. of GP practices now offer extended opening hours and that
every primary care trust is developing a new GP-led health centre,
open from 8 am until 8 pm, seven days a week, 365 days a year;
and welcomes plans for people who need urgent care to be able to
dial 111 for advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”.
Madam Deputy Speaker, you have already referred to the inquest in relation to two deaths and I am sure that the House will want to join me in sharing our deepest sympathy with the families of those involved. I do not propose to comment any further on these sad matters until the inquest is concluded.

The Government have made some important changes to out-of-hours and urgent care services. I welcome the opportunity to debate them with the House today. Let me make it clear that out-of-hours care is better than it was in 2004, but it clearly needs further reform. Regulation, in particular, needs much more central drive. I shall return to that point, because it is a clear difference between me and the hon. Member for Boston and Skegness (Mark Simmonds), who, in his speech, willed the end but not the means. It is important that we ensure that we have a system that delivers for patients, and that means making sure that there is effective regulation in place.

Before 2004, doctors were responsible for the care of their patients 24 hours a day, but growing demands put that system of out-of-hours care under increasing strain. Most GPs worked on a rota basis in local co-operatives, seeing other doctors’ patients. Locums were often employed by practices, and some areas employed private companies.

At the beginning of 2004, about 5 per cent. of GPs provided out-of-hours care for their own patients. We need to be a little cautious about the myths that sometimes surround this matter. The National Audit Office has said that the figures show that the myth that GPs saw only their own patients needs to be challenged. Some of them did that, but the number was relatively small.

Doctors who saw their own or other doctors’ patients as part of a rota were sometimes left exhausted the following day. Before 2004, doctors often turned up for home visits or surgeries exhausted and sleep-deprived, thus putting patients at risk. Dr. Laurence Buckman of the British Medical Association said last week that the old system meant many doctors were tired and therefore potentially dangerous to patients, and that it was for that reason that the BMA and the GPs it represents would resist taking personal responsibility for delivering care out of hours. I shall return to the question of personal responsibility later.

Complaints about the old system were building by 1997. By 2000, the level of complaints from the public led the Government to conclude that the existing model of out-of-hours care was unsustainable. Dr. David Carson was asked to conduct a comprehensive, independent review of out-of-hours services in England. His 22 recommendations, accepted in full by this Government, formed the basis for our 2004 reforms of the GP contract and centrally co-ordinated. Other areas would use companies to provide the services, but in a minority of cases the service would be continue to be provided by GPs who wished to opt out of the system and run their own provision. The aim was to ensure a greater degree of co-ordination in the provision of out-of-hours care that would give patients the increased access that they needed.

Sir Alan Beith: But where were the doctors to come from?

Mr. O’Brien: The right hon. Gentleman repeats his question from a sedentary position. Most out-of-hours services are provided by doctors who specialise in them, or by doctors working on a rota basis for co-operatives or private sector organisations. Some of those doctors work during the day, but they are obliged to ensure that they do not get to the level of tiredness that was evident before 2004.

I mentioned that there were various independent and other reviews. The 2006 review of out-of-hours care by the National Audit Office said:

“England is at the forefront of thinking internationally”
on out-of-hours care, and that it
“compares well on cost and quality against the rest of the UK”.

In 2008, the Healthcare Commission’s report on urgent and emergency care entitled “Not Just a Matter of Time” added:

“There have been significant improvements over recent years in the ... number of out-of-hours GP services meeting national quality requirements.”

It went on:

“These achievements have taken place despite the pressure from the significant growth in demand for many of these services.”

The spending by PCTs on out-of-hours services has risen from £209 million in 2004 to £378 million last year. It is clear that the quality of out-of-hours care for most people is better than it was in 2004 but in some areas, owing to regulation, it is not yet good enough.

Mr. Andrew Lansley (South Cambridgeshire) (Con):

What is the measure?

Mr. O’Brien: The shadow Secretary of State, who has not deigned to lead this important debate, and did not bother to lead the previous one either, insists on chuntering from a sedentary position and asking what the evidence is. If he looks at the evidence in NAO reports and at the reports that we are going to publish in due course, he will see that it is clear that the standard of care has improved, but it still has a long way to go. We have never said—let me make this clear—that the NHS is a perfect organisation. Indeed, only a short time ago, we published a policy statement about going from “good” to “great”. In the next five to 10 years, we need to move the NHS from where it was in 1997, when the hon. Member for South Cambridgeshire and his party were responsible for it, and it was on its knees. We have raised it from its knees, and it is standing up. It is good, but it must now become great. There are real issues that we still need to resolve in the NHS, and we are the first to say so.
Mr. Anthony Wright (Great Yarmouth) (Lab): I accept that there have indeed been improvements. Although I disagree fundamentally with the Opposition motion, which is a step backwards, there are particular problems in my area, where Take Care Now failed on two occasions in the last week to deliver a doctor on time. Only on Saturday, a family friend called the out-of-hours service at 9.30 am, but the doctor did not arrive until 5.15 pm. Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that we need significant improvements in those areas before we can say that we have a very good service? I reiterate that turning the clock back is not the way forward.

Mr. O’Brien: My hon. Friend is quite right—we cannot turn the clock back. We need to improve the quality of care provided by out-of-hours services, and that is what we are committed to do. I do not want to comment on the organisation to which he referred, because there are issues relating to the inquest that is under way. Generally, however, we accept that the way primary care trusts make provision must be improved. I want to discuss levels of control, because the Opposition have suggested that there is a lack of control.

Mr. Todd: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. O’Brien: If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I need to make progress, as other Members wish to contribute to the debate.

Patients must have confidence in all the medical care they receive, regardless of when, where or from whom they receive it. There are three key levels of control on the quality of GPs. First, the General Medical Council certifies whether someone has the appropriate qualifications. Whether they are a foreign national coming from the EU or otherwise, we must look at how we recognise those qualifications. Secondly, PCTs, which commission NHS providers, have legal obligations under the 2004 regulations to check GPs before they go on the performers list. That is not optional, as I am sure the hon. Member for Boston and Skegness, who spoke for the Opposition, the second level of control is the primary care trust which commissions the services. It must put in place robust arrangements to ensure, through the contracts, that out-of-hours services are using GPs who are fit to practise and can deliver appropriate and skilled medical practice, including the ability to speak and understand English.

PCTs were reminded of those duties in the Healthcare Commission’s national review of urgent and emergency care in 2008—

Mark Simmonds: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. O’Brien: No. I shall make progress, then I will give way to some people. I say a few words and am then interrupted almost immediately. There are others on the Back Benches who want to make a contribution, so if the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I will give way to him a little later.

PCTs were reminded of these duties in the Healthcare Commission’s national review of urgent and emergency care, which again concluded that out-of-hours care had improved, but warned that PCTs should scrutinise their out-of-hours care more closely to meet their legal responsibilities to provide safe, high-quality care.

The third level of control is the employer. This can be the PCT or, more often, a company or co-operative contracted by the PCT. The employer should be contractually bound by the PCT to check qualifications and ensure that the GPs it employs are competent. That is part of the basic controls. In October 2009, the CQC issued an interim statement on its inquiry into the provision of out-of-hours services by Take Care Now to remind PCTs that they were already obliged to have in place robust arrangements for commissioning and for performance and contract management. The CQC emphasised the need for PCTs to assure themselves that all out-of-hours GPs, including locums, are fit to practise.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr. O’Brien: Out-of-hours providers were also reminded of the need to ensure rigorous recruitment, induction and training arrangements for medical staff. Dr. David Colin-Thomé, the national clinical director for primary care, followed this up with a letter to all PCT chief executives. The quality of out-of-hours care is good for most patients, but as we know from the CQC report, there are clearly some serious issues to address.

Dr. Colin-Thomé and Professor Steve Field, the chairman of the Royal College of General Practitioners, were asked by me in September to examine all the various reports—there are a number of them, going back to Carson—and to make further recommendations on how primary care out-of-hours services could be improved. It is my intention to publish that report as soon as the current inquest has concluded and I have informed the coroner of that.

I expect the report to show, among other things, that not only have things improved since 2004, but that decentralised controls on PCTs have led to an unacceptable variation in their enforcement—a similar conclusion to
the CQC report in October—and that more action is needed to ensure that PCTs perform their control obligations under the 2004 regulations. Before I go on to say a few more words on regulations, I shall give way to hon. Members who have indicated a wish to intervene.

Norman Lamb: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way again. He talked about the regulations that were in place, with which PCTs were obliged to comply by applying the performers list. What are the consequences for the primary care trust of failing to comply with those regulations? The consequences could be fatal.

Mr. O’Brien: The fatality relates to the patients, but the primary care trusts would clearly be in breach of their legal obligations, and they would then be subject to NHS disciplinary action. Whether they would be prosecuted on a criminal basis is a separate matter; the situation would involve a breach of civil regulations, so the PCT would be answerable through the NHS.

Mark Simmonds: The Minister mentioned that some primary care trusts were clearly not fulfilling their obligations under the current regulations. He may be coming on to this point, but what specifically will he change to ensure that PCTs abide by the regulations, that such tragedies are prevented and that service improvements take place?

Mr. O’Brien: I am indeed going to come on to that.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Beckenham) (Con): My hon. Friend the Member for Boston and Skegness (Mark Simmonds) mentioned that doctors from the European Economic Area do not have to take a language test, and I seem to remember that that comes from the directive on the free movement of workers. Will the Minister clarify whether they still do not have to?

Mr. O’Brien: They do not, and that is an important point. A doctor from the EEA—comprising the European Union and a couple of other countries—does not have to carry out a language test for the GMC; other doctors from outside the area do. However, the PCTs are therefore obliged to ensure that a GP who is employed to provide out-of-hours care or other services can speak good English. The PCT can insist on tests and on the provision of evidence to show that the individual GP speaks good English.

A general examination of a number of PCTs has shown that some have not carried out the level of tests and checks that they are legally obliged to undertake on a person’s ability to speak English. If someone applies in Nottingham or Leeds, for example, they will undergo checks. Other PCTs were not carrying out checks. I understand that Cornwall was not carrying out adequate checks, but I am told that it is now. That issue needs to be clarified.

The PCT is not the only body that must check whether someone speaks English before they go on the performers list: the employer should, through its contract, have an obligation to ensure that the doctor is not only a competent clinician, but able to speak English and communicate with the patient. It seems pretty basic to me.

Mr. Todd: My right hon. and learned Friend’s response provoked me to add my name to the debate, so he will get more value from my words than he might otherwise have had. May I draw his attention to the concern of those suffering from motor neurone disease? I, along with two other Members who are present, sat through presentations from sufferers of that condition who had used the out-of-hours service. It is a rare condition, but the lack of knowledge displayed by the person with whom they were dealing made that experience deeply distressing. The training level and protocol strength that the out-of-hours service uses must be radically reviewed in that context.

Mr. O’Brien: My hon. Friend makes a very good point, which I shall certainly take on board. I look forward to hearing his further contribution, if Madam Deputy Speaker so wishes, during the course of the debate.

I now turn precisely to the level of regulation. This Government take patient safety so seriously that we have strengthened the regulations on health care providers, but the hon. Member for Boston and Skegness made it clear that the Opposition oppose further regulation. There is always a question as to how prescriptive regulation should be and where the balance should lie: should we try to control more from Whitehall with more interventionist regulation? However, one cannot run everything from the centre. Despite what some people say, Nye Bevan did not make himself responsible for every bed pan dropped in Tredegar. We rely on local managers, and the policy needs to be in place so that they know what they have to do; then the regulators must be there to check that local managers know what has to be done and implement it. Nevertheless, we cannot guarantee that human fallibility, negligence or failures might never arise.

Should we leave it to PCTs and employers to enforce safety practices and checks? Decentralisation is beneficial in the sense that it can deliver innovation and respond to local needs; it also sounds good and makes a good soundbite, as we heard from the hon. Member for Boston and Skegness. However, it can produce risks in some parts of the system if those parts do not deliver what they are supposed to. More regulation may therefore be needed in the case of out-of-hours care. I will be able to make some further announcements in a report that we will publish in due course.

We have recently made a number of significant changes. First, the Care Quality Commission has now replaced the Healthcare Commission, the Mental Health Act Commission and the Commission for Social Care Inspection as the single regulator for all health and social care. This more powerful and more effective system of regulation will help to ensure a more consistent approach to patient safety, no matter where people are being treated or cared for and no matter who they are being treated by, whether it be public or private sector providers. This system of stronger regulation is being rolled out. By April 2012, subject to legislation, all providers of out-of-hours care, including private companies, will need to register with the CQC, giving it a greater degree of scrutiny and independent oversight.

Secondly, we have changed the standard of proof for professional disciplinary cases from that of beyond reasonable doubt to the more flexible and more appropriate civil standard balance of probabilities.
Thirdly, in November last year, we introduced a licence to practise. This will ensure that doctors must continue to meet the high standards demanded of the profession throughout their careers by requiring them to go through a process of revalidation every five years to prove that they continue to meet the standards. This will be the only systematic and comprehensive system to assure the quality of doctors anywhere in the world. As part of this process, doctors must also now present annual, clear, positive evidence of their fitness to practice against 12 standards based on the GMC’s “Good Medical Practice”.

Fourthly, from October, subject to regulations, health care organisations will have to appoint a responsible officer with a statutory duty to evaluate a doctor’s fitness to practise and to monitor their conduct and performance. They will also monitor admission to the performers list.

Mrs. Maria Miller: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. O’Brien: Let me deal with a couple more points, and I will give way before I conclude.

The hon. Member for Boston and Skegness asked about the implementation of electronic patient records. More than 1 million core records have been created across a number of locations, including London. Early evidence points to improving out-of-hours care, ensuring that doctors have up-to-date information at their fingertips in situations where this is critical. It is not yet available across the country, but it is rolling out as we speak. With the IT systems and the changes that we are making to improve the quality of care, which the Conservatives have indicated that they are unhappy with, we are ensuring that that sort of information is more readily available.

In terms of the broader issues, the results of massive investment in the NHS in 2001 are now becoming clear. More than 98 per cent. of patients are being seen, diagnosed and treated within four hours of arriving at A and E. Three quarters of GP practices now offer extended opening hours—a move that was opposed by the Conservatives. New GP-led health centres are being opened in every PCT area, opening from 8 am until 8 pm, seven days a week, 365 days a year—also opposed by the Conservatives. Millions of people use NHS Direct for clear and accurate information about medical issues and to seek help by day or night. We plan to introduce a free 111 urgent care phone number, to go alongside the traditional 999. That will help with anything from making an appointment with an emergency dentist to directions to a late-night pharmacist or referral to an out-of-hours primary care GP.

The reforms that we put in place in 2004 have improved the quality of out-of-hours care for patients and were introduced with the support of the medical profession. We have brought the system from poor to good, but we have never claimed that it has got to where we think it should be. There is more that we can do, and we need to make it better. When I asked Dr. David Colin-Thomé and Professor Steve Field to report, I asked them to examine with care all the evidence in relation to out-of-hours care. They will make recommendations to strengthen the system of regulation and improve patient safety, and I look forward to sharing those recommendations with the House in due course.

The Conservatives have indicated today that they want to return responsibility for commissioning out-of-hours care to GPs. I was particularly struck by the answer given to my right hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) when he asked what the responsibility implications of that were. It appears that responsibility for out-of-hours care is to be handed back to GPs. The Conservatives want to force a number of things on GPs, including hard budgets for patient care. GPs are concerned that forcing them to hold responsibility for out-of-hours care, on top of those hard budgets, could drive some practices to the wall, but the Tories would force those things on all GPs. The Government say that under practice-based commissioning, GPs can already take on the commissioning of out-of-hours care and budgets if they want to, but we will not force them to if they do not. It appears that there is a clear dividing line between the Conservatives and ourselves.

The Conservatives claim that they are concerned about the NHS, but in 1997, 18 years of a Conservative Government had left it on its knees and struggling, including out-of-hours care. When we increased national insurance to improve the NHS, including out-of-hours and urgent care, the Conservatives opposed it. When we set a four-hour target for accident and emergency patients to be seen and treated, discharged or admitted, they opposed it. When we created GP-led health centres offering extended hours to patients, they opposed it. When we extended GP practice opening hours, which has now happened for patients at 77 per cent. of practices, the Conservatives opposed it. When we introduced the target for patients to see a cancer specialist within two weeks of referral, they opposed it. They want to set the clock back on the NHS and its reforms and remove the targets that have improved services.

We have never said that the NHS has resolved its problems—far from it. With our policy of “good to great” we have said precisely the opposite: there is still more work to be done on the NHS. We have got it from poor to good, and we now need to get it from good to great. We need to ensure that we reform out-of-hours and urgent care as part of that change. We have shown our willingness to tackle the problems in the NHS and are not satisfied with the current state of things, which is why we commissioned proposals to improve out-of-hours care.

In the coming months, we will expose the complete vacuity of the Tories’ policy. Their claims of over-regulation are the opposite of the truth, which is that we need tough regulation in this area. The Labour Government have shown that we can deliver it. We are the Government who care about the NHS and who will deliver improvements in the NHS.

5.23 pm

Norman Lamb (North Norfolk) (LD): May I first join the Minister in expressing my deepest sympathy to the families of those whose deaths are subject to the inquest that you referred to, Madam Deputy Speaker?

It is clear that what the hon. Member for Boston and Skegness (Mark Simmonds) said is right, and that the quality of out-of-hours care is not good enough across the whole country. Standards are variable, and there are insufficient safeguards to protect patient safety. It is fair to say that there are very good services in some parts of
the country, and they should be recognised. It is also right that cost is not the key factor; some good services are provided at a relatively low cost and some poor services are clearly expensive to the local health economy.

It is also right to point out that the reform that was introduced alongside the GP contract in 2004 was flawed in its implementation. My right hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Sir Alan Beith) made the legitimate point that an assumption seems to have been made at the time that there was a pool of doctors in every locality who would be readily available to provide out-of-hours care. Of course, the truth was very different.

In many parts of the country, including my right hon. Friend’s area and my area of Norfolk, the out-of-hours services has had to rely to a greater or lesser extent on doctors being flown in from overseas. That is not acceptable. It often means someone flying in on a Friday evening ready for a weekend session, tired and too often not sufficiently cognisant of the local health arrangements. That failure of the 2004 reform needs to be recognised.

However, it would be wrong to imply that everything was good before 2004. I am worried that the Conservative proposal to return commissioning responsibility to GPs appears to be a return to what was happening in many parts of the country before 2004. In 2004, immediately before the reform, few patients saw their own doctor out of hours. In most cases, GPs were entering contractual arrangements with other bodies, often co-operatives, to provide that care. That seems to be exactly the commissioning arrangement that the Conservatives propose. I agree that reform is necessary, but I am concerned about a knee-jerk reaction and going back to a previous system, which clearly had serious flaws and was greatly criticised at the time.

Why is out-of-hours care so important? Self-evidently, critical decisions often have to be taken outside the normal hours that GPs operate—often in the dead of night, often in very rural areas. It is vital that patients can rely on high-quality care at those times of need. It is critical that we provide the reassurance to people that, when a crisis occurs in the middle of the night and they make that phone call, they will get a responsive service and that the GP who is available to turn up is of a sufficient standard. Concerns were expressed that the GP who is available to turn up is of a critical that we provide the reassurance to people that, can rely on high-quality care at those times of need. It is

The best situation—I draw the distinction between the provision of care and the commissioning of care—is surely when, as far as possible, GPs who have an involvement in the local primary care system are involved in the provision of out-of-hours care. Some doctors could work shorter hours in in-hours time and commit to out-of-hours care. That happens in some places.

We must recognise, however, that doctors are under significant pressure, and that one reason why the change was made in the first place is that we were finding it difficult to recruit doctors because of the commitment to 24-hour care. Any reform must recognise those pressures and understand that we cannot push doctors over the edge. Exhausted doctors are also not good for patient care.

Mr. Robert Syms (Poole) (Con): The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. However, there are also a lot more women doctors both in hospitals and among GPs—that is one of the major changes in the profession—and they may have family obligations. It would be difficult for them to give the same level of out-of-hours care when they have children to look after.

Norman Lamb: That is a very fair point. I was previously a solicitor. Some women solicitors joined a rota to provide out-of-hours support under the legal aid scheme. It is not impossible, but I recognise that there are constraints, and I accept the hon. Gentleman’s point.

We can all agree that the concerns about the use of foreign doctors in out-of-hour care need to be addressed. I fully understand the sub judice nature of the current inquest, so I will not refer to it, but I will refer to the current framework, which I think is inadequate to protect patient safety. A doctor must get on to the performers list before he or she can practise in any given area. However, once a doctor is on a performers list, in any part of the country, they have access to practise anywhere around the country. Failures by one primary care trust could be fatal in any part of the country, not just that area.

Back in February 2007, my hon. Friend the Member for Truro and St. Austell (Matthew Taylor) expressed concerns about Cornwall and Isles of Scilly PCT in a debate in Westminster Hall. He highlighted specific cases of constituents who had to deal with doctors out of hours who could not understand their patients. Surely that is unacceptable. Of one case, he said:

“Mr. and Mrs. T were gobsmacked when their daughter was seen by another overseas agency doctor who not only found it difficult to understand her—this has been an issue with the overseas doctors employed—but relied on an electronic word converter to communicate with the patient.”—[Official Report, 20 February 2007; Vol. 457, c. 4WH]

That is utterly shocking. How did that doctor get on to the performers list in Cornwall? As I asked the Minister earlier, what are the consequences of the abject failure of that PCT to prevent that doctor from practising out-of-hours care in Cornwall?
Mark Simmonds: The hon. Gentleman makes a very powerful point. Is he aware that rumours are circulating among GPs that one or two PCTs have a reputation for giving easier access to the performers list? As a result, GPs who cannot communicate, and who perhaps do not understand the medicines that are used in the UK, have been able to get on to the out-of-hours circuit and provide care for patients.

Norman Lamb: I am aware of that and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising it.

At the end of that debate, my hon. Friend asked the Secretary of State, who was then a Minister:

"Will the Minister promise to take a personal interest in ensuring that the situation is rapidly turned around?"

He answered:

"I give the hon. Gentleman that commitment, because these are extremely important concerns."—[Official Report, 20 February 2007; Vol. 457, c. 24WH.]

Yet it seems that the practice of allowing doctors to be admitted on to the performers list in that county continued for some time afterwards. The Minister says that that has changed now, but what guarantee do we have that any particular PCT will not have flaws in their system and allow a GP into the system who can then practise anywhere in the country? That issue surely needs to be addressed.

Mr. Mike O’Brien: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it needs to be addressed by ensuring that regulations are more effectively enforced and, if necessary, tightened up? That means that the Government have a role, contrary to the view of the official Opposition. Regulation may have to be tightened up in that area.

Norman Lamb: I am grateful for that intervention, and I agree that the rules have to be tight and effective. If a primary care trust allows doctors to practise, in effect anywhere in the country, by allowing them on to the performers list when they are not competent and cannot speak the language—in other words, in breach of the regulations that the Minister mentions—it should be a criminal offence on the part of the PCT. I would like the Government to commit to investigating that possibility, because there is a powerful case for it. There have to be consequences for a failure by the PCT in allowing an incompetent or dangerous doctor to practise in this country.

Mr. Mike O’Brien: Criminal penalties involve someone having to pay a price, be that a fine, imprisonment or something else. What sort of penalties does the hon. Gentleman propose PCTs should be subject to? After all, patients would lose out if a fine were levied, because it would come from the budget. Who should be imprisoned or convicted of a crime? He needs to think that suggestion through.

Norman Lamb: Of course the idea requires thinking through, but trusts can be criminally liable, if they behave in a way that breaches the criminal law. Some sanction is necessary to concentrate the minds of decision makers, which were clearly not concentrated when allowing doctors into the system in Cornwall, as revealed in that debate.

As other hon. Members have said, the Department of Health commissioned a report on the performers list, which was published on the website last March. It said:

"We also concluded that there are unacceptable variations in the way in which PCTs in this country operate the Performers List arrangements, and have made a substantial number of recommendations to improve the local implementation of the system.”

That report sat gathering dust for many months. I understand that Steve Field is now examining the report and making recommendations of his own, but for too long its recommendations have not been implemented on a national level, and I do not understand why not. Given the flaws in the system that the report revealed last March, the recommendations should have been implemented straight away.

Registration with the General Medical Council is another vexed issue. We have already heard that if doctors come from the European economic area, they have no obligation to prove competence or language skills before being registered by the GMC. However, doctors from the Indian subcontinent, who might have excellent training and skills, have to prove that they are competent and have language skills before they can be registered by the GMC. In my view, that is discrimination and should not be allowed.

It seems to me that there is an obligation on us all to argue the case for reform in Europe to ensure that the GMC can test for competence and language skills before each doctor from the European economic area practises in this country. The case for it is overwhelming, and it seems to me that if we believe in the principle of the freedom of movement of labour, which I fundamentally do, there must be a commensurate system of safeguards to protect patient safety. We are not talking about hairdressers; we are talking about people who could kill patients, if they are incompetent or worse. The system does not adequately protect patients in those circumstances.

The GMC, when one talks to it, confirms that it is unhappy with the current European framework, and yet the system continues to fail to safeguard patient safety.

It is fair to say that the system and the quality of regulation around Europe are of highly variable standards. Many European countries have not yet split the trade union function, which here is performed by the British Medical Association, from the function of regulation. That is a conflict of interest, and yet under the current system we have to rely on a regulator that also acts as a trade union in another country to judge the competence of a doctor. That, to me, is not acceptable for safeguarding patient interests in this country.

A damning report on the quality of general practitioner training in Germany was published in Germany by a panel of invited international experts. It condemned the quality of GP training in Germany, and yet we have to rely on its system of regulation to prove that a doctor is competent to practise in this country. Reports in Germany demonstrate that we should not rely on that before accepting a doctor for registration in the United Kingdom. In my view, that needs to change. However, the fact that it is European law that needs to change should not stop us arguing the case for reform.

Surely there needs also to be a system for training and assessment when a doctor arrives in this country. If he or she arrives for his or her first weekend shift, surely
before that shift is undertaken, there should be full training, both in-hours and out-of-hours, in that local system, before they are permitted to practice in that area. Surely the training should include a full understanding of the “British National Formulary” — the guidance provided on prescribing. The drugs used in this country are often different from those used overseas, and yet we have nothing to require a doctor to understand what drugs are available in this country and what the official guidance is on prescribing. That, again, is surely unacceptable.

Surely there should also be an absolute requirement for induction, to work with GP surgeries locally to understand how the system works locally and to have an induction in out-of-hours care before such doctors are given responsibility for patient safety.

Sir Alan Beith: I can give an example of the problem to which my hon. Friend is referring. Practice differs in rural areas from urban areas. We have had doctors from overseas, and even UK doctors, who say, “Oh, I don’t do stitching, because that is not done in general practice in some areas.” In a rural area, however, it has to be, because otherwise the patient might have to travel 60 miles for treatment elsewhere.

Norman Lamb: Absolutely. My right hon. Friend makes the point very well; before a doctor can practise in a particular rural area, with its particular distances between patient and hospital, they must be able to undertake the work to provide a proper service to those patients. He makes that point extremely well.

Surely it is also the case that, when a doctor in the UK practises, they have to undergo an enhanced criminal records check, but that is not the case with a foreign doctor coming to work in the UK. That foreign doctor might have committed offences elsewhere in Europe, but there is no effective check before they are allowed to practise in this country.

I want to deal briefly with what happens when something goes seriously wrong. When a doctor is suspended in any European country, there is no obligation on the regulator in that country to notify other regulators in Europe or to pass on information to them. The General Medical Council dealt with that in a letter to me, stating:

“Our central concern is that disclosure arrangements for this information are voluntary, and rely on individual regulators being able to build effective mechanisms for co-operation between themselves... There is no legislation at European level that requires regulators to share information about a doctor (or other healthcare professional) when action is taken with regard to their registration.”

The letter continued:

“We have argued that, in addition to the right to receive treatment in another member state, patients should also have the right to safe and good quality healthcare and, as part of this, the right to know that the doctors (or other healthcare professionals) who treat them are safe and fit to practise. Without a legal duty to proactively exchange fitness to practise information, there is a risk that a doctor who held registration in more than one jurisdiction could be barred from practising in one country, while continuing to practise in another.”

That is an horrendous situation, and it is not just patients in this country who are at risk; it is patients across the European Union, because of an inadequate system to safeguard patient safety. We should challenge that.

Dr. William McCrea (South Antrim) (DUP): Having pointed out serious flaws in the present system, perhaps before he finishes the hon. Gentleman will tell us how he believes the situation can be rectified.

Norman Lamb: The GMC is arguing for the reform of directives in Europe. Indeed, it is already lobbying for that, pointing out two different mechanisms in its letter by way of amendments to such directives. I want to know whether the Government are arguing the case strongly in Europe for that change to happen, because it is essential that it should happen in order to safeguard patient safety. When someone is suspended in one European country, surely that suspension should apply across the entire European Union. If we allow people to move around Europe to work, there must be a commensurate safeguard, so that when one regulator decides that someone is not fit to practise or that there is a need to suspend them pending investigation, that suspension should apply across the board.

Dr. Stoate: Can the hon. Gentleman not see that he is getting to the nub of why the previous system did not work? He will remember that before 2004 and the new GP contract, each GP was legally liable for the out-of-hours service, even if he or she did not provide it themselves. That meant that should a GP, in all good faith, take on a locum who happened to be a German or French national, that GP was responsible for checking whether that locum was registered and had the right qualifications, training and Criminal Records Bureau checks. For obvious reasons, GPs felt victimised when something went wrong, because the GP who had employed the locum was legally liable for that locum’s actions. That is precisely why GPs were so frustrated and angry about the previous system and why they voted so overwhelmingly to divorce themselves from out-of-hours care and hand it to the primary care trust, which at least had the power and a reasonable level of bureaucracy to enable it to address some of those issues, which, in all honesty, could not be addressed by individual practitioners in individual practices.

Norman Lamb: That is the reason why I have concerns about the Conservative proposition. I am not entirely sure whether the shadow Minister said that the commissioning GP would be legally responsible and accountable for any errors made by someone who had been commissioned to provide the service—I do not know whether he wants to intervene on me about that point.

Mark Simmonds: indicated dissent.

Norman Lamb: He does not. That point looks like work in progress to me, but it is a critical issue. My problem with the analysis given by the hon. Member for Dartford (Dr. Stoate) is that accountability is lacking under the current system, too. When a PCT fails to safeguard patient safety by allowing a dangerous doctor or a doctor who cannot speak the language on to the performers list, as we saw in Cornwall, there is no comeback for that primary care trust. That surely has to change.

I am also concerned about the situation that exists under European arrangements. A doctor who commits an error for which he is potentially criminally culpable must surely be held to account in the jurisdiction of the
country where that error occurred. We cannot guarantee that that will happen at the moment, and that must surely change. That will involve ensuring the effective operation of the European arrest warrant, but at present we cannot be confident about that either.

There is a clear, powerful and overwhelming case for reforming the system of out-of-hours care. The head of the Royal College of General Practitioners, the highly respected Steve Field, said last autumn that there was a pressing case for the reform of out-of-hours care. That case is overwhelming. I have concerns about the proposition put forward by the Conservative party, and that is why I propose that the Royal College of General Practitioners, which is respected not only by practitioners but in this place, should be commissioned to carry out a review and to come up with proposals to reintegrate doctors into the provision—not the commissioning—of out-of-hours care locally, so that we can ensure that patient safety is protected.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Alan Haselhurst): Order. I remind the House that there is a limit of eight minutes on Back-Bench speeches. The Front Benchers have taken up the lion's share of the debate, to the detriment of the interests of Back Benchers, but I hope that hon. Members will try to keep within that limit.

5.51 pm

Dr. Howard Stoate (Dartford) (Lab): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall endeavour to keep my remarks within your eight-minute time scale.

This has been an interesting debate that has raised important issues about the quality and delivery of out-of-hours services in general practice. The hon. Member for Boston and Skegness (Mark Simmonds) highlighted the problem well when he said that the present system was patchy. In many parts of the country, it is unacceptable. We need to do something radical to change that, to ensure that patients in every part of the country have access to good-quality out-of-hours services from whomever is delivering them.

The problem is that I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's analysis of what needs to be done. He seemed to imply that a return to the old GP commissioning system would somehow improve the situation and put things right. It could well do that in some parts of the country, but it is a rose-tinted view of the situation. This takes us to the nub of the problems that we had before 2004. Some GP commissioners are undoubtedly of extremely high quality and extremely highly skilled, and undoubtedly take a great interest in the service and do a first-class job, but the fact is that most GPs do not want directly to commission. A recent publication by David Colin-Thomé, the national director for primary care, acknowledged that many GPs were not skilled or interested in direct commissioning, and simply did not want to do it themselves. My worry is that compulsorily bringing GPs back into the commissioning role would work in some places but not in others. In other words, we might have a different patchwork, but we would still have a patchwork.

We need to consider why GPs were so keen to divest themselves of their responsibility for out-of-hours care in 2004. They voted overwhelmingly to end the situation in which they were legally responsible for what happened out of hours. I personally know GPs who had been on holiday and who received a complaint when they got back because of the actions of a deputy who had been doing the out-of-hours care for them. The GP, who might have been sunning himself in Spain at the time, was legally liable for the deputy's actions. That was nonsense. It would not occur in any other situation; why should it occur in general practice? Let us also bear in mind the fact that, before 2004, most GPs did not deliver their own out-of-hours services. They contracted them out to deputising services, to co-operatives or perhaps to an in-town rota. Nevertheless, they were legally responsible for the services provided.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that GPs decided that the situation was unsustainable. If we did the work ourselves, we were worn out the next day and not able to provide the top-quality service that our patients deserved. However, if we divested ourselves of the service and gave it to, say, a commercial service, we remained legally responsible. We were never able to sleep soundly in the knowledge that someone else was truly responsible for our patients. The situation clearly could not continue. It was affecting recruitment and retention, and GPs were retiring early because they simply could not keep it up any longer. The situation was untenable and could not continue indefinitely.

The Government therefore, quite rightly, renegotiated the contract in 2004, and made primary care trusts responsible for the delivery of these services. In most cases, the PCTs simply continued to contract with the same bodies that had already been providing the out-of-hours care. In my area, for example, an organisation called Grabadoc, which covers Greenwich and Bexley doctors on call, was almost entirely staffed by GPs before the 2004 contract, and it got the contract to continue to provide the same service, so almost nothing changed. The only thing that changed was that the responsibility was taken away from the individual practices. That is how it should be.

If anything needs to be learned from this afternoon, it is that we should be much tougher in regulations—I agree with the Minister—to ensure that primary care trusts can be held accountable to deliver the service that they contract. They are legally responsible to provide the service, so it is up to them to monitor it. It is then up to the CQC, perhaps, to monitor whether the PCTs are doing their jobs. If not, they need to be held to account in whatever way is deemed appropriate. That is not a matter for this afternoon, but it needs to be done properly.

In the limited time available, I also want to say that the situation is not all bad. It is easy to concentrate on situations in which something has gone wrong, a patient has suffered harm, or a patient's family has waited an unnecessarily long time for a service, and to assume that the service is generally not very good, but that is not the case. We must differentiate carefully in-hours care, when a GP, who is generally known to the patient, will provide a service with a wide range of back-up, practice nurses, diagnostic equipment, access to colleagues within the hospital or community services, and the full armamentarium of interventions. Out-of-hours provision has never been like that. It has always involved an individual practitioner, generally on their own, making an assessment of a patient they probably do not know, and trying, with the limited resources, interventions,
diagnostics and treatments available to them, to provide an emergency service for that patient. It has worked well over the years, and some of the evidence is quite interesting.

I have done some reading of The British Journal of General Practice, as Members would expect, and it clearly draws a distinction. A paper a year ago said:

“When dealing with acutely ill patients in usual in-hours clinic circumstances, the support provided by a competent team in familiar surroundings cannot be underestimated. Not only is the patient likely to be known to the practice, but triage, emergency equipment and diagnostic assessment can also be arranged most effectively”.

It continued:

“In the out-of-hours situation, however, particularly if a home visit...is involved, the GP must deal with many of these aspects alone...clinical decision making is inherently more difficult because patients are much less likely to be known, and options for adequate diagnosis and subsequent patient care are more limited”.

It goes on to make the point that GPs vary considerably in their attitude to risk taking. Many GPs can handle far higher levels of uncertainty of risk than others, and therefore perhaps are better placed to make out-of-hours decisions. It is wrong to assume that all GPs are similarly skilled and competent and that all GPs will provide the same decision making in different situations. Certain types of GPs might be much better placed to make such decisions—that is the direction we are going in—and those GPs often become sessional doctors for co-operatives or out-of-hours services because that is their particular skill and interest. They can provide a better service. The situation is very complex, and one size does not fit all. There are different types of doctor in different parts of the country.

Another study carried out in south Wales, and published in the Emergency Medicine Journal in 2008, made a similar point. It found that 80 per cent. of patients were satisfied with the service they received from the out-of-hours service they viewed. Only a fifth of patients were dissatisfied with the service. The authors examined why those patients were dissatisfied, and concluded that it was due to

“a mismatch between patients' expectations of the service and what the service actually provides to some specific user groups.”

They concluded that, generally, the service was adequate, but the communication between the patient and service provider was often poor. That point has wide relevance. Quite a few of the worries about out-of-hours care concern a failure to arrive at a clear definition of what an out-of-hours service should provide to patients. Better communication is essential if we are to address that and ensure that patients get the best of the deal.

Previously, most patients were reluctant to call their own doctor out to make a home visit at night, knowing that that doctor would have to carry on their normal surgery the next day. On the few occasions they did call the doctor out, expectations were generally modest. They were so grateful that their own family doctor—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

5.59 pm

Mr. Malcolm Moss (North-East Cambridgeshire) (Con): In the light of Madam Deputy Speaker’s ruling at the outset of this debate that the case of my constituent, Mr. David Gray, remains sub judice until the inquest on his death finishes next week, I shall not allude to it any further. However, I put on record my intention to pursue a proper debate on the circumstances surrounding his tragic death and subsequent developments at a later time and through other means. I am sure that Mr. Gray’s family will greatly appreciate the offer of condolences that the Minister made in his opening remarks.

Several cases in the media in the past years—and not just the case that is currently sub judice—have highlighted the failure of the out-of-hours care system. All too often, we hear similar stories of patients not receiving the out-of-hours care that they are entitled to under the NHS. Currently, the shortage of out-of-hours GPs is largely met by foreign doctors who register to work as supply doctors in England, but the system does not adequately ensure that these foreign doctors are fit for practice. Loopholes in the out-of-hours system have enabled some foreign doctors who should never have been allowed to work as GPs in this country to do so, at great cost to patients’ welfare and safety. In the absence of any root-and-branch reform of the system or a change of Government leading to GP commissioning as outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Boston and Skegness (Mark Simmonds) in his opening speech, I should like to focus on the use of foreign doctors in out-of-hours provision and to suggest a few proposals for reform that might go some way to ensure that patients receive the high standard of care to which they are entitled under the NHS.

My first proposal is that an assessment of English language skills should be carried out on all foreign doctors, because too many patients complain of foreign doctors’ often limited knowledge of our language. We must ensure that all foreign doctors who register to work in Britain have a sufficiently good grasp of English to diagnose appropriately and to treat patients. Misunderstandings and unawareness can cost lives, particularly as many EU doctors are apparently unfamiliar with the strength of some drugs that are used in the NHS.

As the Minister confirmed, many primary care trusts require a high level of English proficiency before a foreign doctor can register as a GP. However, the system allows for loopholes to be exploited, as not all PCTs have such high standards. The loophole enables foreign doctors who would not pass the English requirement set by some PCTs simply to apply to others that do not have such stringent rules. Even worse is the fact that a doctor who fails an English test in one PCT can withdraw his application from that PCT, leaving no trace or record in the system, before re-applying for an English test at another PCT. Thus, there is no record of a list of failures or rejections. In other words, a doctor can tout himself around the system until he finds a weakness and gets a breakthrough. Once a doctor is registered with a PCT, he or she can work as a GP anywhere in the country, regardless of the language requirements in the particular PCT area in which he or she ends up practising. The registration of foreign doctors with PCTs is an area where requirements must be standardised in order to avoid applicants exploiting such loopholes.
As well as having these English language tests, it is crucial that the applicant’s medical competence is assessed before they can register in the UK. Before being registered, doctors should be required to provide documentation to show that they have experience of working as a GP and that they have undergone specific training in general practice. All the applicant needs to do at the moment is to provide a licence to show that they are allowed to practise in their own country, regardless of whether they have actually ever worked as a general practitioner. I do not believe that that is enough, and more stringent rules are needed in this area to ensure the best possible care for patients.

Compulsory training and induction in England before foreign doctors are allowed to work as GPs is also crucial to ensure a high level of patient care, a point made by the hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb). That is not currently a legal requirement, and it would be interesting to hear of any plans the Government have to introduce compulsory training and induction for foreign doctors.

The General Medical Council must consider introducing more stringent assessment before recognising medical qualifications from other EU states. Doctors from EU countries do not have to undergo the same assessment of their competence as doctors from other countries, not only those from India—that country has been mentioned—but those from countries such as Australia and the USA. It is necessary that the medical competence of doctors from EU countries should also be assessed, as medical training and types of drugs used vary across Europe. Criminal record checks should also be mandatory for all foreign doctors applying to work in our NHS and the country of origin should be obliged to supply information of previous malpractice by a doctor to the authorities in this country. At present, this is entirely voluntary, but there have been cases of doctors who have been convicted of malpractice in their own country being allowed to practise as out-of-hours GPs in our NHS.

A national database of foreign doctors applying to work as a GP in Britain should be introduced that would hold information on language skills, levels of medical competence, criminal record checks, malpractice in the country of origin and whether the doctor has ever been rejected by, or withdrawn their application from, any PCT. Finally, as a general rule, doctors should be required to provide documentation before they can register in the UK. Before being registered, doctors should be required to provide documentation to show that their medical competence is satisfactory.

I hope that the Government will urgently consider the proposals for reform of the out-of-hours care system that I and many other hon. Members have proposed in the debate this evening. I call on the Government to ensure that foreign doctors are properly assessed and scrutinised before they are allowed to work as GPs in this country. We have witnessed too many cases where patients have been let down by the system and we need a complete overhaul of the provision of out-of-hours care in order properly to ensure the safety and well-being of patients. Until the Government bring in urgent and sweeping reforms to this system, people’s lives will be at risk. Too many patients have had to pay with their lives already.

Mr. Mark Todd (South Derbyshire) (Lab): I had not expected to speak in this debate, but the robust handling of interventions by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister has led me to say a little more than I would otherwise have done.

Let me first say something about the position in my constituency. When the out-of-hours service was removed from GPs and transferred to PCT commissioning, the initial results were simply horrendous. I received large numbers of complaints over poor handling of calls, lengthy delays and so on. However, I should immediately add, by way of comfort, that the PCT—not rapidly, but over time—addressed those concerns and there has been a significant improvement in the services offered in South Derbyshire. Some location changes mean that there is now an outpost in Swadlincote that serves the town and its environment. It is a GP centre in the main population hub of the area rather more rapidly than they could under the old model. There is evidence that change can take place, but I still receive complaints and we still have further to go.

My original reason for wanting to intervene focused on the experience that I and other hon. Members had yesterday of listening to carers of those with motor neurone disease who have called out-of-hours services in their areas and the frankly very poor treatment that they have received. The most extreme example, which resulted in an apology and, I think, disciplinary action against the person involved, involved someone with NIV—non-invasive ventilation—which is the breathing system that supports someone and keeps their lungs functioning. The carer was asked to remove the mask to test that person’s breathing so that the person on the other end of the phone could validate what they were saying. That was after the individual’s notes had been passed to the out-of-hours service, so they should have been perfectly aware of the condition from which that person was suffering.

Clearly, as I said in my intervention on the Minister, protocols for rare conditions—cases in which crises can readily occur out of hours—need to be strengthened so that the training level for dealing with very specific conditions is satisfactory.

There is no way to turn the clock back and, even if there were, it would not be wise so to do. Others have already covered some of the reasons for that, but I shall expand on one. The hon. Member for Boston and Skegness (Mark Simmonds) opened for the Opposition this evening. He was not always as clear as he might have been, but I think that he would say that—many would say that—he had a point about the danger of centralisation leading to centralism and a loss of control. I do not think that that is a realistic view of things. It is essential that we have a level of control at the level that is closest to the individual patient, so that it is clear who is responsible. I think that the Minister has led me to say a little more than I would otherwise have said.

My original reason for wanting to intervene focused on the experience that I and other hon. Members had yesterday of listening to carers of those with motor neurone disease, who have called out-of-hours services in their areas and the frankly very poor treatment that they have received. The most extreme and distressing example, which resulted in an apology and, I think, disciplinary action against the person involved, involved someone with NIV—non-invasive ventilation—which is the breathing system that supports someone and keeps their lungs functioning. The carer was asked to remove the mask to test their breathing so that the person on the other end of the phone could validate what they were saying. That was after the individual’s notes had been passed to the out-of-hours service; so they should have been perfectly aware of the condition from which that person was suffering.

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At the moment, there is GP representation on the professional executive committee of a PCT, but that is a too modest a function in the commissioning process. A governance board should be established to drive quality issues when a service is commissioned. That board should also be involved in the critical issue that I
am now going to come to—the relationship between the various parts of the NHS in the area.

Knowledge transfer is critical. When an out-of-hours service is offered in an area, doctors must be able to access information about patients. Earlier, I gave the example of a person with MND for whom the GP had taken the trouble to ensure that relevant information was passed on. That process should be integrated into the commissioning of the out-of-hours service, because it is critical that those who must answer a call and deal with distress have a clear idea of what the caller is suffering from and of how best to respond. That means that we need to strengthen NHS information systems. I have been a strong supporter of investing in health information systems, in spite of the difficulties that have been encountered. We must continue to get across the message that, without a robust means of transferring information within the NHS, problems are all the more likely to occur. We should always make it clear that we will never utterly eliminate risk, but we must try to ensure that the people who have to deal with crises know what they are dealing with and whom they are talking to.

I was interested in the contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford; for a start, it is nice to hear a Member of Parliament speaking about something that he knows about. He presented interesting evidence about the different relationship between patients and out-of-hours services that arose as a result of the change in the contractual function. I think that patient behaviours are substantially influenced by that relationship.

Essentially, the argument is that people who know their GPs will not want to ask too much of them. They know that providing out-of-hours services is difficult, so they exercise some restraint on the demands that they place on the system. However, those demands may be rather different if people believe that the services are provided by some quasi-state function with which they have no relationship whatever. It is worth thinking about how economic models apply in these circumstances, and how we might try to learn some of the lessons.

Finally, the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mrs. Miller), who is waiting to speak, made a very wise point about integrating out-of-hours services with the acute sector. From time to time, the acute trust in Derby has suggested establishing an out-of-hours service for my community in South Derbyshire that is adjacent to the accident and emergency function, with the aim of trying to provide common standards of treatment. It is perfectly obvious that inadequacies in out-of-hours care drive additional and often inappropriate demands on A and E services. There is therefore a shared interest in establishing common methodologies for examining demand, and common methods for dealing with patients when they arrive in distress and requiring treatment.

As in many cases, there is in this House a huge amount of common interest and opinion on this matter. Although I do not agree with the model proposed by the Opposition, and will not be voting for their amendment, I think that, if they reflect harder on some of the points made in the debate, they will see that there is much more to build on in terms of reform than might have appeared to be the case when the hon. Member for Boston and Skegness first started to speak.
might fall on the taxpayer. If there is no clear responsibility and no clear consequences, I fear that we will not see any change in the quality of care offered to some of our most vulnerable constituents.

My hon. Friend the Member for North-East Cambridgeshire (Mr. Moss) made an extremely powerful and moving contribution, and gave an excellent list of recommendations that the Minister should consider to reform the system so that we get the changes that we need. The hon. Member for Dartford (Dr. Stoate) discussed the different services provided in the NHS, and made a distinction between in-hours and out-of-hours services. Yes, I believe he is right to say that there will be different expectations of what might be delivered by those services, but my constituents and people throughout the country will expect the same quality of service, whether it is in hours or out of hours.

A number of hon. Members mentioned overseas doctors. That is at the heart of what we are debating. The Minister talked about improvements in fitness to practise for British doctors, but did not seem to move on to how that would affect the quality of doctors coming in from overseas. The hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb) spoke about CRB checks. He is right to say that overseas doctors coming in from any country, even within the UK, will not have had an effective CRB check.

Before I move on to the situation in my constituency, which I would like to highlight to the Minister because I think it is an excellent model of working, I shall pick up on the issue of fragmentation within the NHS. We now have, by my calculation, five different ways of accessing NHS services. The Minister spoke about the new 111 service, a telephone service for non-acute calls. We also have NHS Direct, the 999 service, GPs in their normal office hours, and out-of-hours services. As we move forward, we should be careful about how patients understand the way in which those different elements work together. It is a maze of different ways of accessing the NHS. From talking to those who provide services in my constituency, I know that that is becoming a matter of concern.

My constituency has a very high-quality out-of-hours service, which could be a model for other areas. The Hantsdoc service, which has been provided for the past 14 years in Basingstoke, looks after about 30,000 patients a year and is a partnership of local doctors working with the PCT in the community. They work closely with the hospital and are located in the fractures unit to reduce the unnecessary admissions that might otherwise occur. Doctors who are located centrally can see three times as many patients, and the service is open throughout the week and the weekend, when doctors’ surgeries are not available. I recently visited and spoke to patients, who were extremely satisfied with the service that they had received.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Boston and Skegness when he says that there is no one answer to out-of-hours services and no one model, and that that should be driven by what is required in a the community, but I offer the work of Hantsdoc as one model that has worked for 14 years and served my constituency well.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Eighteen minutes remain before the debate is wound up, so I appeal to hon. Members to see if they can help each other in this respect.

6.22 pm

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Beckenham) (Con): I will do my best to help, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It is interesting that we have debated the problems of out-of-hours care. That follows endless debates over the years about abuse, or the increasing use, of accident and emergency services, the problems of single-handed doctors, the provision of GP services, and the wide range of options that exist for people to access health care outside the ordinary hours of a GP practice.

There are legitimate concerns about the out-of-hours care service. In defence of my own PCT, I should say that it is not a subject that has been raised a great deal with me. I am glad to say, but we have an extended 24-hour-a-day GP practice, a minor injuries unit, and a new accident and emergency department. However, we also have a high proportion of ageing single-handed practices, which is what has driven the breadth of provision.

Something profound is going on with people’s access to out-of-hours care. Lest I be accused of being a hard-hearted Tory, I shall quote a comment from the hon. Member for South Derbyshire (Mr. Todd), who spoke about economic modelling in the health service. There is a demand, led by patients, for widening the different forms of provision. By concentrating on out-of-hours care today, minor injuries units in another debate tomorrow, or NHS Direct in a debate two weeks from now, we are not putting together the whole provision of out-of-hours care and ensuring that the models that we offer meet the demands of a patient-led service. That is what we would dearly like to move towards, and it is the basis of my Front-Bench team’s proposals on that one issue of out-of-hours care. We are trying hard to take health care out of politics, and an NHS board would be able to look across health care provision to ensure that patient-led demand was met most appropriately.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mrs. Miller) said, there is a need for the out-of-hours service, for the terrified mother who has a child with croup, for the elderly person who suddenly has a fit, or for whatever the crisis might be. Those people cannot get to the extended GP service or to the minor injuries unit, and reaching A and E is even more difficult. However, we must bring into the debate how the ambulance service is used not just as an accident or crisis service, but almost as a social service.

I was out with an ambulance team when they were called to put an elderly gentleman back into bed after he had fallen out, and it became palpably obvious that he was lonely. He fell out of bed deliberately to get the ambulance team. When they arrived, they knew him. That is an abuse of the ambulance service, but it highlights how the service should be part of a seamless out-of-hours service. By focusing on those different areas separately, we do not focus on how we can meet patients’ demands, and that, more than anything else, is what the NHS should deliver.

6.27 pm

Dr. Richard Taylor (Wyre Forest) (Ind): I shall try to be rapid. Out of hours comprises two thirds of the week, and most emergencies will therefore occur in
[Dr. Richard Taylor]

those two thirds, so it is important that we have high-quality, out-of-hours care. I am green with envy at the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mrs. Miller), who still has the old system that good GPs used long before the GP contract came in. They knew that they could not cover in-hours care as well as out-of-hours care, so they got together, formed a co-operative—my own GPs did that—and, if there were 50 of them, three could be on call for a night on only one in 17 nights.

In the investigation by the Health Committee into out-of-hours care, it was recommended that such co-operatives have 80 GPs to cover holidays and time away, so that system could still be used. In the Committee’s 2004 report on the out-of-hours service, we underlined the importance of GPs’ expertise and knowledge. In a recommendation, we stated:

“It is therefore vital that they”—the GPs—“do not become disengaged from the process of redesigning GP out-of-hours services during this critical transition phase, and their expertise and local knowledge lost.”

Existing GPs are absolutely crucial to redesigning the process.

We know, and many hon. Members have said, that in some areas there are excellent out-of-hours services, while in others they are pretty awful. I have experience of them when they are not so good. I am purposely not naming any names, but, if such services are run by a private company, we can never discover how the tender was awarded, because of commercial confidentiality, and one has the distinct impression that the contracts are awarded simply on price. That means that the skill mix is reduced, because we have to employ fewer doctors and more emergency care practitioners. Emergency care practitioners drive themselves around, so it is not necessary to employ drivers to drive GPs around. It is obvious that when the tender is based on price, economies are made. That is why in many parts of the country it is very hard to get local GPs to take part in these rotas, so we then have foreign doctors taking part.

I am grateful to the Minister for explaining the controls that are meant to be in place for vetting doctors who take part in out-of-hours care. It is crucial to tighten up these systems. The Health Committee hopes, before the general election is called, to have single session on these systems. The Health Committee hopes, before the general election is called, to have single session on these systems.

We cannot go back to the old-style system; people who have it are extremely lucky, where it is really working. A GP who recently wrote to The Independent bewailing the changes and the surrender of 24-hour responsibility admitted that we cannot go back because GPs are becoming deskilled. Sitting in a GP’s surgery looking after patients whom one knows very well with a condition that one knows very well is entirely different from having five to 10 minutes, in difficult circumstances, trying to work out if somebody is extremely ill or not.

Let me make—or repeat—one or two positive suggestions. Pay and conditions across the country must be as nearly similar as possible. In its submission for this debate, the BMA says that in some areas funding for out-of-hours care is only £3 per head, while in others it is £16. Are the best out-of-hours services those that are the best funded? We do not know, and a survey of that nature would be very helpful.

An absolutely vital move, for which I have been pushing since the tragedy in my constituency in 2007, is the 111 number. I think that the hon. Member for Basingstoke slightly misunderstood the importance of the 111 number, which is intended to bring together every other service apart from the emergency services. If someone knows that they need to call 999, okay, it is a matter of life and death, and that is what they do. If they live in my area, where there is no A and E department that they can walk into, they have seven or eight different alternatives. The whole point of the 111 number is that it is tied to the area that a person lives in, and with one call it tells them whether to ring NHS Direct, whether to go to the out-of-hours centre or whether to go to the minor injuries unit.

That system is absolutely ideal. If it is joined together with a really efficient triage system such as NHS pathways, which Ministers know all about, and which is being rolled out in some places, it could make a huge difference, particularly to people who do not have a local A and E department, and relieve the stress on A and E departments by ensuring that only the right people go there. Knowledge that the 111 number, which has been mentioned, is crucial. Why cannot the triage people, as soon as somebody phones up, flash up their summary care record in front of them so that they know exactly what is going on?

Finally, I should like to clarify what the BMA said. For once, the BMA, which we in this place tend to think of as the doctor’s union that thinks only of doctors, got it exactly right. I will read the very last bit of its submission:

“The BMA believes that standards of out-of-hours care could be improved if PCOs”—primary care organisations—“involved local GPs in…commissioning”.

It states not that GPs should do the commissioning, but that they should be involved in it and advise the primary care organisation. It goes on to say that that involvement should happen so that “high-quality, timely and cost-effective services can be developed that are sensitive to local circumstances.”

I cannot understand any political party disagreeing with that.

6.34 pm

Nadine Dorries (Mid-Bedfordshire) (Con): The Minister was right to identify fatigue as a reason for the out-of-hours service as we know it having been developed. Many GPs were very fatigued and it was impossible for them to continue under the system that was in place. However, the current out-of-hours system was then imposed on them, so my constituents went from having GPs who had no room for manoeuvre and were fatigued to having an out-of-hours service in which GPs are working abroad in Poland, Germany and other countries and flying over here on a Friday night. That service is therefore being delivered by fatigued out-of-hours doctors. At the great capital expense of changing one system to another, there is absolutely no difference in the level of care for many constituents—they are being provided with care by fatigued GPs. In many cases the care is much worse because of the language barrier and various other reasons that we have heard today.
There are attempts to minimise the importance of the rise in complaints, but I do not believe that we can do so. As we know, the people who complain about the out-of-hours care are those who are able and motivated to do so. We do not find the poor complaining, because they are grateful to get any help they can. The vulnerable, the needy and the elderly do not complain, because it is not in their make-up to complain about something that they see they are getting for free, such as access to the NHS. Yet the poor, the elderly and the vulnerable are the people who will use the service the most. There are also parents with children, and they have other things to see to. We can therefore probably accept that the number of complaints should be ramped up to take into account those who do not complain.

We have a system that is no better for patients than the one that the Government were trying to replace. Amazingly, it is evaluated by response times, not by the quality of care that is delivered to patients. What is the point in thinking that the service is good if a GP is there within 20 minutes, if the care that he delivers when he arrives is of poor quality? That is simply not good enough. Should not the primary evaluation be the care that is delivered when the doctor arrives at a patient’s house?

The hon. Member for Dartford (Dr. Stoate) said—I am sure he will correct me if I am wrong—that different GPs provide different care throughout the country, which is true. They are providing different care in communities that have varying needs, with different health care provision commissioned in different ways by varying PCTs. I imagine that it is almost impossible for a doctor to come from overseas, be in a different area each time he arrives here and know what he is supposed to deliver and how he is supposed to access the ongoing care that his patients need. Does it not therefore make sense to have local budgets, provided to GPs so that they can commission their own care in the way they need to?

I understand the concerns that the hon. Gentleman raised from his very experienced position. However, there are contracts and then there are contracts. There are ways for local GP practices to commission care so as to protect themselves, so that they are not ultimately responsible for the care delivered. That problem of responsibility needs to be circumnavigated. It should not be a wall that we come up against and say, “You know what? We can’t do it, because it means the GP is ultimately going to be responsible.”

My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mrs. Miller) talked about the services in her area. I have similar services in Bedford. Our accident and emergency facility in Bedford hospital makes provision for patients to receive the equivalent of out-of-hours care for a certain amount of time. That is a good way of triaging out the patients who can be seen by nurses and out-of-hours doctors because otherwise they impose a cost on the PCT. It is an excellent model, but it cannot be delivered in rural areas or in every community throughout the country.

I believe that, although many GPs do not want to return to a system whereby they are exhausted and expected to work all week and then all weekend, they would welcome being trusted again with a real budget to commission the care that they need. They know their patients, the type of care that they need and how best to deliver a service locally. In many areas, GP practices are grouping together to provide their own out-of-hours service because they want to deliver a service locally that they know their communities need and appreciate.

If local people were unhappy with the service, would they not go straight to their GPs to complain? Is it not easier to complain to a GP if people are seeing him anyway, and they know that he is responsible for commissioning the out-of-hours care? Are not they likely to say, “I called out the doctor last Saturday, and I wasn’t happy with what happened”? It is a much easier way for GPs to get to know what is delivered on the ground. They can then modify and adjust the service that they provide to suit their community.

Local budgets, practice-based commissioning, and GPs having a real responsibility for what they provide and how they provide it makes perfect sense for patient requirements, local needs and patients’ ability to adapt that service if and when they want.

6.41 pm

Mike Penning (Hemel Hempstead) (Con): We have had an eminently sensible debate this afternoon. Hon. Members of all parties care about the quality of care that our constituents get. Sometimes we disagree slightly—and sometimes more than slightly—about how it is delivered, but we all care passionately.

Contributions have been measured and understandably passionate. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for North-East Cambridgeshire (Mr. Moss), who, like us all, would have loved to raise constituency concerns and effects on his constituency. His speech was extremely measured, and he will be a great loss to the House when he retires at the next election.

I am conscious that other hon. Members are retiring at the next election, and I apologise if I do not have time to respond to all who spoke.

The key to many of the contributions was safety—for our constituents and the patients who look to the NHS to give them the care that they deserve and that we would all expect. The problem with the existing contract is that many patients do not feel they are given the care that they deserve, whether they live in rural or urban areas. We have heard much about the different sorts of care that we are offered in rural as well as urban areas. My seat is both very rural and very urban, so I well understand the problems.

The hon. Member for South Derbyshire (Mr. Todd), who eventually decided to take part in the debate—I understand why, and I repeat that it was a sensible debate—made some important points. The first was about knowledge and records. Do people who are called out of hours know the patients’ concerns? We talked about multiple sclerosis, motor neurone disease and other conditions. It is imperative that that information is available when possible. That is why the link to the GP is so important.

As the hon. Member for Dartford (Dr. Stoate) knows, I often bow to his medical knowledge. He is a GP, and I serve on the Health Committee with him. I think he said that GPs grabbed the contract with both hands only to remove the risk and perhaps some of the tiredness from it. That is not quite right. GPs were offered a contract by the Government in 2004—frankly, if they had not bitten their arm off, they would have been silly,
because the financial benefits were huge. The contract was fantastic for GPs who had been working through the nights and at weekends. All they had to do was give up £6,000 a year—£120 a week. Nine out of 10 did that. I do not think anyone would take on such a work load for such a small amount of money. It is difficult for a hard-working MP who is also a GP to say that this is about tiredness. Surely he is exhausted when he leaves the House late at night or in the early hours of the morning and goes on to be a GP in the morning. The amount of work he does in his constituency must make him a very tired GP, which is worrying.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Nadine Dorries), like many colleagues, touched on continuity and safety for patients and what they expect from the NHS. The debate has been very much about—I hope—patient-led services. The key is not what the NHS, GPs or NHS Direct want, but what is right and proper for patients. Quite rightly, we have talked extensively about GPs and GPs out of hours, but that is only part of what we should rightly talk about today.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Mrs. Lait) said that we should have a debate not about NHS Direct, out-of-hours care and A and E, but about what a joined-up package would be. One problem with the existing PCT packages is that they are not integrated. There are myriad contacts out there—there are polyclinics and Darzi clinics, care clinics, walk-in units, GP surgeries in railway stations, NHS Direct and NHS Choices.

There are so many different things that it is not surprising that our constituents are confused, which is why I was over the moon when the Government adopted our policy of going to a second number, 111. The number is fine, but do the Government understand what it should involve? I was slightly concerned when my good friend, the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Dr. Taylor), said that people could be given another number to call after they called 111. That is not the idea. The idea is that people should be triaged through the phone system. Once they have had the courage or fear, or felt the need, to pick up the phone, they should be able to triage right the way through. Once they have dialled 111, they should be able to go all the way through so they can find out which pharmacy is open that night, whether they need to go to A and E, or whether an ambulance should be called to them immediately.

I understand that none of the three pilots includes access through the web portal, which is wrong. We need to have a joined-up situation. We should offer a single 111 service, but it should be replicated on the web. At the moment, that is not included in the pilots. Will the Minister look at that, because it is very important?

Finally, if we want to talk about out-of-hours services, we must look at the emergency care single pathway. As I said, the 111 number is eminently sensible, and I am pleased the Government are using it, but we must look at what service is needed by our constituents when they phone up. Should we look at pharmacies, walk-in centres and social care? Should it be possible to tell people whether they need to make a GP appointment the next day, whether a paramedic needs to be sent straight away and whether that should be a single-responder?

The Minister would be surprised if I did not mention out-of-hours dentistry, which is in crisis—dentistry is in crisis during the day and at night. If the Minister went to A and E units at night and talked to patients, he would find a huge number who are there simply because they cannot get a dentist during the day. We know that in excess of 1 million patients cannot access NHS dentistry, but when people are in pain and turn up at A and E, we need to ensure that the skill base is available for them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mrs. Miller) talked about walk-in centres integrating with A and E. I have seen that in action and it absolutely works around the country and releases a lot of the pressure from existing A and E units. I am sure all hon. Members visit their A and E units—I am lucky enough to go and visit very many. Many patients could have been seen at a minor injuries unit, but they go to the A and E because they feel safe. Many in A and E wanted to get a GP appointment but could not, and many are sent to A and E after a long call to NHS Direct, when they could have been triaged in a much better way.

Working as an integrated service is crucial if we are to have the out-of-hours and urgent care that we need. The Government disagree with our policies—that is their prerogative—but they should call an election and let the public decide.

6.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Ann Keen): I too wish to say how well this debate has gone. There have been improvements in out-of-hours services in the last 12 years. They are good, but they are not great. They have let some people down and we need to improve them further. That is why we have asked Professor Steve Field, the chairman of the Royal College of General Practitioners, and Dr. David Colín-Thomé, the director of primary care services in England, to review the out-of-hours service. The report by the Quality Care Commission will also be presented shortly. We have more work to do on out-of-hours services and we intend to improve them. We need to ensure that PCTs and employers do the checks that are needed.

The hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb) said that he wanted to see checks on language and professional competence, and that those should be carried out by the GMC. He claimed that that would require changes to the EU directive. We cannot wait that long. The issues need to be addressed now. PCTs have a legal responsibility to ensure competence in the English language and the practice of medicine. Employers should have that responsibility, and we need to ensure that that is done. Reform of the EU directive is not necessary to achieve that.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) chairs the Health Committee and is well known for his detailed opinions on health. I shall address his points throughout my speech. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Dr. Stoate) said, with obvious authority, responsibility for out-of-hours services lies with the PCT. The hon. Member for Boston and Skegness (Mark Simmonds) says that he would transfer responsibility for commissioning of out-of-hours services to GPs. They would therefore be liable in law for any failures by locums they employ, or any negligence or failures by an
employed GP. It is no wonder that the BMA is concerned about Conservative policy, which would lay a similar liability on GPs to that which they had before 2004.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Derbyshire (Mr. Todd) spoke movingly about the care of long-term conditions. Such conditions require a different out-of-hours service. In many instances, they require a rapid response team, and many such teams are in place. They are multi-disciplinary, including paramedics and specialist nurses. The hon. Members for Basingstoke (Mrs. Miller) and for Beckenham (Mrs. Lait) also spoke of the need for health care teams with different skills, including physiotherapists, paramedics and nurses.

Martin Salter (Reading, West) (Lab): My hon. Friend mentions nursing. I am interested in the development of policy in that area. Does she intend to follow the Leader of the Opposition and meet the Nurses for Reform campaign group which advocates the wholesale privatisation of the NHS, including out-of-hours care?

Ann Keen: My hon. Friend raises an important point. I wonder whether Opposition Front Benchers have met that group—[Interruption.] Have you met them? [Interruption.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have not met anyone.

Ann Keen: From what I have read of that group, my hon. Friend’s remarks are very worrying.

The hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Dr. Taylor) spoke of the 111 system, which will be excellent. I am pleased to see that the pilots may be ready as early as May or June. He made a point about the BMA involving GPs in commissioning, but I would go further and look for more nursing staff to be involved in the commissioning of services.

As usual, the comments by the hon. Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Nadine Dorries) did not disappoint me.

I thank all hon. Members who contributed to this debate and I know that they would want to thank NHS staff. Illness, accidents and ailments pay no attention to the time of day, so we must do all that we can to ensure that patients get the right treatment, at the right time and in the right place, and we must have a system of out-of-hours and urgent care that is achieving that goal. People can now access the NHS in more ways than ever before: through one of the 112 new GP surgeries in the areas with the fewest doctors and the greatest need, and through the new GP-led health centres, of which there is one in every primary care trust, open from 8 am until 8 pm, seven days a week, 365 days a year—there is an excellent one up and running in the heart of Hounslow, and in the right place, and we must have a system of out-of-hours care that is achieving that goal. People can now access the NHS in more ways than ever before: through one of the 112 new GP surgeries in the areas with the fewest doctors and the greatest need, and through the new GP-led health centres, of which there is one in every primary care trust, open from 8 am until 8 pm, seven days a week, 365 days a year—there is an excellent one up and running in the heart of Hounslow, and in the right place, and we must have a system of out-of-hours service. All our services must be safe and of a high quality. They will be checked by the Care Quality Commission or the other regulators that will be needed.

When I look at the extension of patient services since 2004, I feel confident that we will continue to improve our services in every way possible for our constituents, and that is thanks to NHS staff and the commitment that they show.

Question put (Standing Order No. 31(2).), That the original words stand part of the Question.

The House divided:

Division No. 64] [6.59 pm

AYES

Afyrie, Adam
Ainsworth, Mr. Peter
Amess, Mr. David
Ancram, rh Mr. Michael
Arbuthnot, rh Mr. James
Atkinson, Mr. Peter
Bacon, Mr. Richard
Baker, Norman
Baldry, Tony
Baron, Mr. John
Beith, rh Sir Alan
Bellingham, Mr. Henry
Benyon, Mr. Richard
Beresford, Sir Paul
Binley, Mr. Brian
Blunt, Mr. Crispin
Bone, Mr. Peter
Brady, Mr. Graham
Brazier, Mr. Julian
Brooke, Annette
Brown, Mr. Jeremy
Browning, Angela
Burns, Mr. Simon
Burt, Alastair
Cable, Dr. Vincent
Careswell, Mr. Douglas
Cash, Mr. William
Chope, Mr. Christopher
Clark, Greg
Clarke, rh Mr. Kenneth
Clifton-Brown, Mr. Geoffrey
Cox, Mr. Geoffrey
Curry, rh Mr. David
Prentice, Mr. Gordon
Primarolo, rh Dawn
Prosper, Gwyn
Purchase, Mr. Ken
Purnell, rh James
Raynsford, rh Mr. Nick
Reed, Mr. Andy
Reed, Mr. Jamie
Riordan, Mrs. Linda
Robinson, Mr. Geoffrey
Rooney, Mr. Terry
Roy, Mr. Frank
Roy, Lindsay
Ruane, Chris
Ruddock, Joan
Russell, Christine
Saiter, Martin
Seabeck, Alison
Sharma, Mr. Virendra
Southan, Jonathan
Sheridan, Jim
Simon, Mr. Siôn
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Mr. Dennis
Slaughter, Mr. Andy
Smith, rh Mr. Andrew
Smith, Ms Angela C.
(Sheffield, Hillsborough)
Smith, rh Angela E. (Basildon)
Smith, Geraldine
Smith, rh Jacqui
Snelgrove, Anne
Soulsby, Sir Peter
Spellar, rh Mr. John
Starkey, Dr. Phyllis
Stewart, Ian
Stoate, Dr. Howard
Strang, rh Dr. Gavin
Straw, rh Mr. Jack
Stuart, Ms Gisela
Sutcliffe, Mr. Gerry
Tami, Mark
Taylor, Ms Dari
Taylor, Dr. Richard
Thomas, Mr. Gareth
Thornberry, Emily
Todd, Mr. Mark
Touhig, rh Mr. Don
Trickett, Jon
Truswell, Mr. Paul
Turner, Dr. Desmond
Turner, Mr. Neil
Tigg, Derek
Ward, Claire
Wareing, Mr. Robert
N.
Watson, Mr. Tom
Watts, Mr. Dave
Whitehead, Dr. Alan
Wicks, rh Malcolm
Williams, Mrs. Betty
Wills, rh Mr. Michael
Wilson, Phil
Winnick, Mr. David
Winterton, rh Ms Rosie
Wright, Mr. Anthony
Wright, David
Wright, Dr. Tony

Business without Debate

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 31(2)), That the proposed words be there added. Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to. Resolved.

That this House supports family doctors as the bedrock of healthcare services in the NHS; welcomes the improvements in out-of-hours and urgent care services over the last 12 years; notes that the Carson report in 2000 identified the need for the reform of out-of-hours care which was carried out in 2004; further notes that by the start of 2004 only five per cent. of patients saw their own GP out of hours; acknowledges that GP organisations say that they do not want a return to the system which existed in 1997; understands the continuing need to improve the quality of out-of-hours care; notes that the Government commissioned the first national out-of-hours benchmark to help primary care trusts and providers improve the quality and productivity of out-of-hours services and to reduce local variation; recognises the improvement in healthcare after the introduction of the GP contract in 2004, which has significantly extended weekend and evening opening of surgeries for routine, bookable appointments; recognises that over 77 per cent. of GP practices now offer extended opening hours and that every primary care trust is developing a new GP-led health centre, open from 8 am until 8 pm, seven days a week, 365 days a year; and welcomes plans for people who need urgent care to be able to dial 111 for advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

EUROPEAN UNION DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order no. 119(11)),

ROAD TRAFFIC

That the draft Motor Vehicles (International Circulation) (Amendment) Order 2010, which was laid before this House on 5 January, be approved. — (Helen Jones.)

Question agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to. Question accordingly negatived.

EU ENLARGEMENT STRATEGY

That this House takes note of European Union Document No. 14513/09, Commission Communication on Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2009-10; and supports the Government’s policy that Turkey, Croatia, Iceland and all the countries of the Western Balkans should be able to join the EU when they meet the criteria.— (Helen Jones.)

The Deputy Speaker’s opinion as to the decision of the Question being challenged, the Division was deferred until Wednesday 3 February (Standing Order No. 41A).
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made,

That, at the sitting on Thursday 28 January, notwithstanding Standing Order No. 20 (Time for taking private business) the Private Business set down by the Chairman of Ways and Means may be entered upon at any hour, and may then be proceeded with, though opposed, for three hours, after which the Speaker shall interrupt the business. —(Helen Jones.)

Hon. Members: Object.

SECTION 5 OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (AMENDMENT) ACT 1993

Motion made,

That, for the purposes of its approval under section 5 of the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1993, the Government's assessment as set out in the Pre-Budget Report 2009 shall be treated as if it were an instrument subject to the provisions of Standing Order No. 118 (Delegated Legislation Committees). —(Helen Jones.)

Hon. Members: Object.

Barry Gardiner (Brent, North) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Speaker has given his full support to the work of the Youth Parliament and I seek your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as to whether it is in order for a public body to seek to intimidate its members in any way.

Recently, my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Ms Butler) invited young people who were members of her Facebook group to visit her in Parliament. Many of those young people were also members of the Brent Youth Parliament. Shortly thereafter, members of the Youth Parliament received a letter from Brent council’s senior lawyer. The letter stressed that Brent Youth Parliament is supported by the London borough of Brent and it counselled them as follows: “You will obviously need to give careful consideration as to whether you wish to align yourself with a particular person or group and what impact this may have on others’ perception of you as a Brent Youth Parliament member. If you do decide to participate in local politics, you will need to give consideration as to which person or group you are willing to be connected with and any implications of this.”

Many of these young people have been frightened by the letter and regard it as a warning shot. They have previously believed that Brent council was encouraging young people to become politically active, but they now consider that it encourages them only if they are sympathetic to the Liberal Democrats. What action can this House take to ensure that these young people are not bullied in this way by a local authority?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Alan Haselhurst): May I say to the hon. Gentleman that that is not a point of order for the Chair? I think that it is a matter that he might have dealt with better by writing to Mr. Speaker, whose interest in the matter he has cited. This is now taking time out of the Adjournment debate. He has put that on the record and he may wish to take it further in the manner that I have suggested.

Primary and Secondary Education (Devon)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Helen Jones.)

7.18 pm

Richard Younger-Ross (Teignbridge) (LD): Devon’s education authority is one of the worst funded in the country; its standing is 148th out of 151. Indeed, only Leicestershire, South Gloucestershire and Hertfordshire have less per pupil funding than Devon. This is not a new problem; it dates back to the funding formulas set up in the 1980s.

I wish to cite what a local head teacher has said and to give voice to the number of people from across Devon who are concerned about the issue. This is about their concern and anger, so I wish to put their words on the record.

Chris Bray, who was head of the Abbotshamwell school, said that when he was head at Abbotshamwell, the Conservative Government brought in a funding system that gave Devon schools less than virtually every other authority in England—£96 per pupil in 1994, rising to £145 in 1995—and that it has continued to get worse. That is the gap in funding, on average, compared with the rest of the country.

Recognition has to be given that the Labour Government have put more money into education, but the system of grant per pupil is now worse because it is fixed on a cost-plus basis rather than being based on the criteria of what drives the costs in the school. Changes in make up and in deprivation in an area are no longer a matter for consideration because the funding is fixed at a point in time five years ago, when the current criteria were set up, using a faulty system, as I have already explained, from 20 years before that.

The top funded council in the country is currently the City of London, where pupils get a grant in the order of £7,603. The 10 best funded areas per pupil receive £6,252. The national average funding for each school pupil is £4,217. In Devon, it is only £3,842. I am at a loss to understand how that grant of £375 less than the national average can be justified. I looked at the individual schools, and we worked out a little list from the rolls of the schools in my constituency. Let me pick a couple of examples.

Abbotshamwell primary, a small school, has a funding deficit of £29,250. Let me look at some of the larger schools. Hazelwood, which is also a primary school, has a deficit of £145,000. The situation for the secondary schools is even worse. Dawlish primary college is losing £324,000, Teignmouth community college £394,000, South Dartmoor community college £615,000, Teign school £519,000 and Newton Abbot college £362,000. Those are all substantive sums of money—enough, in most cases, to employ 10 teachers. That is one of the main complaints of pupils, parents, governors and teachers. Given more resources, they could do more with what they have.

It can be argued that in Devon, of course, we do very well. We have high standards and educational attainment is in the top third in the country. That is true, but it is no good just considering the 50 per cent. We must consider the rest of the pupils and what happens to them. It is the pupils who have difficulties, who have been statemented...
or who come from areas of social deprivation who are losing out. I would consider it a fundamental aim of any education system to create equal opportunity, and that is being lost in Devon because it is not getting a fair slice of the cake. The original formula fails to take into account the rural deprivation in Devon and the costs associated with travel for pupils and staff.

Mr. Hugo Swire (East Devon) (Con): Devon county council is responsible for 8,000 miles of road, more than any other authority in the country. The school transport bill is now in excess of £22 million a year. Does the hon. Gentleman not agree that any fair funding formula for education in Devon must take into account rural sparsity and the high cost of transporting children to school?

Richard Younger-Ross: The hon. Gentleman makes a very good point: of course any such formula must take account of that. Indeed, the director formerly responsible for the county’s highways and environment was wont to say that there were more roads in Devon when Plymouth and Torbay were part of the greater council than there were in the whole of Belgium. That gives some idea of the scale of the problem. Plymouth and Torbay are no longer part of that road network, but it is still vast and people still have large distances to travel.

I know that the hon. Member for East Devon (Mr. Swire) has a large constituency, but mine covers 660 square miles. It takes me two hours to get from one side to the other. People live in small pockets, and they have to travel long distances to get to the main hubs and to their schools. He has made a very good point.

The great distances that people must travel affect pupils’ attendance at after-school clubs, and also parental choice, as the options are reduced. The county has a real problem when people who wish to assert their parental choice are denied it because the travel budget has to be made to work. In one year, the Government allocated some £5 million in grant for travel—I am not sure of the exact figure—but the real cost was three times that. As a result, the county had to take money from elsewhere to be able to fund its transport needs.

A slight reduction in pupil numbers results in a grant cut, yet core staff must still meet curriculum requirements. That is a particular problem for the small schools that are to be found in rural areas. A campaign group, the F40 group, is campaigning for under-funded education authorities. When the Minister for Schools and Learners addressed its conference on 3 November, he said:

“We want to work with F40 to make sure that that fairness I’ve talked about is built into dedicated schools grant funding from design stage to distribution. It’s one of the reasons why we ordered the funding review last year—so that we can develop a single, transparent formula for the distribution of DSG that’s in line with relative need.”

We welcome what the Minister said, but in answer to the question of whether the Government were still committed to small schools, he said:

“Yes, we are. We know that they’re an important part of the rural landscape and an important factor in keeping rural communities alive. And I am pleased to say that the presumption against closing rural schools, which we introduced in 1998, has reduced the number of closures from around 30 a year to an average of around 9 or 10 a year now.”

In my view, nine or 10 small rural schools closing every year is still too many. They are the heart of their communities, and they have an important role to play in keeping them together.

Devon county council has launched a campaign for fair funding. In a press release dated 16 October, the chairman of the Devon Association of Primary Headteachers—Gary Chown, the head teacher at Tiverton’s Wilcombe primary school—said:

“We are not asking for special treatment. What we want is for Devon’s school children to be treated fairly.”

He went on to say that “staff costs account for around 80 per cent. of a school’s running costs. It costs roughly the same to employ a teacher anywhere in the country because of the national pay scales. Books and equipment cost the same. So do most of the running costs of a school. And in Devon many remote schools have to pay more for such services as broadband because of their distance from the main hub.”

The chairman of the Devon Association of Governors, Don Paterson, is also chairman of the governors of Newton Abbott college in my constituency. He said:

“We do not dispute for a moment that the Government has put more money since 1997, but percentage increases in school funding merely means that the gap is widening all the time between Devon schools and their better-funded colleagues in other parts of the country.”

Josh Wright, the spokesman for the teachers’ unions, teaches at Honiton’s community college, and the Minister might expect him to be on the Government’s side.

He said:

“My colleagues are at the chalk face, and we know what a difference we could make to our students’ education if we were fairly funded. An extra teaching assistant, another field trip or an additional piece of kit in the classroom could really help a student to get the best from their education. Children only get one chance at education and it is really unfair that Devon children are penalised because of the postcode lottery of school funding.”

Other quotes have been sent to me since I secured the debate, and I shall read out a couple more before I conclude and allow the Minister to respond. I could actually have read out enough to fill 45 minutes—I know that I cannot, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I do not intend to do so. Such is people’s anger that when I sent out a request for them to write to me, my inbox was flooded with e-mails from constituents.

Nick D’Agorne, head of North Tawton primary school, said:

“As regards unfair funding, all I need to do is share with you our class sizes….I have had to refuse three families last term as we cannot fit the children into the large classes. So why not employ another teacher? We are unable to employ another teacher as we would have to make TAs redundant and not give support for the teachers in the mornings.”

Jo Frith, a governor at the Littletown primary school in Honiton, said:

“At current levels of DSG settlement, we are predicting that we will have to have mixed-year group classes in key stage 2, with more than 30 per class in order just to keep ourselves in the black.”

Is it not a disgrace that after years of promises on “Education, education, education”, schools have been forced to adopt class sizes of over 30? I thought that we had a commitment to get rid of that.

I shall end with a final quote, from David Fitzsimmons, the principal of Holsworthy community college:

“If we truly want to achieve a world class education system, we have to tackle the underachievement and the needs of the 50 per cent. or so of children and young people who are not achieving the national benchmark in GCSE results tables.”
In short, it is a disgrace that for the past 20 years, Devon schools have not received what they should have received to enable them to educate the young people—the children, the school pupils—in Devon. The fact that they achieve such high results, with such meagre resources, is a testament to their dedication, which is what I would expect from their profession. The Government are reviewing the system, and I welcome their recognition that it is not quite how it should be. In doing so, I hope that the Minister will be positive and say, “It is not necessarily broke, but it ain’t working quite as it ought to.” Is it not time that local authorities such as Devon had their fair share of the cake?

7.33 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families (Ms Diana R. Johnson): I congratulate the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Richard Younger-Ross) on securing this debate.

The funding of education is a topic that my Department takes seriously, and we want to make sure that we get the right amount of funding for our schools, because that allows our schools to give the right amount of support to their students, as well as enabling them to pay for the appropriate numbers of staff to meet the needs of their pupils and manage the upkeep of their school. Funding in Devon has been the subject of previous meetings with other hon. Members and has led to a petition on the No. 10. website. The campaign has been very effective in raising the issue.

Before I address the concerns that the hon. Gentleman raised, it is appropriate for me to point out the unprecedented funding that the Department has given to address decades of underinvestment in our schools. I am pleased that he recognised and paid tribute to that. There has been a national revenue funding increase of £2,410 per pupil between 1997 and 2010. That has seen the previous average revenue funding of £1,808 that was spent on each pupil back in 1997 increased to record levels of investment of £4,218 in 2010.

We want to ensure that that investment is built upon steadily, so that each school gets the right amount of funding to support its students and staff. That was the chief aim when we set up the dedicated schools grant in 2006. The amount was calculated by the SpendPlus model, which took the per-pupil spend by each local authority in 2005-06 and applied an increase to it. This model of funding was used in 2006-07 and 2007-08 and, following extensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, it was decided that the formula would also be used for 2008 to 2011. Using the formula has created stable and predictable funding levels for all local authorities. It is worth noting that in the pre-Budget report in December 2009, there was a significant commitment to increase spending on schools in real terms between 2011 and 2013.

That brings me on to funding for Devon. I understand that the funding that schools in Devon receive has been an issue for some time, and that there has been a debate about it for several years. I appreciate the concerns of the hon. Members for Teignbridge and for East Devon (Mr. Swire). It is our intention to provide all schools with the appropriate funding for their area. We want to ensure that all children get an excellent education, and children from disadvantaged backgrounds need extra support from their school to make that a reality.

Such support requires funding, and the appropriate school funding reflects the needs of each area. Devon has fewer pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds than other local authorities, which is a contributing factor to the amount that it receives. Only 8.5 per cent. of Devon’s funding settlement in 2009-10 was for disadvantaged pupils. That compares with the national average of 12 per cent.

Let me pick up on the comment from the hon. Member for East Devon about school transport. School transport is funded not from the dedicated schools grant, but from the general local government fund. Part of the funding in the dedicated schools grant is specifically for sparsely populated areas, because we all recognise that the cost of running a small rural school is much higher than the cost of running an inner-city school. Consequently, Devon will receive this year £9.38 million to cover the cost of its sparsely populated areas.

Mr. Swire: I am aware of the dedicated schools grant of £9.38 million to cover all aspects of sparsity, but the transport bill is more than £22 million a year.

Ms Johnson: I heard the hon. Gentleman’s comments on that, but as we are talking about the funding that goes into schools in Devon, I thought it was worth making it clear that that part of the expenditure on school transport is separate from the school funding directly to schools, which is the main thrust of the debate.

Staffing, managing staff and how much teachers are paid were among the issues raised. Schools are free to make choices between priorities, but they have a responsibility to make tough decisions and to operate within their funding allocation. It should be a matter of course for each school to review how it deploys its resources, including staffing.

On rural deprivation, I appreciate that young people in rural areas may find it more difficult sometimes to access services and opportunities, but we still have high expectations of services and activities being made available in all areas, not just in towns and cities. The White Paper “Your child, your school, our future” published last year set out our vision for a 21st century schools system, in which every child can get access to the support and activities that they need to succeed.

Richard Younger-Ross: Does the Minister accept that it is very difficult to measure rural deprivation? One reason why Devon loses out on funding is that the measures that are used to look for rural deprivation are a very blunt instrument. We need far more refined tools to work out the real poverty and deprivation in rural areas.

Ms Johnson: I am certainly happy to come on to deprivation as one issue that might be put out to consultation when we consider the funding formula that we use in future.

To return to our expectations, we recognise that schools will not be able to deliver everything on their own, and that is why we are encouraging schools to work in partnership with other schools and services,
especially in rural areas. Our expectation is that they will work together to deliver for all their pupils, using pooled and combined budgets where appropriate to maximise efficiency and get the most from their money. On raising Devon’s funding to the national average, I should say that funding should reflect the needs of each local authority, so some authorities will receive an education settlement that is lower than others. I appreciate that the current funding methodology does not necessarily wholly reflect the costs and pressures that local authorities face, but the hon. Gentleman will understand that the SpendPlus model has brought a great degree of stability and predictability to the system. Indeed, the guaranteed units of funding for 2010-11 have been available since 2007, enabling schools and local authorities to plan effectively, but we recognise the need to move to a needs-based formula, and that is why we are undertaking the dedicated schools grant review. With 152 local authorities to fund, with many costs and pressures to consider and with a finite amount of funding to distribute, it is not right for everyone to receive the national average. It is right that we invest our resources where they are most needed.

Let me be clear: there will be no change to the Government’s funding settlement for education in 2010-11. In 2007, we consulted on the school funding arrangements for 2008 to 2011, which we published prior to our announcement for the settlement in November 2007. The Department has been very open, highlighting since then that the current spending period will not be as generous as in previous years. It would not be right to reopen the funding settlement now. Doing so would create additional pressure on an already tight settlement and take away from the excellent work that local authorities and schools have done, through planning, on how to use that money effectively. Devon county council, like all other local authorities, has had an indicative budget for three years since 2007 in order to enable it to plan and use the money wisely.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the funding of schools should be fair and even throughout the country, and that is why we are carrying out a review of the dedicated schools grant. We want to be able to develop a formula for use from 2011-12 and onwards that properly reflects the needs of every local authority. We have to take into account factors such as deprivation, the number of high-cost pupils, sparsity and the higher cost of employment. At this point, I cannot commit to the outcome of the review or promise what the formula will be, but the hon. Gentleman should know that we are working very hard towards a fairer funding system, and we expect to publish the consultation soon.

In conclusion, I again commend the hon. Gentleman for his proactive role in bringing this topic to the Floor of the House. I hope that he, along with other hon. Members who represent that part of the country, will feel able to participate in the consultation on the dedicated schools grant, once it is published in the weeks ahead.

Question put and agreed to.

7.43 pm

House adjourned.
Westminster Hall

Wednesday 27 January 2010

[DR. WILLIAM MCCREA in the Chair]

Dairy Farming

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the sitting be now adjourned.—(Mark Tami.)

9.30 am

Mr. Stephen Crabb (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Dr. McCrea. It is good to see so many hon. Members join us for the first debate of the day, on the future of dairy farming in the UK. I know that a number of hon. Members want to make contributions, so I shall be as brief as I can and do a general skirt-through some of the issues.

The first Westminster Hall debate in my name, back in 2005, shortly after I was elected, was on this very issue. I am returning to it in the closing weeks of this Parliament because many of the challenges facing the dairy sector that prompted me to write to Mr. Speaker the first time round have not changed fundamentally. The industry still faces difficult and uncertain times. I accept that the picture is not entirely bleak and there are some positives to talk about, but dairy farmers across Britain and the EU have been through another horrible year.

The seriousness of the situation was recognised by a Welsh Assembly committee report on the future of dairy farming in Wales published shortly before Christmas. The European Union has also recognised the particular difficulties facing the dairy sector in the past year or so across the continent. Its work on the EU dairy market situation was debated upstairs in European Committee A on Monday night.

My starting point today is the same as it was for my first debate, in 2005. It is the simple belief that a vibrant, healthy dairy farming sector is vital to Wales and Britain, both for its importance to the rural economy in many parts of the country and for its contribution to national food security. It is good to see hon. Members present from all corners of the British isles, representing at least four different political parties.

Mr. Lindsay Hoyle (Chorley) (Lab): I thank the hon. Gentleman, who is a doughty campaigner on behalf of the dairy sector in the UK, has summarised the key issues very well. The debate is about exactly those issues. It is about restoring confidence to the sector so that farmers can plan for a stable future, and seeing some profitability come back into the sector.

Mr. Crabb: The hon. Gentleman, who is a doughty campaigner on behalf of the dairy sector in the UK, has summarised the key issues very well. The debate is about exactly those issues. It is about restoring confidence to the sector so that farmers can plan for a stable future, and seeing some profitability come back into the sector.

Mr. Crabb: I agree with the general thrust of the intervention. It is a good thing to be supporting local food, and in my local supermarkets I see an increasing amount of local produce on the shelves, but we need to see more of it. We need to give much more priority to local, home-grown produce.

David Simpson (Upper Bann) (DUP): I welcome you to the Chair, Dr. McCrea, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire (Mr. Crabb) on obtaining this very important debate. Does he agree that one difficulty that the dairy sector, along with other farming methods, has faced is that the legislation from Europe has hindered many farmers, who have been put to unnecessary expenditure? Then of course we have the difficulties with the banks at the moment.

Mr. Crabb: There is no question but that one of the things that have eroded profitability in the dairy sector in recent years is the significant increase in production costs, and a large part of that increase has been driven by the increasing amount of regulation.

To return to my speech, I do not look on the decline in dairy farmers as a positive restructuring of an industry in transition and I do not believe that we in this place should be neutral about the forces shaping this important industry. One positive thing that came out of our debate in 2005 was the formation of the all-party group on dairy farmers. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski), who is present, for taking a lead on that and, with the assistance of the Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers, ensuring that there is a dedicated cross-party voice speaking up for the dairy sector in this place. When he is not authoring books on Colonel Gaddafi, my hon. Friend is being a powerful advocate on behalf of dairy farmers in his local area and across the UK.

Last month, a consortium of farming organisations, including the National Farmers Union, Farmers For Action, NFU Scotland, NFU Wales, the Farmers Union of Wales, Dairy Farmers of Scotland and the Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers, wrote to me and the other officers of the all-party group to alert us to the very difficult year that the dairy industry went through in 2009. My request to Mr. Speaker for today’s debate was in part a response to that sobering letter that we received just before Christmas.

If we look back over the past five years, it is clear that the sector has been shaped by a number of events and trends. The volatile milk price hit healthy heights in 2007-08, but has since collapsed, leaving many farmers once again receiving a price for their milk that is well...
below their production costs and leaving them unable to plan investment in the new kit that they need to stay competitive. Bovine tuberculosis has continued its destructive spread through many dairy farming areas, decimating dairy herds in the process.

Mr. Oliver Letwin (West Dorset) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that for those of us who have dairy farmers in TB hotspots, that has become one of the major issues now and that we urgently need effective action from Government to eradicate the source of the problem?

Mr. Crabb: I agree absolutely. I shall make some comments about bovine TB later, but it is clear that that disease is having a devastating impact on many farmers in many parts of the UK and we need urgent action.

Last year, we saw the collapse of the Dairy Farmers of Britain co-operative, which rocked the sector and left many farmers facing losses of tens of thousands of pounds each. That shook confidence across the board. Meanwhile, Britain's supermarkets have continued to expand and increase market share relative to other outlets for dairy products, and the question of their market power and strength within the supply chain persists.

Mr. Letwin: My hon. Friend has touched on both points to which I hoped to draw his attention. Does he agree that in relation to the supermarkets, there is now an urgent need for an ombudsman properly to enforce the code?

Mr. Crabb: I agree; that is a key point. I am pleased that the Government have finally responded positively to that recommendation by the Competition Commission. My party has been campaigning for that for some time, as have other parties. There is no question but that we need a serious neutral body that can look clearly at the way in which the supermarket supply chain is working, make recommendations and take remedies where appropriate.

On the point about supermarkets, we have also seen some positive trends in the past few years. I am thinking of the move by Tesco, Asda, Marks and Spencer, Waitrose and others towards direct contracts with milk suppliers, which has meant that some farmers are receiving an economic return for their production, although I accept that others who are outside those contracts are left struggling. We have seen continuing attempts by the major processors to create higher-value-added brands, which can achieve better prices for products, but set against that, we have seen the Food Standards Agency persist with its campaign against dairy products—its vilification of dairy products as part of its campaign against saturated fats.

Mr. Hoyle: One supermarket that the hon. Gentleman did not mention is Booths Supermarkets in the north-west, which deals with local farmers. I do not know whether he has seen the same in his own area, but a new Asda supermarket is coming to Chorley. There is nothing wrong with that, as long as it plays its part. I have suggested to Asda that it ought to have a local purchasing agreement to buy local farm produce in order to reduce the number of food miles. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that would be a good way forward and show that Asda, or whoever of the big supermarkets is involved, is playing its part to support our local community?

Mr. Crabb: That is an excellent suggestion and I hope that Asda responds positively to the recommendation that the hon. Gentleman is putting to it.

The backdrop to the debate has been a changing one, and I shall describe some of the challenges in more detail in a few moments. First, however, I want to say a few words about my constituency, which is part of the great west Wales milk producing region, where dairy farming has been part of the fabric of economic and social life for generations. In that respect, we are not debating just an economic activity, but an activity that sustains the very social structure of rural life in Pembrokeshire and many other parts of the country.

What has happened in my constituency is a microcosm of what has been happening to the dairy sector right across the UK in recent years. Some of the dairy farmers in my constituency who briefed me before the 2005 debate are no longer producing milk; some have switched to beef farming, while others have quit the industry altogether. Still others have retired because their children did not see a viable future in dairy farming, and their farms have been sold or merged into much larger farming units. Pembrokeshire is also a key bovine TB hot spot, and a number of our large dairy herds have been devastated by the disease. In addition, several of my constituents were directly affected by the collapse of the Dairy Farmers of Britain co-operative.

However, the picture in my constituency is not entirely negative, and there are some positive things. I would point, for example, to the dairy processing plant in Haverfordwest, which is owned by First Milk. The co-operative uses the brand name The Pembrokeshire Cheese Company to create high-value-added cheese brands and will, I hope, create a better future for the local dairy farmers who supply it.

Lembit Öpik: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the collapse of Dairy Farmers of Britain. Did he, like me, experience the outrage felt by farmers in his constituency, who basically acted in good faith and who were of the impression that the organisation was allowed to trade long after it had become insolvent? Many of my constituents lost tens of thousands of pounds as a result. Sadly, the same probably happened in the hon. Gentleman's constituency and in the constituencies of other colleagues.

Mr. Crabb: The hon. Gentleman is right. Some troubling questions remain to be answered about Dairy Farmers of Britain, although it is important to say that the company is not entirely reflective of farming co-operatives and that we should keep faith with co-operatives, which are one vehicle for farmers to achieve a greater return on their product. The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee is carrying out an investigation into what happened at Dairy Farmers of Britain, and some unanswered questions will need to be addressed.

My constituency has witnessed the outstanding success story of Laurence Harries, who farms near Cilgerran in the north of my constituency. His award-winning Daioni brand of flavoured organic milk drinks is appearing all
over the UK and internationally. As I am sure you are aware, Dr. McCrea, Daioni is the Welsh word for goodness. Laurence Harries says that a few years ago he “set up with a single tanker, a couple of lorries and a lot of wishful thinking”.

Last year, he secured a deal to supply the academy and youth teams at Chelsea football club with Daioni milk drinks. He also supplies the Welsh rugby union. A year ago, I was on a Eurostar trip to Paris as part of a Conservative joint working group meeting with French parliamentarians from the Union for a Popular Movement, and the milk that we were served was Daioni organic milk from my constituency. Although it is a high-value, niche brand, it is an example of what can be achieved when good farming skills and excellent business acumen are combined. However, even Laurence Harries would admit that he is exceptional. For the larger number of milk producers in my constituency who supply the generic liquid milk market, the last few years have not been happy.

The dairy sector constitutes 18 per cent. of the agriculture industry in the UK and more than 30 per cent. of agricultural production in Wales. However, the falling number of dairy farmers and the decline in milk production are continuing across Wales and the UK, with a growing concentration of milk production in particular geographical areas. I have seen figures that suggest that the number of UK dairy farmers has halved since 1997, and the Welsh Assembly Government have estimated that 26 farmers leave the dairy industry on average every week. One in 10 farmers say that they will leave the industry within two years. Over the past five years in Wales, the number of producers has fallen by a third.

We are therefore seeing falling numbers of farmers, accompanied by falling numbers of dairy cattle, falling milk production and the closure of processing plants. UK milk production has fallen by 8 per cent. since 1997 and is now at its lowest level for more than 30 years, although Dairy UK, the trade body representing the dairy processing sector, takes an upbeat view and believes that the Government put pressure on other EU countries to achieve that decoupling?

Mr. Crabb: Yes. My right hon. Friend makes his point very effectively.

There can be little doubt that the fluctuating price of liquid milk and the increasing cost of milk production have contributed significantly to the lack of confidence in the dairy industry in recent years. We have seen milk prices move from a low in 2006, when the average dairy farmer was estimated to be losing almost 5p per litre, to a high in 2008, when prices soared by up to 40 per cent. However, in the last year, as I said, the price has fallen back dramatically. Today, the price paid for milk is once again falling below the cost of production for many farmers. At the same time, production costs have increased by 27 per cent. since 2006, undermining much of the confidence that the industry regained in 2007 as prices increased.

The think tank Open Europe has stated that the cost to farmers of UK regulation has more than tripled since the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs was created in 2001. I would welcome the Minister’s response to that point and his comments on how he sees the future of farm regulation and what can be done to minimise the additional production costs that farmers face as a result of regulation.

It is clear that this is not an isolated trend in the UK, and dairy farmers across Europe have faced challenging conditions. I spent part of last summer on a dairy farm in northern France, and the farmer and his family described a situation very similar to the one experienced by farmers in the UK. However, one difference in the French situation is that French agriculture receives huge political support across the board. No one can be a serious politician in France unless they are willing to stand time after time and speak up for French agriculture. Although hon. Members are well represented here, those present largely have significant dairy interests in their constituencies, and we need far more colleagues to speak up for farming who do not have dairy farms in their constituencies, but who nevertheless recognise the importance of dairy farming to the UK.

In answer to parliamentary questions over the past year, the Secretary of State has reiterated his opinion that the UK dairy industry is in a much better position than most of its European competitors. However, the Farmers Union of Wales has suggested to me that if it were not for the current exchange rate, farm-gate prices would be likely to be about 30 per cent. lower. Does the Minister therefore accept that the industry’s saving grace this year has been the weakness of sterling, rather than a fundamental strengthening of the sector? I would also welcome his comments on what needs to be done to...
ensure that UK dairy farmers can weather the storms created by volatile milk prices but still plan and undertake long-term capital investments so that they can stay competitive.

Bovine tuberculosis is another area on which there has been a frustrating lack of progress in recent years. I have met farmers in my constituency whose cattle herds have been decimated by the disease. Indeed, two years ago I spent a Sunday with one of Pembrokeshire’s leading dairy farmers, whose farm had just been hit by it. It was moving to see a strong man brought almost to tears by the decimation of his stock. It is not like losing a faulty batch of a widget on a production line. Farmers invest their lives in raising those animals, and they love them. When they must see a herd go off to be slaughtered, it is a moving and difficult thing. I recognise that that area of agriculture policy is devolved in Wales, and I take my hat off to the Welsh Assembly for taking some bold decisions in moving ahead with an eradication programme that includes a careful element of active wildlife management.

I have put the question before to Ministers, and ask it again today: why, given that the scientific evidence base on which Welsh Assembly Ministers operate is identical to the one available to DEFRA, do English Ministers still refuse to recognise a role for a targeted cull as part of the plan? The Welsh Assembly has the same evidence and is moving ahead. There is a pilot programme in my constituency.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): I apologise, Dr. McCrea, for my late arrival. This is an important debate and my hon. Friend touches on a vital point, particularly for border counties such as Shropshire. Many farmers in the county are landowners on both English and Welsh sides of the border. It is puzzling and frustrating when there are advancements on the Welsh side of the border on the vital issue of TB, and not on the English side. We need progress quickly.

Mr. Crabb: I give way to the Minister.

The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Jim Fitzpatrick): I shall say more about TB and do not want to take up the hon. Gentleman’s time, but in response to that point I must say that the science is not conclusive that culling will eradicate TB. The Secretary of State made his decision on the basis of the scientific evidence. The eradication group that he has set up does not dismiss culling as a tool in the box, which might be used, but the evidence suggests that just culling creates a vacuum and draws the infection in, and does not eliminate it.

Mr. Crabb: I am grateful for that and look forward with interest to the Minister’s reply to the debate; but the Welsh Assembly does not believe that it is all about culling. No one argues that. Culling is part of a comprehensive strategy, and the Assembly is proceeding in a careful and targeted way. I am not known for often praising the Assembly, but I salute it in this instance.

Dan Rogerson (North Cornwall) (LD): I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman for securing the debate and for his work on behalf of the dairy industry. The evidence to which he has referred is evolving, and it is not true that the so-called perturbation effect that was predicted has not been demonstrated, as areas where the experiments were carried out have continued to be monitored? The effect has not materialised as was envisaged.

Mr. Crabb: That is a useful and helpful intervention.

Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con): To back up my hon. Friend, with reference to what the Minister said, the Ministry of Agriculture in France recently issued a statement that the reason bovine TB has practically been eradicated in France is the part culling of badgers.

Mr. Crabb: That is also a useful intervention.

Sir David King, the former chief scientific adviser, was quoted in the Farmers Guardian last week as saying that DEFRA’s refusal to tackle the badger population was a “source of great exasperation”. He went on to suggest that the TB epidemic could put an end to dairy farming unless the Government considered a cull of infected badgers. As I said, the Welsh Assembly is at last moving ahead with a programme that includes an element of active wildlife management. It is being piloted in the north part of my constituency and is a brave move.

One of the new emerging challenges for the Secretary of State is unquestionably what I regard as the unbalanced and distorted healthy food agenda being promoted from some quarters, which seeks to demonise dairy products. I am thinking principally of that increasingly powerful arm of Government, the Food Standards Agency. There was a time when I thought that the job of the FSA was to help to ensure that the hygiene and safety practices in the production and sale of food were of a sufficient standard to avoid the risk of illness or worse, but I see from its recent press releases, and from its website this morning, that it sees one of its main jobs as warning people away from dairy products, as part of its campaign against saturated fat. The website names those products: cheese, cream and ice cream. I see from a press release of the past few days that it wants us to abandon full fat milk. Frankly, many of my constituents do not want their taxes to be used to fund that kind of nonsense. Obesity in Britain is not caused by eating dairy products. In Westminster Hall this morning you can see, Dr. McCrea, a group of some of the healthiest parliamentarians. I see marathon runners, rugby players and fell runners: an incredibly healthy group. It is no accident that they are also some of the proudest and fiercest advocates and defenders of dairy products, the eating of which is part of a healthy lifestyle.

The dairy sector is being made a scapegoat by the Government because of their rank failure to tackle the more profound drivers of obesity in this country: the British obsession with getting drunk; the collapse of sport in schools; the end of cookery in schools, driven by the health and safety madness that has affected a generation of young people; and the proliferation of poorly regulated low quality fast food outlets in many town centres. I do not mean McDonald’s, which has been good news for farmers in recent years, but the proliferation of low quality cheap fast food. Will the Minister join me in condemning the Food Standards Agency’s misguided approach to dairy products? Does he agree that the Government must not give mixed signals to the dairy sector, sending Ministers to farming
265WH Dairy Farming 27 JANUARY 2010 Dairy Farming 266WH

conferences one day, to speak up the British dairy sector, and channelling money to anti-dairy campaigns the next? Will he join my call for more sense from the Food Standards Agency?

I could say more about lack of investment in the sector, driven by a lack of confidence and certainty about the future, but I want to bring my remarks to a close to enable other hon. Members to contribute. I am sure that some of them will talk in more detail about the ombudsman. I support the creation of an ombudsman. The supply chain has been characterised by accusations and mutual mistrust, and we need somehow to get beyond that. There needs to be recognition of a partnership between farmer, processor and retailer, with common sense in the relationship. My hope is that the ombudsman will have enough powers and clear guidance to make that happen. However, I want to say a word of caution about what the ombudsman can achieve. I have talked to some farmers who believe that the ombudsman can somehow radically change the price they get for milk, and I think that view may be naive. Unless the Minister can correct me, I do not understand that it would be the job of the ombudsman to fix prices. I should welcome the Minister's remarks on how he sees the ombudsman's role in the dairy sector and with respect to milk prices.

I am grateful to have had this opportunity to raise concerns affecting the dairy sector in the UK and in particular my constituency. I am conscious that perhaps I have not covered all the issues, and optimistic that other hon. Members will fill in the gaps. I look forward to the Minister giving us good news and reasons to be optimistic about the dairy sector in the years ahead.

Dr. William McCrea (in the Chair): Several hon. Members want to speak in the debate and I shall try to allow as many as possible to do so, but the discipline will be in the hands of hon. Members.

9.58 am

Mr. David Drew (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): I shall be as brief as I can, Dr. McCrea, partly because so many hon. Members want to speak, and also because I must leave slightly before the end of the debate, as I have an important meeting about flooding to attend.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire (Mr. Crabb). I do not agree entirely with all that he said—I shall explain why—but it is right to discuss dairy farming. I have taken an interest in dairy farming and the dairy industry for a long time, not least because the Severnside processing plant chimney is at the bottom of my garden; I cannot but be influenced by that important industry.

I want to make four quick points. First, I make a plea to my hon. Friend the Minister about what is happening in Gloucestershire at the moment, which is the epitome of some of the industry's problems. The county farm estate is actively debating the conflation of its dairy holdings from well over 20 to 11. In a previous life, I chaired the county farm estate's smallholdings group on the county council, and I have always been a great upholder of the belief that dairy farming is an important sector, as it allows people to start in agriculture who could not do so in any other way. It would be a tragedy to use the current problems as an opportunity to increase the size of holdings, as younger people would never be able to get into dairy farming. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will look, as a matter of urgency, at what is happening in Gloucestershire.

I have had two debates on the subject, and I have always upheld the importance of the county estate nationally, but this is another side of the debate. I totally oppose selling off what I think of as the county's family silver, but I also worry that we might shut out dairy farming in what, after all, are the country's milk fields. That needs to be considered. I hope that the Government have a view on the matter. They may say that it is up to local government, but we need the Government to take a strategic view.

My second point is about something that was mentioned by the hon. Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire—the common agricultural policy and how its reform might affect dairy farming. I have been a complete long-term critic of the CAP. I think that it has done more damage to the dairy industry than to any other sector of industry. Milk quotas should have been removed a long time ago. They are a huge disincentive in this country, and there is no excuse for them.

The problem with CAP is that it is one-size-fits-all strategy does not work. We should be expanding our dairy industry rather than having to go cap in hand to Europe—forgive the pun—to try to maintain the current situation. The latter is not acceptable. It is about time that we were allowed to pull out of the CAP, if nothing else, because we need to rebuild our dairy industry.

My third point is about bovine TB—something on which we will disagree. The debate is so sterile. Yes, I have read the independent science group report, but to me the science is clear. Culling does not work. It is counter-productive. So I turn to what we are doing in my area and the vaccination strategy. The Select Committee on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs debated the matter long and hard.

I congratulate the Government, but I wish they would move more quickly. In every other area of animal disease, we are trying to find a vaccination strategy, yet with bovine TB, we go back to the old argument that if we cull one species that carries bovine TB, even though many others carry it, it will be a magic bullet. There is no magic bullet. It is a dreadful disease. I met someone from the farmers' stress network yesterday, and I know what damage it does to people's lives. It is a really awful disease, and we must get hold of it.

Dan Rogerson: As a fellow member of the Select Committee, I remember those debates. I also recall that our report recommended that culling might be an effective tool. The evidential picture is evolving. I know that the hon. Gentleman cares a great deal about the industry, but does he agree that we ought to keep an open mind on these things, perhaps allowing culling to take place in some areas? It could make a huge contribution.

Mr. Drew: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says. However, I agreed to the report with gritted teeth; people know that I am a great compromiser, and I believed it important to have consensus.

The biggest problem is that we might give people the illusion that culling will work; if so, we will let them down. We must be honest. It is not going to work. There will be legal challenges in Wales, and it will take years to...
clear that out of the way. In any case, only a small part of Wales is experimenting with culling. We should not fool ourselves. The idea that it will be imposed on Shropshire, as the hon. Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire suggested, is an illusion. Let us be honest, and get on with finding a solution in the vaccination strategy. We should not go along cul-de-sacs that have been tried before and did not work.

I shall be careful how I phrase my last point, because the Select Committee is considering Dairy Farmers of Britain. It was wrong to see the failing of that organisation being attributed to its structure, its co-operative nature. Mistakes were made in its management, but its biggest mistake was to try to compete in the liquid market with the wrong production structure. If it had specialised, it would probably have had a greater chance of getting through its deep-seated capital problems.

I welcome the ombudsman, who was mentioned earlier. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for St. Ives (Andrew George), who has driven the idea relentlessly, with some help from my hon. Friend the Member for Chorley (Mr. Hoyle), myself and others. I pay credit to that campaign. The dairy industry has done badly because supermarkets, in particular, have used milk as a loss leader, playing all sorts of games with processors and especially with farmers.

Mr. Hoyle: Because of my hon. Friend’s knowledge, I invite him to comment on two quick points. The other thing that dairy farming needs is agricultural shows. What more can be done? Will the Government support them, to ensure that we get the Royal Lancs show back? It is a great way of ensuring that the public understand farming, particularly dairy farming.

My second query is about the spraying of nitrates and slurry. Should there be more flexibility to ensure that farmers have more time to do so?

Mr. Drew: On the second point, my hon. Friend is talking about another mad EU regulation, but no one takes a blind bit of notice of it. On the first point, I agree with him entirely. I am in favour of shows. It is important that farmers should have the opportunity to show off the good things that they do. The problem nowadays is that few farmers go to shows because they are too busy. They face too many constraints, not the least of which is that their income is insufficient for them to spend time there.

We should support the ombudsman. A previous report found that one problem was the poisonous atmosphere in the dairy industry. It is the most difficult industry, as everybody distrusts everyone else. The different levels distrust each other; it is not competition within the segments of the sector, but a real dislike of some of the things that are going on.

I say to the Government that this country needs a clear strategy for dairy farming. There is no excuse for avoiding that. I would like to see the industry completely outside Europe, because the CAP has done immense damage. A strategy has to be brought forward to rebuild some of the relationships. I would like to see more co-operation; indeed, it was wrong to say that its co-operative structure caused problems for Dairy Farmers of Britain. If we can get on with that, we will have served our purpose and done what we should be doing. Our purpose is not simply to maintain that important sector but to build it for the future. That is what we need to see.

10.7 am

Mark Williams (Ceredigion) (LD): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Dr. McCrea. I pay tribute to my constituency neighbour, the hon. Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire (Mr. Crabb), for securing this debate. The hon. Gentleman, the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski) and I have raised these issues on numerous occasions, and have ensured that, for the past five years, we have an annual debate on agriculture in this Chamber.

As the hon. Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire said, some aspects of dairy farming are devolved. I shall endeavour to delve into the devolved settlement, but I want to focus on producers, suppliers and retailers and the relationship between them. That is the fundamental problem that our dairy industry faces.

I hesitate to use the word “crisis” as it is emotive, but figures on the long-term position of dairy farming in Wales show that it is in serious decline. In 1994, there were 5,300 dairy farmers. The number had fallen to 3,600 by 2004, and figures for December 2009 show that it has now fallen to 2,059. Those figures show that 60 per cent. of Welsh dairy farmers have left farming over the past 15 years, something that I think is reflected in England.

There was an important geographic message from the hon. Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire. He does not like the word “Dyfed”. Neither do I; it is an old county term that describes our area. However, I will use it now because half of the dairy farmers of Wales are from Dyfed—from my constituency of Ceredigion, and from Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire.

We can wax lyrical about the social implications of the loss of the dairy sector, but it is a reality. We are talking not about isolated farms appended to big towns but about large areas of the rural economy being dependent on farmers and farming families. Losing those farms and those families has implications well beyond the production of milk. It affects village schools and the local economy more generally.

I concur with what the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Drew) said about county starter farms and encouraging young entrants into the industry. We lost our farms in Ceredigion a long time ago. One of the dispiriting things about making farm visits and meeting the two farming unions in Wales is the constant repetition of questions. Five years ago, questions were asked about young farmers and how to attract people into the industry. At the end of the farming hustings in Ceredigion, we always ask the question, “If you had a child, would you encourage them to stay in the farming industry?” Many say, “In all honesty, with hand on heart, we could never make that recommendation given the state of the industry.”

There have been some glimmers. I congratulate the Minister on ensuring that Wales has received a fair distribution of the £25 million EU rescue package,
which, as far as I can tell, was calculated on the proportion of dairy cattle rather than on the Barnett formula, and I pay tribute to the Assembly Government for their role in that. I share a constituency with the Minister who has responsibility for rural affairs, and I pay tribute to her for the work that she has done. However, I should like some clarification on future emergency spending. If we need such spending again—I hope that we do not—will it be allocated according to relative need rather than population?

Jim Fitzpatrick: We are currently consulting on how to distribute the £29.26 million, which is the UK’s share of that. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has already made a submission, but if he has not, he may want to reinforce that.

Mark Williams: I thank the Minister for that. I am also taking consultation from the Welsh Assembly Government. There is sensitivity about the matter. During the foot and mouth scare in 2007, there was concern from the devolved Administrations about the extent to which DEFRA funding came to Scotland and Wales.

I am pleased that the Government have finally agreed to a supermarket ombudsman. I appreciate that such a matter is not directly within the Minister’s portfolio, but it is crucial to the farming sector.

Mr. Alan Reid (Argyll and Bute) (LD): I agree with my hon. Friend that the ombudsman is vital. Does he not think that the Government should give powers to the ombudsman so that they can be proactive in carrying out investigations? It is no good just waiting for complaints to come in. Many people in the sector are concerned that, if they make a complaint, their products could be boycotted, so it is important that the ombudsman has strong proactive powers.

Mark Williams: I thank my hon. Friend for raising that matter. The hon. Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire made a fair point when he said that the ombudsman will not be the solution to all problems, but expectations are high. If this is to be an ombudsman without teeth, it will be costly lip service and will fail at the first hurdle.

We have a job of communication to do with our constituents. When Mr. and Mrs. Average go into a supermarket and purchase their milk for a couple of days, only a tiny share of that milk price actually finds its way to the producers. Prices may have gone up a bit, but they have still been low over the past couple of years. They have gone up from 18p a litre to 23p. People do not understand—the farmers understand—why a greater share of the price is not finding its way back to the farmers.

Mr. Crabb: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the dedicated milk contracts that all the major retailers have are, by and large, a positive thing? They have not led to an across-the-board increase in farm-gate prices, as some of us had hoped, but they are good for the farmers. What would be positive now is for those dedicated contracts to expand into the cheese markets, so that we have dedicated cheese contracts as well. That would help many other farmers.

Mark Williams: I agree. As the hon. Gentleman said, it is the scale of those contracts rather than the principle itself. He mentioned dedicated contracts in the cheese industry. We have present not only the chair of the all-party group on dairy farmers, but the chair of the all-party group on cheese, my hon. Friend for North Cornwall (Dan Rogerson), who has done a lot of work on promoting the cheese sector. Pembrokeshire, like Ceridigion, has many cheese producers who need support. It is in that spirit that the regulator is to be welcomed. I am glad that the Government have listened to our concerns. Organisations such as the Farmers’ Union of Wales have been talking about a regulator for 10 years or more, and I am glad that it is now happening. I should also pay tribute to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen) who, as co-sponsor of the grocery ombudsman Bill, will be pursuing the matter as well. I would welcome assurances from the Minister that the code of practice will be legally binding and that the ombudsman will be given powers to sanction supermarkets when they transgress.

The issue of bovine TB is fundamental and needs to be addressed. It has been partially addressed, and I pay tribute to the Welsh Assembly Government for the brave, but immensely regrettable, decisions that they have taken.

There have been difficulties recently with milk collections, and getting milk to processors. The dire weather we have had recently has forced some farmers to throw away their milk. Moreover, there has been concern over Milk Link’s decision to ban the use of plastic roadside containers when tankers are unable to reach the farms. That has been a real issue across much of rural Wales. Some disruption was understandable, but surely we should do everything we can to ensure the distribution of milk. Steel storage tanks being required by Milk Link are not affordable for many farmers, who are already operating on very tight margins. They do not have the money to invest in any capital infrastructure.

Lastly, let me turn to the point about healthy food. Like me, the hon. Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire has praised the Assembly Government for what they are the purchasing power of supermarkets is a fundamental concern. Again, I welcome the announcement that the ombudsman issue is to move forward. Some supermarkets treat farmers more fairly than others and they should be rewarded for their support by not allowing others to cut corners, thereby restricting the ability of producers to make a living.

Some contracts are linked to production costs. Those are welcome and contribute to keeping farmers in business, but much more needs to be done. One of the first jobs of the ombudsman is to establish whether the price of milk has been kept artificially low, which is what we suspect.
The all-party group on dairy farmers issued a report in the autumn of 2006 and we presented it to the then Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, who is now the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, and to the then shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for East Surrey (Mr. Ainsworth). The main thrust of that report was to seek to have a regulator or ombudsman for supermarkets. Our group has been pushing for that appointment for the past three years. Initially, I was told, “Impossible. You’re never going to get a regulator for supermarkets. It’s totally unrealistic, a pipe dream. Just forget about it.” So it just shows that, if someone perseveres, feels passionately about an issue, never accepts a no and keeps plugging away, ultimately—hopefully—success will come.

The all-party group on dairy farmers visited the European Parliament on a cross-party basis to meet the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mrs. Fischer Boel. She said that she felt that part of the problem was that we had too many milk processors in the United Kingdom. She also said that a certain amount of consolidation within the United Kingdom market would not be a bad thing. I would like the Minister to note that she said that the European Union would not interfere if there were certain consolidation in the dairy sector. In her own country, Denmark, Arla has 80 per cent. of the milk processing. She said that that was one of the most important factors in Denmark; the strength of Arla in its discussions and negotiations with supermarkets. Therefore, that is something that I would like to promote.

My hon. Friend the Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire and others have spoken about bovine tuberculosis. Bovine TB is absolutely devastating in Shropshire and it has increased at a massive rate in the past few years. My hon. Friend talked about the emotion of this issue and that struck a chord with me. I have sat with some of the farmers in my constituency. I will mention one, Mr. Chris Bulmer of Snaileach. We basically sat together at his kitchen table, having tea, and I have to say that we both got rather emotional about the issue of bovine TB. I am not prone to being overtly emotional with constituents, but this was an extremely emotional matter. People such as Mr. Bulmer live for their farms and their animals, and when they see the extraordinary suffering and wanton slaughter of their animals that has to go on, it is very upsetting.

One of the most difficult things that I have had to do in my constituency is speaking to the Shropshire Wildlife Trust, addressing 500 of its members. The first question to me was, “Well, Mr. Kawczynski you horrible chap, why do you want to kill all those lovely badgers?” Of course, the emblem of the Wildlife Trusts movement is a badger and so passionate are the members of the Shropshire Wildlife Trust about badgers that they have even taken my wife and me to look at a badger sett in my constituency. They gave my daughter a cuddly badger soft toy, which I think was a bribe to encourage us to think nicely of badgers. The problem is that, although we all like badgers, badgers themselves suffer terribly as a result of this disease.

I have to say that the next Conservative Government must tackle this issue of badgers and I expect to see a limited cull of badgers, should a Conservative Government be elected to office. I make no bones about saying that,
because I am absolutely convinced that culling must be part of the process of controlling badgers, no matter how controversial it is.

I just want to talk very briefly about the Rural Payments Agency. I must say that I am still trying to sort out problems with the RPA on behalf of various constituents. Some dairy farmers are still grappling with this issue, on top of bovine TB and the low prices they receive for their milk. I will mention to the Minister one of my constituents, Mr. Hamer of Longden, who is still having terrible problems with RPA payments and I very much hope that he can help Mr. Hamer with those problems.

Lastly, the all-party group on dairy farmers will be meeting shortly. Among those coming are representatives of the Farmers’ Union of Wales, the Dairy Farmers of Scotland and the Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers. I must say that sometimes when we have these meetings, not enough Members of Parliament attend, because of their other commitments. So I will be sending every MP who has attended this debate notification of the next meeting of the all-party group on dairy farmers. As I have said, we have a lot of representatives of different farming organisations coming and I would be grateful if Members of Parliament who are here today attended the next meeting of the all-party group.

Dr. William McCrea (in the Chair): I will be commencing with the speeches from the Front-Bench spokesmen at approximately 10.30 am, but I want to call Roger Williams before then.

10.26 am

Mr. Roger Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire) (LD): Thank you, Dr. McCrea. I will try to be brief.

Much has already been said about the plight of dairy farmers. Indeed, in my own constituency, I think that we are down to fewer than 10 dairy farmers at the moment and that is in the biggest agricultural constituency in England and Wales. So we have suffered. However, one of the remaining herds in my constituency has 350 cows, showing the way that the industry has gone.

With all the farmers who have gone out of the industry, we are left with a small number of farmers, but they must be the most efficient farmers in the whole farming industry. Even so, they are struggling to survive with these milk prices. Therefore, we get some idea of the consequences of low commodity prices.

However, we should not be surprised about these difficulties. The point that I will make, which I do not think has been made by any other hon. Member, is that when we went into the single farm payment scheme it was on the basis that we would be competing not only within Europe but within the world on a commodity basis. The single farm payment was there to compensate farmers for a drop in commodity prices. Not much liquid milk is traded, but huge amounts of dairy products, including generic cheddar cheese, is traded throughout the world. That has been the problem that has pulled down milk prices in Britain. We should consider the fact that milk production in Britain has only fallen from 13 billion litres to 12 billion litres, despite the number of people who have gone out of the dairy industry.

Of course, the reason that commodity prices have fallen is that we are doing away with import intervention buying, which kept up prices within the European Union, we are doing away with import tariffs, which discouraged cheaper imports from being brought into the country, and we are doing away with export subsidies, which allowed surplus product in this country to be exported and dumped on the world market. So it is not surprising, in a way, that we have got lower commodity prices.

Many important issues have been raised, such as the ombudsman, TB and various other issues. However, the really important question is this: what will the common agricultural policy look like in 2013? I do not think that anyone has really addressed that issue.

We know what the CAP should look like; it should give a commercial return to farmers and a guaranteed supply of products at reasonable prices to consumers. However, what does it look like in detail and in principle? The National Farmers Union has given us some indication. It has said that the future CAP, with regard to milk and other products, should be:

“a simple policy...market-oriented...geared towards competitiveness”.

The final indication of what the CAP should look like—but not what it will actually be like—is that the NFU says it should be:

“fundamentally a common and agricultural policy, predicated on a firm belief that the above aims are best achieved through a common policy framework with EU rather than national funding.”

The NFU recommends no co-financing or co-funding but a straightforward common agricultural policy.

In the last 30 seconds available to me, I must say that the experience of the dairy industry, and indeed of some of the arable sector at the moment, is that with great dips in commodity prices, the farming community and industry still needs direct payments. Yes, some payments are pillar 2 and fund public goods, but if we are to have a vibrant agricultural industry in this country, direct payments such as the single farm payment will be necessary if we are to survive in a cut-throat global competition for commodities.

10.30 am

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Dr. McCrea. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire (Mr. Crabb) for securing this debate and starting it off so admirably and for his commitment to the sector, not just in his own constituency but across the country. My hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnorshire (Mr. Williams) said more in four minutes than many of us are capable of saying in 40. If I just endorse everything that he said, I can knock about five minutes off my speech in order to allow others more time to wind up.

I was at the Castle Green hotel in Kendal two weekends ago for the Cumbria Young Farmers annual general meeting and jamboree. It was a wonderful evening and a great opportunity. I listened to all the speeches made and sat there with my notebook writing down all the jokes—as a Liberal Democrat, I am a keen recycler, and that extends to my speeches and jokes as well—but at some point during the evening, I realised that there was absolutely no context in which I would ever be able to use one of the jokes and get away with it.

Apart from having an entertaining and slightly off-colour sense of humour, the young farmers, a good proportion of whom were dairy farmers, demonstrated to me that however difficult and challenging life in the dairy sector
has been and continues to be, there is nevertheless immense room for optimism. A new generation of young people are set to become the backbone of a dynamic, competitive and innovative dairy industry. However, the system is not making it easy for them. There is a huge risk that young dairy farmers’ ambition, work ethic and talent will be stifled.

As we have heard from many hon. Members, these are immensely difficult times for dairy farmers. Since 1997, the number of dairy holdings has decreased by 50 per cent. and the number of dairy farmers by 35 per cent. In the past three years alone, liquid milk production has dropped by 7 per cent. That is 1 billion litres of lost production. Production levels in this country are at their lowest since the 1970s, despite the fact that the UK population is now 15 per cent. higher and demand is rising. We are losing milk production capacity because farmers are leaving the industry. Some go to the wall; some slip quietly into other work; many wait for retirement. As my hon. Friends have said, they will retire having actively encouraged their children to do anything but follow them.

Supply is tightening, yet the prices paid to farmers are pitiful. The estimated cost to the farmer of producing 1 litre of milk in October last year was 26p, and the average farm-gate price for liquid milk was 24p. The average farmer is making a loss on every litre produced. That is the average, but hundreds of dairy farmers, including dozens in my constituency, get less than 20p a litre. Many of us wander down one aisle in the supermarket and make ourselves feel good by buying fair trade coffee, but in the next aisle we buy milk that might be sourced locally but is anything but fairly traded.

Mr. William Cash (Stone) (Con): The hon. Gentleman and I took part in a debate initiated by the European Scrutiny Committee only a couple of days ago. Does he agree that the importance of reviving the whole dairy industry in the context of European legislation is essential and that we should ensure that dairy farmers in this country are not only protected but given an opportunity to engage in new milk contracts, as proposed by a series of Ministers?

Mr. William Cash: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely correct. Dairy farmers are effectively forced to accept the price of a litre of milk that goes into the supermarkets’ pocket—have tripled. In consequence, farmers are leaving the industry.

There is no question of UK producers over-producing; in fact, they are under-producing.

Dairy farmers are effectively forced to accept the prices that they are offered. Supermarkets’ and processors’ ability to abuse their market power legally must be curtailed. That is why we endorse the setting up of a supermarket ombudsman. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Andrew George) for leading on that issue for many years. We as a party championed it for a long time while being ridiculed by others, but it is good news that those others have come on board.

It is important that the supermarket ombudsman should, as my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. Reid) said, be powerful and proactive, not supine and reactive. Hon. Members will know all about ombudsmen and will have had many reasons to make use of them on their constituents’ behalf. Ombudsmen tend to be able only to react to complaints, to investigate only one tenth of complaints and to find in favour of the citizen in only one third of cases. That is not a model likely to strike fear or even respect into the hearts of the supermarkets.

We support a powerful supermarket regulator based on a model similar to Ofcom, with proactive investigative and enforcement powers, a remit to go out and look for trouble and the ability to stand up forcefully to those who abuse market power, with appropriate sanctions at its fingertips. Anything less might be counter-productive by providing supermarkets with the necessary political cover to continue exploiting dairy farmers and other producers.

Mr. William Cash: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the supermarket ombudsman should have the ability to abuse their market power legally must be curtailed? That has clearly been borne out within the dairy industry. In any case, an unfettered market is not a free market.

Such exploitation was seen in its rawest and most appalling form after the tragic collapse of Dairy Farmers of Britain in May. Afterwards, some members of the co-operative were forced to accept as little as 10p a litre from buyers who simply took advantage. We have heard of the devastating losses involved. In my constituency, the average farmer lost £20,000 from their May milk cheque and perhaps £50,000 on their investment within the co-operative. The effects of that tragedy are still being felt and have caused unbearable financial and emotional strain among friends of mine who were struggling to get by even before the collapse.

Mr. William Cash: We are pleased by the £25 million in emergency support from the European Union. We lobbied for it from the beginning, whereas the Government did not. We are concerned that that money should be spent appropriately. For example, some of it could be spent to support the co-operative movement. After the demise of Dairy Farmers of Britain, it would be easy for many farmers to conclude that their best bet is to go it alone. I am sure that all of us would agree that that is the wrong
lesson to learn. The co-operative movement is an important element of providing farmers with the strength to compete powerfully within the marketplace.

In conclusion, abuse of market power is the main challenge to our dairy farming industry, but it is not the only challenge. Unnecessary regulation is also a huge problem. The extension of the European Union's nitrate vulnerable zones directive has caused and threatens to cause immense damage to farmers in general and dairy farmers in particular. That new directive will mean many farmers have to spend around £50,000 on a new slurry tank simply to comply with the measure, with absolutely no benefit to their business. That will be the straw that breaks the camel's back for many farms.

There are more challenges to come. The Government made an announcement this week on cost sharing, and the establishment of an animal disease levy will be cause for alarm for many dairy farmers in Cumbria and across the country. The proposal to charge farmers at a rate of £4.80 per cow to pay for the clean up of disease outbreaks, which in the case of the 2007 foot and mouth crisis was wholly the Government's fault, is unjust and extreme. Such a proposal will help to push even more dairy farmers out of business. We have heard about the Government's failure to tackle bovine TB, and I endorse those remarks. Some 29,000 cattle were slaughtered in England for TB control reasons just last year. Squeamishness over a controlled cull of badgers led to that mass slaughter of cattle, and a failure to deal with that disease is contributing towards making many farms non-viable.

The story of British dairy farming in recent years is one of market failure, and Government failure to tackle market failure, versus the staggeringly impressive resilience of an industry that is determined to succeed against the odds. That battle continues and my money is undoubtedly on dairy farmers to win. I suggest that it is time this House got off the fence and took their side.

10.41 am

Mr. Richard Benyon (Newbury) (Con): It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Dr. McCrea. Before I say any more, I refer hon. Members to my entry in the register. Until 14 months ago, I was the only dairy farmer in the House. I left dairy farming for many of the reasons discussed today—not least because of the effects of the nitrates vulnerable zone directive. I also left the industry because I did not invest in my business, for the very good reason that my unit costs of production were greater than the pence per litre I was receiving. That situation is replicated across the country and has led to a dramatic reduction in dairy farmers and the amount of milk we are producing. There is a range of other issues, including food security.

I pay great tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire (Mr. Crabb) for not only securing the debate but speaking passionately about the needs of this important sector of the farming community, which he represents—he has done so in the past and will continue to do so, whichever party is in government. I also pay tribute to hon. Members such as my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski), who have set up the all-party group on dairy farmers. They do great work and hon. Members from all parties who take part in that should feel proud that they have set up something really important.

As I said, since 1997, I have been one of 14,000 dairy farmers who are no longer dairy farmers—if hon. Members can follow that tautology. Since that time, milk production has fallen by more than 1 billion litres and the National Farmers Union has warned that Britain will lose its “critical mass” of milk suppliers. That is important, because when someone has left dairy farming, it is very hard to go back to it. If someone is growing sugar beet and they stop doing so, they can go back to it easily. In areas such as mine—the central-south of England—we have lost slaughterhouses, a large amount of veterinary expertise, cattle markets and all the infrastructure that supports mixed farming units. One does not get that infrastructure back. Such a situation makes a dramatic difference to our landscape and our biodiversity. The issues relating to the subject go much further.

I also pay tribute to the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Drew), who made an important point about skills. We are losing skills across the farming industry, particularly in stock farming, and we make a great mistake if we do not understand the need to bring young people in and give them a career in a good industry.

According to DairyCo, if the increasing trend in the consumption of dairy products is extrapolated forward, annual consumption in 2030 could be in the region of 16 billion litres, which is some 23 per cent. greater than the current UK production level. The hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron) makes a good point: to say there is overcapacity in this industry is completely wrong.

The price that dairy farmers receive for their milk has fluctuated between 15p and 28p a litre over the past 13 years, which has led to wide variations in profitability. The UK average farm-gate price has been consistently below the average for the EU15 throughout the past decade, which partly explains why dairy farmers have under-invested in their businesses compared with their European counterparts. In addition to the fall in prices paid to milk producers, during 2009, more than 1,800 dairy producers suffered significant financial losses. We have heard about the effects that the collapse of Dairy Farmers of Britain has had on many constituents of hon. Members in this Chamber.

The NFU estimates that an average supplying member lost in the range of £10,000 to £15,000 as a result of being left without pay for milk collected in May and up to 3 June. As well as low farm-gate prices, dairy farmers have had to manage rising input costs, which has left little spare for investment. As the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale pointed out, the unit cost of production of 26.5p per litre is significantly higher than the average milk price at the time of 24.5p per litre.

In 2009, DairyCo's farmer intentions survey revealed that only 18 per cent. of dairy farmers intend to increase milk production—from 35 per cent.—with 13 per cent. intending to exit the industry within the next two years. An increase in production is forecast on some farms, but the reduction in the number of dairy farmers will result in a further fall in milk production nationwide. With demand for dairy products increasing and domestic supply declining, it is vital that the Government act to put the dairy industry on a secure and sustainable long-term footing.

I suggest to the Minister that there are five steps we need to take to improve the outlook for the dairy industry. I hope that he will have time to deal with those
in his remarks. First, we have heard talk of supply chain fairness but, in recent years, the price for raw milk has dropped by 27 per cent. and the consumer price has risen by 11 per cent. Government documents on the dairy market state:

“On the whole, there is little connection between the price paid by the consumer for milk and the price paid to producers”.

On Monday, there was a European Committee debate in which my hon. Friend the Member for South-East Cambridgeshire (Mr. Paise) asked the Minister a question. I will repeat that question, because it needs a full answer from the Minister. He said

“Can the Minister tell us the Government’s view about the relative market share within the UK, vis-à-vis the main processes, and the EU? Many people will find it astonishing that there are co-operative and other organisations in the EU with up to 80 or 90 per cent. of the domestic market, yet in this country, the OFT has frequently over the past decade, forced the break-up or restricted mergers and amalgamations to give equivalent market share.”—[Official Report, European Committee A, 25 January 2010, c. 9.]

That is a really important matter. My hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham talked about Arla in Denmark, which has an 80 per cent. share of the market in that country. We broke up Milk Marque when it had only 37 per cent., which has had a detrimental effect on the ability of producers to work together to get a fair deal.

We have heard about a need for proportionate regulation. That is so important. As I said, I have experience of the impact of the effect of the nitrates vulnerable zone directive. None of us wants impossible levels of nitrates to be in our water supply, but we know from the Government’s figures that the changes imposed by the directive in respect of manure spreading will lead to a 1 per cent. drop in nitrate leaching. That has a massive cost—an impossible cost for some businesses—for the farming community.

We need effective action on disease. Much has been said about TB but, of course, Johnes’s disease is also having a large impact on production. On TB, the Minister was wrong to say in his intervention that those of us who support a limited cull consider that to be a silver bullet and that is all we talk about; we are talking about a cull as part of a much wider approach. The hon. Member for Stroud talked about vaccination but, frankly, it will be 2014 before we get an oral Bacillus Calmette Guérin that is available to work. What state will the dairy sector be in in many areas of this country by then? It is vital that the Government grasp the nettle and get a grip of the TB issue.

That point was poignantly made on “Countryfile,” which is a programme that sometimes irritates me because it considers the matter through the prism of a rather more urban view. There is a man called Adam on that programme, of Adam’s Farm, and he showed precisely the frustration, depression and anxiety caused during TB testing.

We need a stronger focus on research and development. When R and D is so fundamental to the immense challenge of increasing food production while conserving our natural resources, it is critical that we get the most from our world-class science base. That will require the Government to do everything they can to help our universities, institutes and scientists to maximise their contribution to strengthening food security, both here and across the world. They need to do that by equipping farmers with the tools necessary to produce more and impact less. Smart solutions must be found to translate research more effectively into practical use at farm level, so that yields and quality in all sectors improve. I do not have time to go into details, but I would very much like to take that point up further with the Minister.

My final point is on honest labelling. We have heard much about that in the debate and we have been talking about it for a long time, so I hope that the Government can come on board and understand the problem. More than 408,000 tonnes of cheese are imported into this country, and imports of cheese have increased by 60 per cent. in the past 10 years. There is real concern among dairy organisations, such as the Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers, that the ability to put dairy products on our shelves without telling the consumer where they come from is not fair on our farmers.

There is much more that I would like to say on the subject, as it is one that is close to my heart. I can assure hon. Members that if we are in government in a few weeks time we will take the plight of the British dairy farmer to heart.

10.51 am

The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Jim Fitzpatrick): It is a pleasure to see you preside over the debate today, Dr. McCrea. I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire (Mr. Crabb) on securing the debate and on his excellent opening speech. I agree, as clearly many colleagues do, with much of what he said, although not all of it. The only thing that spoilt his speech was his reference to Chelsea FC—I do not know why he wanted to go there, but it was entirely up to him, as it is his debate.

It is clear from the three debates that I have attended in Parliament on the subject within the past week that the future of our dairy industry, and of our food industry more generally, is a prominent issue on the parliamentary agenda, and rightly so. I have listened carefully to the comments raised during the debate. Despite some of the concerns expressed, I believe that the sector can and does have a positive future and that it will play its part as an important and valuable element of the agricultural sector and the food chain, contributing to both the economy, rural areas and the wider environment. I think that the underlying tone of the majority of the contributions made today agrees with that optimism and positivism, despite the concerns that have been raised.

I recognise that the medium-term challenges facing the UK and EU dairy industries are real. I meet with the NFU and other groups regularly to talk through concerns. Yesterday, I attended a meeting with the board of Dairy UK, at which we had a lengthy discussion and I responded to questions on a range of matters. As colleagues will know, I also chair the Dairy Supply Chain Forum, where all the stakeholders play a full part.

We need to take a long, hard look at the dairy sector. It is clear that the substantial sums of money the EU has allocated to dairy farmers in the past year alone are unsustainable. The health check, the economic recovery
plan, market management and the dairy fund have contributed billions of euros to dairy support, but those funds are not the answer to the sector’s difficulties, as many colleagues have said. The EU dairy sector needs to be leaner and more competitive to benefit to the full from the opportunities of a globalised market and to withstand its shocks.

We need to help the sector as prices rise to compete without support. With that in mind, we look forward to continued discussions in the high-level group, which was set up by the European Agriculture Council and the European Commission, and to further reform of the common agricultural policy subsequently. The high-level group process offers an opportunity to inform the direction of travel towards further reform, rather than away from it.

I will try to respond to some of the points raised in the debate. The hon. Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire referred to the declining number of UK dairy farmers. It is clear that there is a natural consolidation in numbers. We are moving towards having fewer farmers, as has been clearly outlined, and larger dairy farms, but that is a move towards greater efficiency. The number of UK dairy farmers is falling more slowly than the number of our competitors in Europe, as has been outlined.

The hon. Gentleman also raised the issue of TB, and the Government recognise the seriousness, the disaster and the tragedy that that represents for herds, farmers and farming. There is also an economic impact on the UK taxpayer because of compensation costs. The hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski) and for Newbury (Mr. Benyon) referred to the emotional aspect of that problem. I saw the piece on “Countryfile” about Adam’s farm and recognise that it is a huge issue. I will come back to that in due course.

The hon. Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire also raised the question of Dairy Farmers of Britain. Clearly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Drew) mentioned, the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee is looking at that and will come forward with its report. It is taking evidence from all those involved, including Ministers.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (David Simpson), in an intervention, expressed his view on subsidies. The UK strongly supports the end of quotas by 2015, and we lobby hard against market distortions. We lost the argument, and I know that there was some disagreement about the €300 million and whether that was a good or bad thing. We argued against the money being devoted to dairy farming because we thought it would further distort the market and not help the UK dairy industry, although obviously it was supported by the majority of member states at the Agriculture Council. As I said in my intervention, we are consulting on the share-outs of the €29 million allocated to the UK.

With regard to the question that the hon. Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire asked about the burden of EU regulation, our aim is to keep the administrative burdens to a minimum. That is a key part of our negotiations at EU level and considerations during all of our policy development, as I am sure he knows. He mentioned unhealthy diets and remarked that there is a range of causes, from alcohol and a lack of exercise to poor food choices, and I do not disagree. I do disagree, however, with his accusation that the Government are not addressing those problems. We might have different conclusions on what the priorities should be and what emphasis should be given, but the Government are addressing all the issues he raised and will continue to press on that. I am more than happy to endorse the dairy industry and dairy products, and I said the same to Dairy UK yesterday. Indeed, my wife says that I have bread with my butter, rather than the other way round.

The hon. Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire asked about the trends on dairy and milk imports. The UK imports high-value products and exports low-value commodities as a rule, which leads to the distortion, and no one would deny that the exchange rate is having an impact. With regard to the Food Standards Agency, it is clearly DEFRA’s role to promote agriculture and dairy, but the FSA has a responsibility to promote a healthy diet and eating well. We do not see those two aims as incompatible. We see dairy as an important element in a balanced, healthy diet, and we make sure that we get that message across as strongly as we can and as frequently as we can.

I will not return to the TB debate, if hon. Members will forgive me, because that matter has been aired well during the debate, and the same is true of Dairy Farmers of Britain. We covered the matter of the ombudsman in a debate last week. The vast majority welcome the advance of the ombudsman. The only Member I have heard speak against it is the hon. Member for Shipley (Philip Davies), who was alone in the Chamber last week on that. That demonstrates that, although there is not unanimity, there is overwhelming support for an ombudsman from all three Front Benches.

The hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham mentioned the size and power of Arla, but we covered that point to an extent in the European Committee, so he will forgive me for not referring to it again. I congratulate him on the establishment of the all-party group on dairy farmers—I hope that that advert increases attendance at the next meeting.

Mr. Benyon rose—

Jim Fitzpatrick: The hon. Gentleman will have to forgive me, as I have one minute left and will not get through my points if I give way.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion (Mark Williams) asked about the UK’s share of the £300 million, and we are consulting on that. The hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham asked about RPA payments. Its performance over recent years has been far better than it has ever been. It now has 80 per cent. of the payments already out. If he wants to write to me on any specific problems, I will be happy to do what I can to look into them. The hon. Member for Newbury gave us the benefit of his personal experience as a former dairy farmer, adding significantly to the value of the debate. I answered some of the questions that have been raised in the debate on Monday.

In conclusion, the prospects for the sector, in the sector’s view, are positive, but there are challenges. The Government are trying to help and will continue to do so. The sector is fundamentally sound, and the efficiency improvements, innovation and investments in new products mean that in the medium to long term the sector can do well.
Kenya (Drought and Famine)

11 am

Mr. Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): It is a privilege to serve once again under your erudite chairmanship, Dr. McCrea, as per usual. I am delighted to have secured an Adjournment debate on an international topic that has been important for a considerable time.

As the developed world changes we see economies decline and then recover. Many of the emerging economies and markets in the near and far east attempt to play catch-up with the developing world. But in the context of those changing economies on a global scale there is one persistent problem, in a geographical sense, for more than 1 billion people: that is, the continent of Africa. Kenya has a population of some 40 million, a quarter of whom are under nine years of age. So it is a significant, populous country yet it has a young population.

Every international political leader of standing in the past 30 years has given, at some point in their tenure, a statement or repeated statements on their determination to help resolve the problems that afflict much of the African continent, but unfortunately the reality is that as they leave office many international statesmen and stateswomen find that those problems are similar to when they entered office.

Drought, famine and corruption are three debilitating reasons for Africa’s awful dilemma, and they afflict Kenya as much as any other country. Despite all the aid and assistance offered it seems to many on the outside that things do not change. Yet there is hope. I have been to Kenya and other parts of Africa. Tribute needs to be paid, and repaid, to the many volunteers, missionaries and charities that are involved in delivering help and hope to the people of Kenya. In north Kenya I witnessed at first hand some excellent work being carried out by missionaries, who for many years have toiled without reward to deliver assistance to the people there.

David Simpson (Upper Bann) (DUP): I congratulate my hon. Friend for his timely intervention. When I was in the northern part of Kenya, such was the level of deprivation that a new school being built by one church group was the major building work in the entire region of north Kenya. Yet that was a commitment address a need at local level. I concur with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Campbell: I thank my hon. Friend for his timely intervention. When I was in the northern part of Kenya, such was the level of deprivation that a new school being built by one church group was the major building work in the entire region of north Kenya. Yet that was a commitment address a need at local level. I concur with my hon. Friend.

In the east Africa region some 23 million people are at severe risk because of the reduction in rainfall in recent years. The average rainfall used to be 200 mm between March and May but last year in that region it was 40 mm—a reduction of some 80 per cent. on average rainfall that was already low.

A charity entitled Excellent Development does phenomenal work in Kenya. It does superb work constructing sand dams, which are a comparatively cheap and ancient system, where the water retention properties of sand are used to help grow bananas, tomatoes and beans. They cost about £8,000 to construct, making them relatively cheap. A sand dam is a reinforced concrete wall built across seasonal river beds. A pipe is built into the dam, going 20 metres upstream, and over one to three seasons the dam fills up with between 2 million and 10 million litres of water. The sand, which filters water through the pipe built into the dam, delivers a clean, reliable water supply for up to 1,200 people. These dams can last for approximately 50 years and they deliver a clean water supply for approximately £7 per head of the population. Some 200 dams have been built by Excellent Development in the past eight years in Kenya, which means that approximately 250,000 people are able to access a clean water supply as a result of a cost-effective measure by a charity that deserves the praise that is heaped upon it.

This type of innovative forward thinking can, if replicated in other parts of Kenya and across the African continent, offer hope to millions of people who otherwise would have none. Offering people ownership of the benefits of many of these projects on an anti-corruption basis can also help remove the stigma that has attached itself to some of the aid efforts of the past in Africa.

Simon Maddrell, who is the originator of Excellent Development and is originally from the Isle of Man, and Joshua Mukusya, who is described as a charismatic Kenyan agriculturist, pioneered the sand dam technology in Kenya to help impoverished communities. Between them they have delivered considerable assistance to more than 250,000 in Kenya. Simon Maddrell’s original applications for charity work were turned down several times, but he decided—I have much sympathy with his decision—that if he could not join them he would beat them. He set up his own charity.

I should also like to mention the work of Dr. Rene Haller, who is from Switzerland. Dr. Haller started experimenting with different trees to see if any would put down roots into the dry, rocky terrain in northern Kenya. The casuarina tree, whose seeds were washed up on Kenyan shores when Krakatoa erupted in the 1860s, was thought to be the best candidate. It produces nutrients in nodules on its roots and so is self-sustaining.

Haller set up a charity and managed to establish many different business enterprises supported by rehabilitated land, both employing and providing food for hundreds of local people. He managed to demonstrate the value of conservation—for example, by showing farmers the benefits of tree planting in preserving water for irrigation. Another activity complements dam-building projects. To prevent the freshwater pools from becoming breeding grounds for mosquitoes, fish have been introduced and the fish eat the mosquito larvae. The fish are also a rich source of protein for the community and they fertilise the water, which makes it even better for feeding the crops. Any surplus fish are sold, providing much-needed income for local communities.

I and my party have supported successive Governments in their endeavours, through international aid agencies, to help in Kenya and throughout Africa, but I hope that the Minister today can offer the prospect of additional help to projects such as those that I have outlined,
whereby a difference can be made on a local and regional basis. I am talking not just about a difference in per capita spend in Kenya, but about a difference that is seen on the ground, at very local level, and that individuals there report as a positive step, a renewal step, a regenerating step. I am talking about steps that provide them and future generations with the wherewithal to regenerate that part of Africa.

11.11 am

The Minister of State, Department for International Development (Mr. Gareth Thomas): I join the hon. Member for East Londonderry (Mr. Campbell) in welcoming the opportunity to serve under your chairmanship, Dr. McCrea. I do not think that I have had that privilege before now. I also, in the usual way, congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing the debate and on the way in which he introduced the topic. I welcome, too, the interest of his party colleague, the hon. Member for Upper Bann (David Simpson), in the debate. I join both hon. Members in paying tribute to the considerable number of charities, aid agencies and individuals who make it their life’s work to serve people less fortunate than themselves on the continent of Africa, and in particular today, to those working in Kenya.

In a debate such as this, it is worth noting that although many of the countries in Africa still face considerable challenges, there has been considerable progress across the continent. One thinks of the considerable numbers of children who are now in school, the rising economic growth and extra jobs that are being created—notwithstanding the impacts of the current global recession—and the fact that less is conflict taking place. There has been considerable progress across the continent. One thinks of the considerable numbers of children who are now in school, the rising economic growth and extra jobs that are being created—notwithstanding the impacts of the current global recession—and the fact that less is conflict taking place in Africa now than probably at any time in the last 30 years, albeit there are still considerable challenges.

Mr. Campbell: May I rectify an omission? I also thank those people involved in the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, who have made a considerable contribution to the work in Kenya and other parts of Africa. I omitted to mention that in my speech and I thank the Minister for giving way to allow me to do so now.

Mr. Thomas: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point about the contribution of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, which does very good and important work—work that is appreciated by politicians and parliamentarians across the globe, but particularly in a number of Commonwealth countries.

The hon. Gentleman rightly drew the attention of the House to the issues relating to drought, famine, corruption and good governance. Those issues would challenge any state, but they are challenging Kenya in particular at the moment. He is right to highlight the fact that for millions of people living in Kenya, hunger is a harsh reality. In 2009, an estimated 3.8 million Kenyans needed emergency food aid, hence the importance of today’s debate.

It is perhaps worth pointing out that the real problem is not that there is no food available in Kenya, but that food is available only at a price that puts it beyond the reach of most people, particularly those living in remote or marginalised areas. There are a number of reasons for that. As the hon. Gentleman said, last year’s drought had far-reaching consequences for Kenyan farmers, for other food producers and for people in Kenya more generally. El Niño rains were expected from October to December, but many areas experienced a shortfall of rain. It is a cruel irony that although rain is now falling in Kenya, it is falling at a rate that has caused harmful flooding in many areas in the past week alone. All that means that Kenyans are likely to suffer even more hunger this year than they did last year, and that is why the work of the charities that the hon. Gentleman described is so important.

The second barrier to affordable food has been the post-election violence that has blighted some areas. As a result of tensions and conflict, pastoralists in north and east Kenya have had difficulty accessing land and water sources. The fear of violence also means that even those who did manage to produce food face problems supplying it to their usual markets.

The third challenge has been the massive rise in food prices. The hon. Gentleman will probably remember that food prices across the world rose steeply in 2008 in line with rising oil prices. Although global prices fell later, Kenyan prices remained high last year, with maize costing about double the average global rate. That was in part due to high transport costs, but according to research recently carried out by the World Bank, domestic prices in Kenya also reflect subsidies that the Kenyan Government have offered to maize producers. By subsidising producers who sell maize to the National Cereals and Produce Board, the Government have, in effect, kept maize prices high. In addition, although the subsidies were meant to be part of the response to the food shortage, the reality is that only a minority of large farmers benefited, leaving the impoverished majority even worse off. Indeed, according to the same research, half of all maize revenues are enjoyed by just 2 per cent. of farmers.

Those, then, are some of the underlying causes of the shortage of affordable food in Kenya. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the Government are committed to trying to tackle these challenges and to giving help to those who need it immediately. Let me set out how we have responded. First, on humanitarian aid, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in October that we would provide £39 million of extra funding to tackle the food crisis across the horn of Africa, bringing Britain’s total new commitments for 2009 to £83 million. As the hon. Gentleman will recognise, the horn covers a number of countries beyond northern Kenya, but Kenya certainly benefited.

I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that Ethiopia must remain our priority, given the sheer number of people in need. In 2009 alone, however, our direct humanitarian support for Kenya reached nearly £15 million. That money is helping to provide a full emergency food ration for up to 220,000 people for three months, treatment for more than 25,000 cases of severe acute malnutrition, clean water for 200,000 households and vaccination against measles for 400,000 children.

David Simpson: Will the Minister outline how the Government are helping to prevent aid—whether food, water or medical supplies—from being sold on the black market? What are they doing to tackle corruption?

Mr. Thomas: The hon. Gentleman’s intervention is extremely timely, because I was moving on to reassure the House that the money we give Kenya is channelled
through reputable agencies with a sound track record of aid delivery and good financial management, which the Department has worked with in several humanitarian emergencies. We have audited them regularly and are confident in their ability to get aid to those at the sharp end who need it the most. We believe that humanitarian aid should be focused on those groups where the needs are greatest, rather than spreading larger amounts of assistance more thinly.

Hon. Members will be aware that the Department for International Development, under the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, published a White Paper on development last July. In that White Paper we made clear our commitment to ensure that agriculture and food security will be given the highest international attention. We have as a result also lobbied other Governments to do more in Kenya. The announcement that we made on additional funding has helped to put pressure on others to do more to help the people of Kenya. My ministerial colleagues and I have approached our international counterparts and I have written personally to Development Ministers of all major donor countries to alert them to the famine in the horn.

We have tried to lead the international response to the difficulties that the people of Kenya face, and to do so by example. In 2009, the UK was the third biggest bilateral donor of humanitarian assistance to Kenya, after the US and Japan. In addition, the UK accounted for 17 per cent. of the $41 million committed by the European Community Humanitarian Office, and more than 15 per cent. of the $30 million committed by the UN Central Emergency Response Fund. The aid provided by the UK and others has brought some stability and has meant that food has been available, at least in the short term. The challenge is to avoid the same situation happening year after year.

That brings me to our second area of activity: helping Kenya to become self-sufficient so that it no longer needs to depend on humanitarian aid. We know that cash can have greater long-term benefits than food aid because it allows people more flexibility in the way that they organise their lives and incomes. We are providing £122 million over 10 years to improve the livelihoods of the poorest Kenyans, particularly in the drought-prone arid lands. Much of that is going through a hunger safety net programme, which provides cash to 90,000 poor rural households. A very rough equivalent would be the social security system of the UK. The fledgling programme is the start of a similar system in Kenya. Additional funding from the Kenyan Government, the World Bank and UNICEF extends that to another 120,000 households. In total, that means that more than 1 million of the poorest Kenyans will receive support in the form of cash rather than food aid.

We are also putting money into new crop and livestock insurance products to help poor households manage the risks posed by extreme weather events; we are trying to support people in looking after themselves for tomorrow, rather than just in dealing with the immediate situation. We have also just started working with the Ministry for Development of Northern Kenya and Other Arid Lands on a programme of longer-term support that will reduce dependence on humanitarian assistance. We plan to commit up to £15 million to that programme.

Thirdly, we have increased the frequency and intensity of our discussions with the Government of Kenya. Last year the Kenyan Government allocated more of its own resources to dealing with the consequences of drought than ever before. Frankly, it could do still more. Kenya has substantial domestic resources and should be perfectly able to prioritise the plight of its most vulnerable citizens. We shall continue to take every opportunity we can to make that point. We have also encouraged the Kenyan Government to develop their own longer-term strategy. We are working with Ministers and officials in Kenya to help them to appreciate the economic consequences of climate change, which is clearly an increasing factor in some of the difficulties that the people of Kenya face. It is particularly important that they are able to take advantage of the opportunities offered by new climate finance, including the resources committed at Copenhagen. I therefore hope that the hon. Member for East Londonderry will agree that a lasting solution to food insecurity does not lie in humanitarian aid, however crucial it might be in the short term, and that the Department needs to focus on not only the immediate humanitarian needs of the people of Kenya, but how to help them to avoid a repeat of the present situation in the longer term.

The hon. Gentleman specifically asked whether we could give further support to particular charities and he described the work of charities with which he is familiar. We have a strong programme of support for civil society; indeed, the Secretary of State increased that support last July, at the time of the White Paper. I do not know whether the organisations that the hon. Gentleman mentioned have had discussions with the Department, but if he wants to write to me or to bring some of their representatives to see me, I would be happy to listen to any presentations and to point people to potential sources of funding for work with the Department. The hon. Gentleman will understand that I can give no guarantees to him or the House, because we clearly need to do our audit checks. In principle, however, I would be happy to meet him and the organisations concerned, if he thinks that that would be useful.

Perhaps the last point that I should make is that we are seeing a disaster of the magnitude of that in Haiti every year internationally. At the same time, however, we are regularly seeing continuing emergencies of the sort that the hon. Gentleman has brought to the attention of the House. The international system is having to deal with the reality that a growing number of people need humanitarian assistance, some for relatively short periods, others for much longer. There continues to be a question as to whether the international humanitarian system is geared up, for want of a better phrase, to cope with the expected increase in the numbers needing humanitarian assistance. As the Prime Minister said at Prime Minister’s questions only last week, we need to keep our eye on that particular issue. DFID and I as a Minister in the Department are continuing to put considerable time and energy into the issue.

I hope that I have done justice to the issues that the hon. Members for East Londonderry and for Upper Bann have raised. I repeat that I am happy to meet the hon. Member for East Londonderry and colleagues in
the charitable sector with whom he has worked. I hope that people—perhaps in Kenya—will reflect on the issues that we have discussed and on whether they can do more to tackle the long-term challenges that Kenya faces.

11.28 am

Sitting suspended.

Colombia (Human Rights)

[MISS ANNE BEGG in the Chair]

2.30 pm

Jim Sheridan (Paisley and Renfrewshire, North) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Miss Begg. I sought this Adjournment debate because I visited Colombia last year and saw at first hand the human rights atrocities that go on in that country. The Colombian Government are a slick PR machine, well rehearsed at saying all the right things about how they are tackling the human rights crisis, but the real situation is very different from what they say. In fact, the regime in Bogota is complicit in the abuses.

However, the Labour Government are endorsing the proposal for an EU-Colombia free trade agreement—something that will only serve to legitimise the terrible record of the Uribe regime. Our Government say that they will ensure that a human rights clause is incorporated in the agreement and that that will provide the UK and the EU with leverage to force Colombia to comply with certain human rights standards, so I want to pose these questions to the Government.

First, if innocent people are still, as we speak, regularly being murdered by the Colombian army, why do the Government and the European Union believe that rewarding the regime with an FTA will do anything to improve the situation? Surely it would be better to wait for the killings to end—to tell the regime that it can have the agreement after it starts respecting human rights, not before.

Secondly, how will the Government monitor improvement by using the clearly bogus figures produced by the Uribe PR machine? Thirdly, what is the mechanism for withdrawing the agreement? We understand that withdrawal requires unanimous agreement by all the EU member states—something that we are never likely to get, regardless of the abuses in Colombia. Lastly—this is the proof of the pudding, as I see it—the EU already has a generalised system of preferences trade agreement with Colombia, which includes human rights clauses that the Colombia regime is currently flouting, yet the EU, far from suspending that agreement pending an investigation, as it is doing with Sri Lanka, is choosing to reward the Colombian regime with a full free trade agreement.

I come now to some specifics of the human rights situation in Colombia. First, I want to focus on the abuses suffered by our trade union colleagues, because, as we all know, that country is the most dangerous place on earth in which to be a trade unionist. It is vital to put it on the record that contrary to the assertions of the regime in Bogota and some of its more fervent supporters in the international community, the situation has not improved for trade union members. The facts are clear. In 2007, there were 39 assassinations of trade union leaders; in 2008 there were 49. That is a 25 per cent. increase in the number being killed.

The statistics are the same for other abuses. More trade unionists are receiving death threats and being forced to flee their homes and jobs. More trade unionists have disappeared and more trade unionists are being locked up without trial. It is high time that people stopped swallowing the propaganda of the Colombian regime and looked at the reality.
It is also important to examine who is perpetrating the attacks and, according to the Colombian TUC, that is pretty clear. In 90 per cent. of the cases, the perpetrator of the abuses is the state, either directly via the police and army or indirectly through allowing right-wing paramilitaries linked to the army free rein to butcher our trade union colleagues in that country. The question of why they are being targeted also comes back to the Colombian state. On repeated occasions in recent years, the Colombian President himself, President Uribe, has spoken out publicly about trade unionists, human rights activists and the like, but instead of saying how important their work is and offering support for their predicament, he has lashed out at them, describing them as criminals or terrorists. Such comments lead to people being killed, and President Uribe knows that.

Bob Spink: I was told eight years ago that the killings would cease totally, and they have not.

Jim Sheridan: You can imagine the outcry, Miss Begg, if nine trade unionists were killed in this country; you can imagine the effect that there would be. The situation is similar for journalists, because Colombia is one of the most dangerous countries in the world in which to be a journalist. Six were assassinated there during 2009, and the concerning thing about such cases is that those murdered are invariably the journalists reporting on Government corruption, human rights abuses or other issues that the regime in Bogota would prefer to be swept under the carpet. There has been widespread harassment of journalists deemed unsympathetic to the Administration of President Uribe, including by the DAS—Department of Administrative Security—secret police, who in one case threatened to murder the daughter of a reporter if she did not shut up. It is not enough simply to condemn those who violate press freedom or kill trade union activists. Those responsible need to be named and shamed, and in this case that is primarily the Colombian regime.

The second human rights issue that I want to touch on is political prisoners, as although the regime in Bogota appears to find it impossible to arrest those responsible for killing trade unionists and others who speak out against President Uribe, it seems to have no problems whatever in locking up critics for long periods without trial, on the flimsiest of evidence. That tactic of jailing opponents is used by several nasty regimes around the world. Burma, Zimbabwe and Sudan jump to mind, and the Foreign Office has rightly spoken out in those cases. What is strange in the case of Colombia, unlike the others that I have mentioned, is the deafening silence from our Government. Let us be clear: although the regime denies it, the Colombian authorities are throwing large numbers of people in prison simply for their political beliefs.

With five parliamentary colleagues, I visited several of the victims of that criminalisation in two prisons in Colombia last year. It was clear that they were being locked up on bogus evidence that would not be taken seriously in most countries. They are normally accused of rebellion or terrorism; but they are not taken to court so cannot clear their names. They are left to languish in jail for months — and, indeed, for years.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (Lab): I, too, had the opportunity a few short years ago to visit Colombia. Along with my colleagues, I had the chance to meet a number of displaced people. I understand that their number has increased to about 4.5 million — but perhaps my hon. Friend was coming to that. Does he agree that that figure alone suggests that it is time for a strategy to return to peace in a country that does not give the impression that its leadership is prepared to do so?

Jim Sheridan: My right hon. Friend is renowned for his work in international development. Indeed, he is regarded by many in the House of Commons as having the highest integrity. In case there is any ambiguity about what we are saying, my right hon. Friend has confirmed that it is also his view.
Why have we not condemned this state of affairs more forcibly? The truth is that it should not need much pressure to get the Colombian authorities to release those prisoners. For example, the British NGO Justice for Colombia has managed to get more than 15 political prisoners released; and only days after we visited the prison, one of the prisoners whom we had met was freed, which allowed a very public denunciation of his situation in the Colombian press.

I would like to focus on one prisoner, a woman that I met last year. She is an outspoken defender of human rights and trade union rights, and she remains in prison unconvicted even as we speak. I ask the Minister to consider the case of Liliany Obando. She is an academic, and has toured north America and Australia at the invitation of trade unions there, with the express intention of raising awareness of the human rights crisis in Colombia. Her high profile work clearly angered the regime in Bogota. Shortly after she returned from one of her speaking tours, she was dragged from her home in front of her young children, and thrown into jail. That was a year and a half ago, and she is still there. I therefore urge the Minister to make urgent representations on her behalf and publicly demand that the Colombian authorities release her immediately.

Mr. Eric Joyce (Falkirk) (Lab): I understand that one of the accusations against Liliany Obando is that she was collecting money for terrorists, yet she had raised money from a Canadian trade union to be used for an educational project in Colombia. That accusation was condemned by the Canadian Government. I hope that the Minister will consider taking the same position today.

Jim Sheridan: My hon. Friend makes a perfectly valid point. The Canadians have been very proactive, not only in that case but on the situation in Colombia in general. I shall touch on that aspect later.

I wish to cover one other matter—one that is so important that it deserves the attention of everyone here today. It is the question of extra-judicial execution. It is a deplorable practice. The Colombian army is murdering civilians, and then dressing their bodies and pretending that they were guerrillas killed in combat. It does it because, in the grotesque world of Colombia’s Ministry of Defence, soldiers who achieve a high body count receive financial bonuses with time off work and their officers receive promotion.

To the south of Bogota is a poor neighbourhood called Soacha. Over the past few years, countless young men from that neighbourhood, where unemployment is extremely high, have been offered jobs by a bogus employment agency established by the army. The young men, some as young as 17, when going off for their first day at work, simply disappeared—that is until their bodies were paraded on television by the army as guerrillas killed in combat; they were even wearing FARC guerrilla uniforms. The problem was that although their bodies were riddled with bullet holes, their uniforms were not; they had clearly been dressed as combatants after they had been executed.

It has since transpired that that practice is systematic, and is carried out by military units across Colombia. I understand that about 2,000 cases have been identified—that is 2,000 civilians who have been slaughtered in cold blood by the Colombian army. What happened at Soacha was important, although Colombian human rights groups had been highlighting the practice for some time—only, I might add, to be accused by President Uribe of being anti-army terrorists.

Soacha was the first time that the media, the United Nations and others became involved. Indeed, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said that the phenomenon was so extreme, so systematic, that it could be described as a war crime. Soacha therefore became an emblematic case; and everyone, including the US Government, expressed concern and called for justice—and the Colombian Government promised that justice would be done.

Once again, however, despite the promises, they appear to have done nothing. Although a small number of soldiers were detained pending trial, I understand that in the last couple of weeks, now that international scrutiny has subsided, the Colombian authorities have started releasing those men without them having faced trial. Basically, those responsible for that industrial-scale slaughter are back on the payroll.

That, however, is just the tip of the iceberg, as the majority of those involved were not even investigated. Their ringleader, General Mario Montoya, who in any other country would have been jailed for life, was instead appointed Colombian ambassador to the Dominican Republic. He remains there today, no doubt living the cushy life of a diplomat, yet his victims’ families have received no justice.

The contrast with the plight of Colombia’s political prisoners could not be greater. It is astonishing that the authorities in Colombia seem unable to catch the soldiers responsible for the extra-judicial killings, or the hundreds of people who have assassinated trade unionists, yet at the same time they are most effective at locking up those who speak out against the abuses and the Uribe regime more generally.

To sum up, it is important to say that the Colombian regime is expert at misleading the international community, and at providing misleading and bogus information to try to pull the rug over our eyes. Senior Government officials will sit in front of us, smile, look straight into our eyes and tell a pack of lies. It is crucial that we do not fall for it. We need to listen to what human rights organisations, trade unions, independent journalists and so many other brave members of Colombian civil society are saying. What they are saying is supported by evidence that the Uribe Administration is complicit in the violence and is not the slightest bit serious about dealing with the abuses.

If we believe the propaganda, we will be doing an immense disservice to the people of Colombia. For that reason, I call on the Minister to end British political, diplomatic and military support to that odious regime. In particular, in light of all the evidence, it is absurd to suggest that pushing ahead with a free trade agreement between the European Union and Colombia will help to alleviate the suffering of Colombian civil society. Colombia’s trade unions, human rights groups, organisations that represent peasant farmers, its indigenous people and thousands of others have made it clear that such an agreement would make the situation worse, not better.
[Jim Sheridan]

It would be a disgrace for the British Government to support anything that merely served to legitimise Uribe. We should be on the side of those whose rights are being abused, not of those who are perpetrating the abuses.

2.48 pm

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire, North (Jim Sheridan) on securing this debate. He brings an important subject before the House. I have much respect for him. I know that he feels passionately about the matter and has consistently spoken up for human rights in Colombia.

I declare an interest in that I recently visited Colombia as a guest of the Colombian Government; it is entered in the Register of Members’ Interests. I am also secretary of the all-party group on Latin America, and a member of the Conservative party Human Rights Commission with responsibility for Latin America. I have often raised human rights matters, not only with the Colombian ambassador in London but with incomers and ministerial visitors from Colombia—and, indeed, when I was in Colombia.

I condemn any killing of any sort in Colombia, whether it be the assassination of political leaders, the recent assassination of a regional governor, or the assassination of trade unionists or journalists. All murders and killings are wrong, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman and some of his esteemed colleagues will recognise that progress has been made. I dispute the figures that he has brought before the Chamber this afternoon. Every murder and killing is a murder and killing too far; they leave behind a suffering and grieving family. None the less, there has been a reduction not only in extrajudicial killings but in the killings of journalists and trade unionists. The perpetrators of such murders are wide and varied, and it would be wrong entirely to place the blame at the foot of the Government of President Uribe.

If the hon. Gentleman cares to look at the statistics for the amount of close protection and bodyguards that are given to trade unionists, he will see that they have increased. Perhaps I might pay tribute to him in that regard. The Government of Colombia were right to listen to the view of many people in this House—whether they be on the left or right—that there should be better provision for the protection of trade unionists, and that is happening and it should continue to do so. The Government of Colombia are right to keep the matter under review and if the provision needs to be extended, so be it.

There is a contradiction at the heart of the hon. Gentleman’s argument. On the one hand he suggests that the Government should do more to promote human rights in Colombia, and on the other, some people on the Labour Back Benches have been campaigning very hard to see human rights training for senior military officials in Colombia withdrawn. That is what has happened. Therefore, the contradiction at the heart of his argument is clear. We need to be very top as well as people in voluntary organisations, non-governmental organisations, and advocacy groups promoting human rights.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the hon. Gentleman not concern himself with the fact that when we look at Colombia we discover the tremendous problem of drugs and the influence of the drug barons? We are told that drug-related conditions are second only to cancer as a cause of death. Does he not feel that much more needs to be done to co-ordinate a response to remove that blemish?

Mark Pritchard: I completely agree with the right hon. Gentleman. The fact is that drugs from Colombia—I was recently in the jungles of Colombia—fuel crime in the streets everywhere, whether it be in West Bromwich Albion, Shropshire, or in the Rhondda. I am glad that the British Government are working in close co-operation with the Government of Colombia to deal with the issue. What is of particular concern is the new and emerging link between al-Qaeda and the FARC, which live and breathe off drug money. Moreover, because farmers have been so successful in diversifying their crops away from cacao, a lot of the drug production has been displaced into Venezuela. A question perhaps for another day is: what are the Government of Venezuela and President Chavez doing with the revenue that is coming from drugs in Venezuela? Therefore, progress is being made, but we want to see more.

Let me touch now on the organisation Justice for Colombia, which is funded by the TUC. Although I do not have an issue with that, the TUC and some trade unionists need to recognise that progress is being made. If occasionally they made one positive statement about the most minuscule amount of progress in whatever Government department in Bogota, some of their many siren calls about the Government of President Uribe might be taken more seriously. They need to applaud on occasion and condemn, as I do, when there are human rights abuses. I suspect that even if President Uribe or any future president were to get it absolutely right, Justice for Colombia may well move on to President Calderon and become Justice for Mexico.

Let us consider the facts. There has been a reduction in homicide, including the homicide of union leaders and teachers, who are also unionised members; a 90 per cent. drop in kidnappings; and a huge demobilisation of guerrillas, from the FARC and the other two groups—perhaps there is a lesson there for the Afghanistan campaign—the members of which have become integrated into society and run farms and small businesses. FARC numbers are running at around 9,000, which is a huge success. Both individuals and the collective have been demobilised and vulnerable groups have been protected.

If we look at who has attended this debate today, we will see that many of the glitterati of the left are here, and they are entitled to their view. I suspect that much of this agenda—not all of it, the human rights issue is important—is driven by an anti-capitalist outlook on life. [HON. MEMBERS: “Oh!”] Yes, shock, horror. It is also driven by a slight dash of anti-Americanism. The fact is that the EU-Colombia free trade agreement will address many of the issues on which we agree. It will reduce poverty, enfranchise people to set up their own small and medium enterprise businesses, allow people to have the money to put shoes on their children’s feet, and enable people to send their children some distance to go to school. If there is no agreement, millions of Colombians will be locked into the poverty they find themselves in at the moment. If there is a real campaign
against the free trade agreement, the left in the Labour party should say so and tell its Front-Bench team. I will support the Government if they continue to support the drive to see that trade agreement come forward.

There have been successes in the Colombian economy. GDP and exports are up; inflation is down and private investment and foreign direct investment have risen. Britain, of course, is a major investor. I caution the left of the Labour party, those anti-bilateral trade agreement people, and those who have the dash of anti-Americanism running through their blood, that many pension trusts and investors from this country invest in Colombia. A destabilised Columbia would present a peril to pension investment and to the people who draw pensions in every constituency represented in this House today. The public sector debt and unemployment are down, and we want to see more people in employment, but let us recognise progress when progress is made.

Please forgive me, Miss. Begg, but I need to leave this debate early. I am sure that some hon. Members will be delighted about that. I will read the debate in Hansard. I am sure that it will be exhilarating, especially with my hon. Friend the Member for Rayleigh (Mr. Francois) and the Minister for Europe on the Front Benches.

Let me finally touch on Venezuela. It is particularly unhelpful to the poor people of Venezuela and Colombia and to the region as a whole for President Chavez to use hot talk to endanger stability and geo-political peace in the region.

Colin Burgon (Elmet) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman talks about stability in the region, but have President Chavez’s troops interfered in any other country in the way in which Colombian troops did in Ecuador?

Mark Pritchard: I just look at the incoming traffic to Caracas, which represents the glitterati of peace and human rights: President Ahmadinejad, Prime Minister Putin—

Colin Burgon: Answer the question.

Mark Pritchard: I am coming on to that; I am giving the hon. Gentleman some context first. The fact is that there are incursions on both sides of the border. They should end and both Governments should ensure that the rhetoric is reduced and that there is dialogue in a measured, calm and reasonable way, because conflict in the region would be absolutely disastrous for both countries.

I also encourage the hon. Gentleman himself, through his Venezuelan contacts, to encourage the Government of Venezuela not to talk in apocalyptic terms and not to talk about nuclear ambitions—I have a reference to such talk here and I am happy to send it to him. That talk is destabilising for the region and dare I say it?—it is also destabilising for the poor people in the region and for human rights throughout Latin America.

I conclude by saying that much progress has been made in Colombia. It is not enough, it is not being made quickly enough and more needs to be done. However, I encourage the glitterati of the left in the Labour party to recognise where progress is being made. Yes, they should condemn when it is appropriate to do so, but occasionally they should recognise and applaud where breakthroughs have been made.
ordered to participate in the murder of a trade union leader. The fact that the security services are involved in intimidation, which can lead to murder, and have tried to cover their tracks by drug trafficking again causes me concern about the way in which that society operates.

We also know that the threats have been widespread. I want to make the point to the Minister that communication intercepts of, for example, Supreme Court judges, trade unionists, human rights activists and so on have been made. We know that, as a result of those intercepts, death threats were made. It would be a laugh if it were not so serious, but the death threats have been made in accordance with a textbook that is issued to DAS officers. The textbook sets out how they should approach or communicate with a particular person to make their death threat. It is because of the way in which these death threats have been made to this group of people that they have been traced back to that textbook and therefore to the security services.

I understand that the actual machinery that was used to make those intercepts is alleged to have come from the UK. It is alleged that the machinery was provided to the security services of Colombia and that it is being used, as I have said, in an intimidatory way. Perhaps that is something else that the Minister will refer to in his winding-up speech. If there is indeed evidence that such technology has been exchanged with or sold to Colombia, I hope that he will take action to ensure that that activity is brought to an end.

The final point that I want to make to the Minister is related to the way in which the British embassy in Bogota appears to have a relationship with, for example, the director of DAS. I have been told that I can be provided with a list of the people who were invited to a dinner at the embassy last year and that among the names on that list is that of the director of DAS. If that is correct, again, I find it to be very disturbing that that man, who is responsible for intimidation, has been invited to attend a dinner at the British embassy.

Mark Pritchard: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern. However, is he not in danger of confusing the relationship between the UK embassy and Colombia in relation to counter-terrorism advice, help and support and the embassy’s counter-narcotics help and support, given that those two issues are linked to what goes on in the streets of London and elsewhere?

Mr. Clapham: I do not think that I am in danger of confusing those issues. We have evidence that the director of the security services is so involved in thuggery that we should keep our distance from him. We should pass instructions down the line to our embassy in Bogota saying that we should not invite people to dinners at the British embassy when we know that they have been involved in the violation of human rights, as this person has been. When the Minister winds up, perhaps he can let us know whether any instruction has been passed down the line to ensure that we do not invite people who are involved in thuggery to the British embassy. Inviting such people to dinners at our embassy is not helpful, because it gives Britain the wrong image throughout Latin America. If I am proved correct about this issue, I hope that action can be taken and that an instruction can be passed down the line saying that we should not be involved with people we know to be involved in thuggery.

3.11 pm

Colin Burgon (Elmet) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire, North (Jim Sheridan) on securing the debate. I have been described as many things, but I have never been described as part of Labour’s glitterati. When I look round at Members from places such as Barnsley, Paisley and Renfrewshire, and Bradford, I know that those are the places where the real glitterati hang out.

My hon. Friend mentioned the proposed free trade agreement between the EU and Colombia and how its so-called human rights clauses are likely to have no effect on the situation in Colombia or on the behaviour of what can only be classed as the abhorrent regime in Bogota. However, I would like to add a couple of points about the agreement that make it even more imperative that the British Government insist on delaying it.

The first point relates to the international situation and the United States. The hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mark Pritchard) accused some of us of anti-Americanism, but I side with Americans such as Mark Twain, who said that he did not want to see the eagle of freedom sink its talons into any other country. There is a sizeable body of opinion in America that thinks differently from right-wing Republicans. As hon. Members and the Minister will be aware, the US Congress, backed by the President, has so far refused to ratify the country’s free trade agreement with Colombia. The reasons that have been given for that are the human rights situation, the ongoing attack on trade unionists and others and the continuing impunity that the Colombian authorities have permitted. I understand from recent press reports that the US ambassador in Colombia announced last week that he thought there was little chance of the US-Colombia agreement going anywhere at this stage. Interestingly, Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers are often portrayed as America’s outriders, so I wonder how they feel about the present situation. On most occasions, we seem very pleased to follow in America’s wake, but what are we doing now?

In addition, the Canadian Parliament has not ratified the proposed Canada-Colombia trade agreement, again after incredibly fierce debate about the human rights consequences. Similarly, the European Free Trade Association group of countries has delayed approval of its free trade agreement with Colombia, again on human rights grounds. For the European Union to press ahead with such an agreement would send entirely the wrong signal—that human rights are not so important to the European Community. It would also shatter the international consensus on the issue and provide President Uribe—one of the worst human rights abusers in the world—with an incredible domestic propaganda victory, which his regime, more than any other, does not deserve.

My other point on the free trade agreement is perhaps of more concern. The Minister will correct me if I am wrong, but I understand that informal discussions with the European Commission have revealed that suspending the proposed EU-Colombia free trade agreement on human rights grounds at some point in the future would
require the unilateral agreement of all 27 EU member states, and senior Commission officials have privately admitted that there is no chance whatever of securing that unanimity. The Colombian regime presumably knows that—as has been said, it has an excellent intelligence agency domestically and internationally—and therefore has little interest in whether there are human rights clauses in the agreement, safe in the knowledge that they would never be enforced in any case. Therefore, the arguments that the Foreign Office has repeatedly put forward in recent months about including human rights clauses in the agreement are slightly disingenuous—I am being quite polite there. Colombia clearly does not respect human rights, and incorporating in the agreement clauses that will never be implemented will do nothing to change that.

My hon. Friend mentioned that Colombia benefits from a generalised system of preferences-plus trade arrangement with the EU. That mechanism specifically says that countries benefiting from the GSP must comply with several international human and labour rights standards. If they do not, it says that an investigation should immediately be opened into their conduct and that trade preferences should be suspended, as recently happened in the case of Sri Lanka and, before that, Belarus. Colombia complies with virtually none of its obligations under international treaties. Do not get me wrong, the Colombian Government swear that they comply with everything, but that is nothing more than spin in reality. They regularly breach International Labour Organisation core labour standards, and collective bargaining in the public sector, for example, is illegal under Colombian law. They also flout international human rights norms almost daily. Has the European Commission pushed for an investigation or a suspension? They have not. I wonder why. When such abuses so clearly continue, why on earth would it be sensible to upgrade Colombia’s trade status?

When one looks at how the GSP human rights clauses have been so comprehensively ignored, it is beyond belief that the Foreign Office should continue to bleat on about how the human rights clauses in the proposed free trade agreement will make all the difference, give us leverage, force an improvement and all the other nonsensical arguments that we have heard. When I last met a Colombian trade unionist just before Christmas, she clearly told me how strange she and her colleagues felt about what was happening with the free trade agreement. They had always assumed that Europe was to the left of, or more progressive than, its counterparts in Washington. For us to push ahead with the agreement, while the United States has taken the position that it has on human rights, is an utter disgrace. It is stomach-churning that a Labour Government should provide this undeserved reward to a regime that murders more trade unionists than every other repressive regime in the world combined. I and other members of the glitterati will continue to raise this issue, because the fate of working people, whichever country they live in, is closely linked with our politics, and we will not give up on them.

Several hon. Members rose—

Miss Anne Begg (in the Chair): Order. I would like to call the Front-Bench spokespeople at 3.30 pm. I call Jeff Ennis.

Jeff Ennis (Barnsley, East and Mexborough) (Lab): It is always a great pleasure in such debates to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Colin Burgon), who is a new Labour colleague and friend. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire, North (Jim Sheridan) on calling the debate. It is always a great privilege to support an hon. Member whose constituency’s title is as long as mine.

In December 2009, I was fortunate to be a member of a delegation to Colombia sponsored by the Justice for Colombia campaign, and if hon. Members have a look at the Register of Members’ Financial Interests, they will see my entry in that weighty tome. I want to make some general remarks about that visit, which was my first to Colombia. First, the country is very beautiful and has an excellent climate. Its regions are very fertile and it is very productive agriculturally. It is rich in mineral resources and the people are fantastically friendly to Europeans like us. The problem, currently, is that the people of Colombia are being badly let down by their national Government, whose performance has a negative impact on the country’s standing in the world. The biggest problem is the infringement of Colombian people’s human rights, particularly the number of extra-judicial killings that continue to take place, and particularly the killing of opposition politicians and trade unionists. As Amnesty International has said, Colombia is the most dangerous country in the world in which to be a trade unionist. For the past decade, more trade unionists have lost their lives in Colombia than in all the other countries of the world put together.

When we arrived in Bogota to go to the hotel in the city centre, one of the first things that I noticed was the number of people on motorcycles, and the fact that they all had reflective bibs and crash helmets with the registration number of the motorcycle. That is because of the number of drive-by shootings from motorcycles carried out in places such as Bogota. That is the sort of legislation that the Colombian Government have had to pass to try to protect as many ordinary people as possible. It is a sad indictment of the current state of affairs.

I want, having set the general scene, to turn the Minister’s attention to two seriously worrying incidents that occurred while we were in Colombia. The first was something that we witnessed in a town called La Macarena, a tiny community in a remote rural region called Meta, which the delegation visited. My hon. Friend talked about the appalling phenomenon of extra-judicial executions, in which the Colombian army has murdered thousands of innocent civilians and then tried to deceive public opinion by claiming that they were guerrillas killed in combat. The people responsible for those crimes have gone unpunished, and I understand that the new commander of the Colombian army, who was allegedly appointed to clean things up, was previously the officer in charge of a region called Antioquia, where perhaps more extra-judicial executions have occurred than anywhere else. In addition to him, numerous other army officers who were behind those killings have been promoted. Virtually all remain on active duty, which is no doubt the reason why the murders continue.

In La Macarena we met local people and human rights activists from the region, who gave us details of case after case of innocent, mainly young, people simply
disappearing. No one was investigating the cases, and those who dared to speak out about them were threatened and, in some cases, forced to flee the area. However, what shocked us the most was the cemetery in that small village, which could be better described as a mass grave. On the village outskirts, right next to the main military base in the region, was a cemetery with more than 1,000 unmarked graves. Each had a little cross with the letters “NN” on it, which in Colombia means an unidentified body, along with the date of burial. Nearly all had a date in either 2008 or 2009. There were just as many dated 2009 as there were dated 2008, to answer the point made by the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mark Pritchard), who is no longer in his place, about progress being made by the Colombian Government. That is not what I witnessed at first hand in La Macarena.

Even more chillingly, there were four graves that had been dug ready for the next crew. I got the impression that they had been dug to order, ready for the next four extra-judicial killings. No one except the army knows who the people in those graves really are, and as access to the region is severely limited, and no autopsies or investigations are carried out, it is almost impossible for anyone else to identify the victims. To make things clear, those people are not included in the 2,000-odd cases of extra-judicial execution that are being investigated. Those dead people are completely unregistered. I strongly believe that the army in that region systematically murders people and buries them in the cemetery. The army admitted to killing them, but said that they were all guerrillas killed in combat—although there are not that many guerrillas within 100 miles of La Macarena because of the heavy military and police presence.

Something else that caused me concern was that when we met the officer in charge of the military establishment, Colonel Yunda, he explained to our group that he had been trained by the British Army. He even gave us the name of the sergeant-major in charge of the course he was on. We were all very disappointed and found it very hard to accept that a British soldier had trained that colonel for the Colombian army.

My first request to the Minister, therefore, is that he should arrange for our embassy in Bogota to take a serious look at what is happening in La Macarena. I have no idea whether all those bodies are still there. Some say that the Colombian army might try to remove them, now that it knows that the cat is out of the bag, and found it very hard to accept that a British soldier had trained that colonel for the Colombian army.

We were in awe of her commitment and bravery. However, just days after we left the region, when we got back to England, her home had been broken into. All the documents about the cases that she was investigating—cases clearly showing the complicity of the Colombian army in the abuses—were stolen. Other items of value were left. It was clearly a burglary to order. I do not think that it was a coincidence that her house was burgled after she had accompanied us on the visit. I am deeply concerned for Carolina’s personal safety, and would therefore welcome a commitment from the Minister that he will look into her case, and that of her colleague Edison Cuellar, who also worked with us on our visit and is the vice-president of the regional human rights committee. It needs to be made crystal clear to the Colombian authorities that nothing should happen to either of them.

The UK’s relationship with Colombia is extremely important to the Colombian Government. After all, the UK is the largest foreign investor in Colombia after the USA, with investments totalling more than $16 billion. We should be using our relationship with the Colombian Government to apply more pressure to eliminate human rights abuses.

The hon. Member for The Wrekin said that nothing positive comes from the Colombian Government. The number of kidnappings in Colombia has fallen drastically in the past few years. That should apply equally to the number of extra-judicial killings.

Miss Anne Begg (in the Chair): I said that I hoped to call the Front-Bench spokesmen at 3.30.

3.30 pm

Jo Swinson (East Dunbartonshire) (LD): I congratulate the hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire, North (Jim Sheridan) on securing this debate on an issue of undoubted importance.

Colombia is suffering one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. It has the world’s second largest number of internally displaced people—3 million to 4 million have fled their homes in the past two decades—and
one of the highest murder rates in the world. Today we have heard from many hon. Members who have been to Colombia and witnessed at first hand the suffering of the people, including poor farmers, indigenous people, trade unionists, human rights activists and journalists. The list seems to go on and on. Although killings by gangsters are obviously a great cause for concern, there is something particularly chilling about state-sponsored executions and the repression of different political viewpoints. It is an affront to the foundations of a free democracy.

Behind the figures and statistics often heard in such debates are individual stories, particularly those of people whom Members have met, which often end up being the most poignant and powerful. I was moved by the story of Liliana Obando and am looking forward to hearing the Minister’s response on her case. Equally, I was shocked by the practice of killing innocent civilians and dressing them up in guerrilla clothing in order to claim a bonus. The fact that that happens not occasionally but systematically is deeply shocking.

The Colombian Commission of Jurists shows that state agents are directly or indirectly responsible for three quarters of extrajudicial killings, political murders and forced disappearances. The Colombian Government’s record has been pitiful. Last year, they made a show of arresting 42 current and former members of the army for such crimes, but 38 have been released pending trial, and now the deadline for prosecution has lapsed. As many Members have pointed out, even when the Colombian Government say the right thing, they all too often do the opposite.

The UK Government have changed their position on Colombia. They have cut off bilateral aid for de-mining and human rights training for the army but, bizarrely, continue to give military aid for counter-narcotics programmes. The Minister is shaking his head; I hope that that means that it is no longer happening. We should not be giving military aid and legitimacy to an army with such a poor human rights record. In addition, although I do not have time to go into detail, the many killings by right-wing paramilitary forces and by guerrilla groups, including FARC, have left many ordinary Colombians fearing for their lives.

President Uribe seems to be following the worrying trend in the region of trying to extend his term of office by changing the constitution, but that is ultimately an issue for Colombians to decide. Depending on the Constitutional Court’s ruling, there might be a referendum in which they get to have their say, but in general terms, it is not a good trend for democracy. In a democracy, no one person is indispensable. Last month, the International Crisis Group highlighted the dangers for institutions in Colombia and the dominant Executive power if democratic checks and balances were undermined and the constitution were changed. It could have severe consequences for the human rights situation in Colombia.

I will be brief, because I want to ensure that the Minister has plenty of time to respond to the many points raised in this debate. I encourage him to touch particularly on human rights abuses by the Colombian army and the state itself. The Government have been strongly in their condemnation of paramilitaries and guerrilla groups. I hope that condemnation of the Government and state actors will be equally strong in his remarks.

There has also been an interesting debate on free trade agreements. Although discussions and negotiations should certainly continue, there is no strong case for renewing the agreement while the human rights issues remain unresolved. I welcome the Minister’s comments on that and look forward to hearing him set out clearly and in full how he thinks the Government can bring pressure to bear on the Colombian Government to protect the human rights of everybody in that country.

3.35 pm

Mr. Mark Francois (Rayleigh) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Miss Begg. I congratulate the hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire, North (Jim Sheridan) on securing this important debate, which he introduced with evident commitment.

In the past decade, Colombia has made significant progress in reassuring Government control over much of its territory, combating drug trafficking and terrorist activities by illegally armed groups and reducing poverty. Since the development of Plan Colombia in 1999, the Colombian Government, with substantial support from the UK, the United States, Canada and others, have stepped up their counter-narcotics and security efforts.

Against that backdrop, the human rights situation is improving, but Colombia remains a country in transition. Although the country’s security situation has vastly improved in the past decade, fighting between the armed forces and illegally armed groups continues to harm the country’s citizens, especially its most vulnerable groups, the displaced, the indigenous population and Afro-Colombians.

Years of reforms and training, as well as key changes in leadership, are leading to welcome progress in increasing the armed forces’ respect for and understanding of human rights. Practical examples include the army’s new rules of engagement, which exist to ensure that international humanitarian law is followed in combat situations. However, revelations of extrajudicial killings in Soacha and a preliminary report by the UN special rapporteur for extrajudicial killings indicate that far-reaching reforms have not fully taken hold.

Mr. Tom Watson (West Bromwich, East) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman is being as generous as ever. The British Government support a European free trade agreement with Colombia, with the justification that human rights in the country will be closely monitored. Given that the budget for investigating forced disappearances was only £13,000 last year and the budget for identifying the victims of forced disappearances was £39,000, would it not be wise for the Minister to commit to considering that budget in order to ensure that there is a body of evidence to test the justification for the treaty?

Mr. Francois: I suspect that the hon. Gentleman may want to have a repeat bite at the Minister himself if time allows, but he has put the question to me as insurance. I will not speak for the Minister—I will allow him to respond in his own way—but having sufficient resources to investigate such matters is probably important. However, I will leave him to give his own definitive answer.

To their credit, the Colombian Government have responded firmly to the revelations of extrajudicial killings by issuing a zero-tolerance policy for abuses
and implementing reforms to prevent similar crimes in future. The prosecutor general’s office continues to investigate more than 75 members of the armed forces linked to the killings. The Government still have much to do, but those are signs that they recognise the severity of the problem and are working to address it. None the less, according to Human Rights Watch’s annual world report published in January 2009, hundreds more cases of extrajudicial killing and other human rights abuses await resolution. Non-governmental organisations have criticised the impunity resulting from the backlog of cases, and some worry that the departure of prosecutor general Mario Iguaran on 31 July 2009 will cause further delays. In 2008, the Colombian Government increased the office’s budget and personnel levels, which was a step in the right direction and an indicator of the Government’s commitment to ending impunity, but more trained investigators and prosecutors are needed to address the office’s overwhelming case loads.

Despite the challenges that the prosecutor general’s office faces, it has made several important advances in human rights cases during the past two years, including arresting four retired generals for collusion with paramilitary forces and reopening the case against retired general Rito Alejo del Rio for his alleged crimes during Operation Genesis.

It is crucial that the United Kingdom Government do all they can to help Colombia during the next few years. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) has spoken to both British and Colombian officials, who expressed their disappointment at the Government’s decision on 30 March 2009 to end bilateral human rights projects with the Colombian Ministry of National Defence, even though the United States and Canada have increased financial commitments to such projects.

Will the Minister say why that decision was taken at such a crucial time for the evolution of human rights in Colombia and will he confirm that the decision was not linked in any way to cost-cutting measures in the Foreign Office? In addition, will the Minister explain how the budget shortfall currently affecting his Department is impacting on funding for Colombian programmes? While the Foreign Office is under so much financial pressure, it is important that the Government finally shed light on how much they are spending on counter-narcotics programmes. That issue links indirectly to human rights cases, and some worry that the departure of prosecutor general Mario Iguaran on 31 July 2009 will cause further delays. In 2008, the Colombian Government increased the office’s budget and personnel levels, which was a step in the right direction and an indicator of the Government’s commitment to ending impunity, but more trained investigators and prosecutors are needed to address the office’s overwhelming case loads.

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I have no doubt the Minister will explain that the Government are unable to publish what resources are used in counter-narcotic operations because of security concerns. However, the United States, which runs extensive counter-narcotic operations in Colombia, diligently lists every dollar spent on such operations for the public to see. The Department of State’s Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs annually publishes extensive information on not only how much money is spent, but details of the programmes in place and analysis of their success over the past 12 months. Of course, there is a need to protect national interests and individual personnel, but the secrecy with which the Government surround their counter-narcotics programmes leads only to unfounded suspicions and, in some cases, conspiracy theories. Will the Minister let us know which body monitors how much money the UK Government spend on counter-narcotic operations in Colombia and who is responsible for assessing the effectiveness of the programmes?

Despite the difficult fiscal reality in which we find ourselves, I urge the Government to continue to take the issue of human rights seriously and to support the Colombian Government in their reforms. In the past, Colombia has struggled to exist as a democratic nation against an utterly ruthless, well-organised, drug-financed terrorist group. I ask hon. Members who have spoken this afternoon—some with considerable passion—to acknowledge the reality that the country has faced.

Investment in and trade with Colombia can help the country to overcome those challenges. A free trade agreement would be an effective mechanism whereby Colombia could use the resulting economic opportunities to boost social conditions. That would ultimately lead to better respect for human rights and reaffirm Colombia as a strategic partner for the UK in Latin America. UK investment in Colombia is substantial—more than $16 billion a year—and it is surely in both countries’ interests to build on the trade links that already exist.

However, having said that, it is undoubtedly true that real issues remain around the persecution of trades unionists and human rights defenders in Colombia. A human rights clause in any free trade agreement with the EU that would enable suspension of the agreement if it is breached would act as an incentive to have frank and constructive dialogue. The promises and good will expressed by the Colombian Government have not always been translated into practical effect and improved human rights at a grass-roots level, but sometimes they have. I hope that the Minister will continue to give those issues a high priority in the formulation of Government policy.

Many points have been made and I have been urged by a number of hon. Members to give the Minister as much time as possible to reply. I know that Back Benchers will want to press the Minister in interventions, so partly out of deference to them, I will conclude and give the Minister 16 minutes to speak in response.

3.44 pm

The Minister for Europe (Chris Bryant): It is a delight to sit under your chairmanship, Miss Begg. I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire, North (Jim Sheridan) on securing the debate. This subject is one of the key issues the UK faces in our relations with Latin America and the European Union. As he may know, there was a very interesting debate on the subject in the European Parliament on Monday. I know that many hon. Members follow these matters keenly, as do many of our constituents. Many hon. Members write to me on the issues that their constituents have raised, and we watch the topic very closely.

I am reminded of the words of Arthur Ponsonby—a Labour Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office in 1924—who, a few years after 1924, said:

“When war is declared, truth is the first casualty.”

In the ongoing war there has been in Colombia between different groups—paramilitary and military, and different drug lords—it has been difficult to see the truth. Although the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mark Pritchard)
spoke with his customary intelligence, his version of events was rather different from the version of events that I have. He has a rather over-optimistic interpretation of the situation in Colombia.

**Mr. Watson:** When truth is tested, we need to adhere to our virtues. I have a simple request for the Minister: will he comment on the activities of the former British ambassador to Colombia, Sir Tom Duggin? I understand that after leaving the embassy in Bogota, he took control of the Colombian operations of the mercenary company Global Risk Strategies, which is now known as the Global Strategies Group. That firm was established by Damian Perl, a former marine, and Charlie Andrews, a former Scots Guard officer. It has operations in Afghanistan and is one of the largest mercenary companies operating in Iraq. The company has been mired in controversy, and many of its staff members—ex-Fijians and ex-Gurkhas—have been killed in action. Will the Minister comment on the appropriateness of our former ambassador taking up such a role in such a controversial country?

**Chris Bryant:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. I understand that Sir Tom Duggin has not worked for the company to which he refers for a couple of years. It is obviously difficult for me to comment on his work for that company when he is a former civil servant. I am not aware of any direct conflict between Sir Tom Duggin's former responsibilities and the work he has done, but if my hon. Friend has specific allegations he would like to make, I hope that he will put them in writing to me, so I can look into them.

**Mr. Watson:** It is not an allegation; I would just like to know whether the Minister thinks it is appropriate for a former ambassador to work for a mercenary company.

**Chris Bryant:** I do not know the specifics of the matter or of the work in which Sir Tom Duggin has been engaged—I have never met the man—but if my hon. Friend says he is not making an allegation, I suppose that there is nothing I can investigate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire, North spoke with passion. Whether he is a member of the glitterati of the left—a rather weird phrase that was used this afternoon—I do not know. I have spoken to others who went on the trip to Colombia and know that the visit was an eye-opener for many of those who went. I will come on to some of the specific issues that he raised in a moment. The hon. Member for The Wrekin has a rather exaggerated understanding of what a free trade agreement can or cannot achieve.

I also say to the hon. Member for Rayleigh (Mr. Francois) that, although I want to see a free trade agreement with Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, I do not believe that it should be any free trade agreement. The point being made today is this: if we are convinced that the current human rights abuses are such that we might want to cease the free trade agreement, why on earth would we want to sign up to a free trade agreement that we could not be certain we would be able to suspend? I have said regularly to my Colombian counterpart, and to President Uribe for that matter, that they will have to do significantly more work before the whole of Europe will feel able to subscribe to a free trade agreement. I also believe that it would be wrong for us to close the door on negotiations on a free trade agreement, because that would simply be like saying to Colombia, “Don’t bother engaging with Europe on those issues and carry on exactly as you are doing.”

I think that we should be pushing hard on the issue of human rights with Colombia to ensure that all the issues are dealt with so that we can then sign a free trade agreement, and that is the track that we have been encouraging the Spanish Government to go down during their six-month presidency of the EU. It cannot be just any free trade agreement. One specific issue on which we have held firm is the question of whether a suspension, if we wanted to suspend, would come in immediately when we think that there are significant human rights abuses, or after a 15-day delay. We think that it should be immediate, and I have made that point firmly to the Colombian ambassador to the UK.

**Colin Burgon:** On that point, would the Minister clarify whether unanimity across all member states would be required to trigger that suspension? If that is the case, does he not think that it would be virtually impossible to achieve?

**Chris Bryant:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Unanimity would be required to sign up to the agreement and to suspend it. I am less pessimistic than he is about the possibility of securing a suspension if one was wanted, because that is precisely what we have done in the case of Sri Lanka, on which it has not been all that difficult to secure unanimity.

There are some key challenges in Colombia in relation to human rights. The first, which has barely been touched on today, is the problem of poverty. Many millions of Colombians live in abject poverty and have no opportunity to make a decent living or feed themselves properly. That is one of the key issues the Uribe Government have said they are intent on tackling. It is true that they have made some progress on poverty, as have many other countries in Latin America, but we want to see much further progress, not least because the roots that the drugs trade is able to press down into Colombian society depend on the endemic poverty across the country.

The second key human rights challenge, as many hon. Members have mentioned, is the number of murders. Colombian statistics might indicate a fall from 28,000 murders in one year to 16,000 in another,
but that is still 16,000, a very large number of murders. That is accompanied by complete impunity. We have heard today of the number of cases in which there is no investigation, let alone the cases in which there is some investigation that takes a long time. Clearly, where there is no justice, there is a significant human rights abuse. Therefore, I want to see all the murders tackled, whether they are extrajudicial killings or those that result from the general level of violence in the population.

The third key human rights challenge, as hon. Members have mentioned, relates to trade unions, and I raise that point as a trade union member myself. The number of trade unionists, and other human rights defenders for that matter, who are murdered in Colombia is still far too high. We could have an exchange about whether that number is 49, 39, 17 or nine, but the fact is that trade unionists are being killed because they are trade unionists, and that must stop. We must make that absolutely clear, as I have done regularly.

Chris Bryant: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and we have already made representations about Liliana Obando. We first did that on 27 April 2009 when we sent two letters from the British embassy: one to Carlos Franco, director of Human Rights First and director of the presidential programme for international humanitarian law; and the other to the director of international affairs from the prosecutor general’s office. On 25 June we received information from the prosecutor general’s office. The Colombian Foreign Secretary is in London tonight and tomorrow for the conference on Afghanistan. I shall be seeing him this evening, and I will raise that case specifically with him. It is not something we will let go over the days to come.

When I visited Colombia before Christmas, I raised with all the people I met, including President Uribe, the need for Colombia to seize the issue of human rights abuses. Otherwise, it is difficult to see how in the end it can be the closest partner with the EU, which we would really like to see. Furthermore, a couple of weeks ago the Colombian Deputy Foreign Minister, Adriana Mejía, was here in London. I raised a series of human rights issues with her then, and I intend to write to her about the case that my hon. Friend has just raised.

I mentioned earlier the issue of impunity, which is still one of the biggest problems. In many parts of Latin America the prison systems are simply unable to cope and the criminal justice systems are unable to deal with cases fast enough. Therefore, the perpetrators of extrajudicial killings, whether paramilitaries, members of the military or whoever they are, simply go by without any justice at all. We would not accept that in this country, and we should not accept it for the people of Colombia either. That is why we work particularly hard to try to tackle the issues of corruption that exist in the criminal justice system in Colombia.

Mr. Watson: I know that my hon. Friend is doing his best to move the agenda on, but with regard to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire, North (Jim Sheridan) about the use of technology by DAS to identify potential human rights activists, would he commit to investigating whether it is British technology that is used and report back to the House on that, given that we are moving into an era of struggle for information freedom, as Hillary Clinton says?

Chris Bryant: My hon. Friend might not be a member of the glitterati of the left, but he is certainly a member of the glitterati of the blogosphere, so he is much more technically competent than I am. I am happy to look into that matter, but I am slightly hesitant about what I might be able to say in public, because traditionally, as I think all hon. Members accept, we do not want to talk publicly about the specifics of our counter-intelligence work. As a former Minister in the Ministry of Defence, he will understand that.

Another problem, which I have raised with the deputy Minister for human rights in Colombia, relates to the law on rebellion, or rebeldía. Intrinsically, at face value, that certainly does not seem like a law that respects human rights. One might think that it allows someone to rebel—I see several hon. Members on whom the Whips might have more of an effect if we had a law on rebellion in the UK. The serious point is that it is absolutely clear, as my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Colin Burgon) said, that Colombia needs to do considerably more to abide by conventions of the International Labour Organisation and the UN. Recent reporting and monitoring of changes in the law suggest that it is moving in the right direction on those issues. Consequently, I am keen to encourage the Colombian authorities to move further.

We have touched on the issue of the drugs trade, and undoubtedly that is one of the single biggest causes of death, violence, criminality and corruption within the whole of Colombian society. It is one area where I think we British have a shared responsibility with Colombia. That is why we do not provide military aid to the country. We have stopped providing human rights training to the military because we do not want to provide aid to the military. Instead, we try to tackle the drugs trade.

Miss Anne Begg (in the Chair): Order. We must move on to the next debate.
EU-Israel Trade Agreement

4 pm

Dr. Phyllis Starkey (Milton Keynes, South-West) (Lab): This debate relates to the information given to Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs by those exporting goods from Israel and Israeli settlements to the United Kingdom and the effectiveness or, as I shall demonstrate, the ineffectiveness of HMRC checks in preventing fraud. Under the EU-Israel trade agreement, produce from Israel enters the UK and other EU member states under a preferential agreement that exempts it from import duties. The agreement only applies to Israeli territory that is within its internationally recognised borders, and that has recently been reaffirmed in a legal ruling from the European Court of Justice.

The Israeli authorities have long had a cavalier attitude to compliance with the agreement. In 1997, for example, in another Adjournment debate, I drew attention to the then practice of Israeli authorities of importing Brazilian orange juice, re-labelling it “Made in Israel” and re-exporting it under preference to the European Union. Israel has also unilaterally interpreted the agreement as applying not just to Israel but to the numerous settlements in East Jerusalem and the west bank, even though they are illegal under international law. Settlement produce has been routinely labelled “Made in Israel” and thereby exemption has been claimed from import duty. Not only is that defrauding the EU taxpayer by avoiding legitimate import duty, but it sets a dangerous precedent that could allow other countries unilaterally to reinterpret their agreements with the EU.

As a result of the abuse, in February 2005 the EU introduced a technical arrangement requiring all goods from Israel to be marked with their place of origin and postcode, supposedly so that individual customs authorities could identify settlement goods and prevent the fraudulent obtaining of exemption from import duty. However, it is clear that these checks are not working and that goods from settlements are still being misrepresented as originating in Israel.

An indication of the likely scale of abuse can be estimated from the total duty raised on settlement goods in 2009, which was just under £22,000, compared with demands for duty in 2005-06 that averaged £110,000 per annum, which is five times the level raised in 2009 and suggests that at least 80 per cent. of settlement goods are imported without duty being paid on them. The information and powers available to HMRC are so weak that the controls are unenforceable and the European Commission oversight is ineffective.

I shall now deal with the mislabelling of goods and will talk first about agricultural produce.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) (Lab): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dr. Starkey: I would rather not, if my hon. Friend does not mind, because I have a lot of densely argued stuff that I want to get on the record. There is mixing of produce within one consignment. It is well known that the major exporter, Agrexco, which is responsible for 60 to 70 per cent. of settlement produce, mixes settlement and non-settlement produce in its depots and then labels the whole lot as originating in Israel, which means that all of it gets the import duty. It has been confirmed by EU diplomats that that happens in respect of oranges. The answers that I have received to written parliamentary questions give additional, indirect proof of that, showing that in the 12 months to March 2009 HMRC identified six consignments as being from settlements although they were validated by the Israeli customs authorities as originating in Israel, and describing a particular consignment which contained two consignments of herbs that were identified because the packaging was properly labelled as coming from the Jordan valley, although they were included in a consignment purporting to be from Israel. Obviously, mixed consignments are hiding settlement goods. Although HMRC undertakes physical inspections, it cannot look at every consignment—there are tens of thousands a year—and it is presumably only detecting the tip of the iceberg.

The trade agreement sets out in detail the documentation that is required from exporters and importers: the original commercial documents accompanying the customs import declaration, the sales invoice and delivery/consignement note or packing list issued by the exporter and showing the UK importer; health documentation where required; and, where a preferential rate of duty is claimed, either a proof of preferential origin showing the place of production and zip code on the invoice or on form EUR1, which is issued by the exporter and stamped by the Israeli authorities. It is clearly stated on EUR1 that anyone signing the form will be committing an offence under section 167 of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 if the declaration is incorrect. The importer is also held responsible.

The problem is either that documentation is insufficiently detailed to reveal all settlement goods’ origin or there is deliberate falsification at the Israeli end. The first problem is that the EUR1 form does not travel with the goods, and as long as the form has a location and postcode and is stamped by the Israeli customs authorities it can be accepted by HMRC. That is a huge loophole. A report in 2006 in the Israeli business magazine “Globes” helpfully described how it is done:

“The method is easy: you invent an address within the Green Line and operate using this address. In this way you do not have to pay the customs fees that apply to products exported from across the Green Line. The method works, but not for those whose company carries a name that gives away the true location—such as Golan Height Wineries.”

The Israeli authorities clearly turn a blind eye to this practice, although it is interesting to see that, at the same time, they have set aside 30 million Israeli shekels through the Israel Export Institute to be used for compensation for manufacturers from across the green line, by paying the import duties for them. However, presumably that is only done for those whose names give away where they are, because only four exporters have applied.

Given the well-documented policy of deliberate falsification, the powers of HMRC are incredibly weak. If HMRC has doubts it can make a verification request, but that request just goes straight back to the same Israeli authorities who mislabelled the produce in the first place. I have received a written parliamentary answer that confirms that the issuing and verifying authorities are the same.

In 2007-09 HMRC asked Israel to verify 65 preference certificates that were doubtful, but even when it asks, the Israeli authorities do not necessarily respond. In the
same period HMRC made 21 requests for information to Israel, but 12 were not answered within the 12 months stipulated in the agreement.

Strictly speaking, customs can only levy import duty if they can definitely tell that goods are from settlements. However, it is interesting that, in dealing with BRITA water-carbonating machines manufactured in Maale Adumim, even though the Israelis first said that those were made “under Israeli Customs administration”, and then refused to reply when asked to confirm that they came from a settlement, German customs levied import duty in the absence of definite proof from the Israelis that those were manufactured within Israel. HMRC could learn a few lessons from German customs and could perhaps be a bit more robust about levying duty when it has strong suspicions.

There are two other things that HMRC should be doing. First, more information on exactly where the products are from could come from the traceability system set up by retailers and importers, which is primarily to meet food safety requirements but is also there to give information to customers. That system is much more detailed. For example, my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Richard Burden) asked Tesco about some dubious-looking mangoes in one of its stores and was given the precise name of the farm that it came from, which turned out to be in Israel.

I accept that HMRC cannot demand the traceability information, but it could ask the retailers and importers if it could look at it where suspicions arose about the customs declaration, because that would give HMRC independent, extra information. It is in the interests of retailers that their audit trail is not compromised. They would not want goods in their stores to be labelled as coming from the west bank if that was not so, or to give a different description to HMRC and thereby avoid the import duty.

The second issue is the spot checks that HMRC does on consignments. It has not done any checks at all on sweet peppers, halva or tahini, although all those products are known to be produced in settlements. Halva and tahini, for example, are produced in the Barkan settlement by Achva and sold widely in the UK. It would be an obvious thing to target those products. HMRC does apparently target products and addresses that have misrepresented produce before and where there are known production facilities in settlements, but it does not seem to do that often. I would be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister said how often imports are challenged. Why does HMRC not step up the spot checks that it could do if it looked at where suspicions were raised about the customs declaration, because that would give HMRC independent, extra information? It is in the interests of retailers that their audit trail is not compromised. They would not want goods in their stores to be labelled as coming from the west bank if that was not so, or to give a different description to HMRC and thereby avoid the import duty.

The third issue is that no action seems to be being taken against those who make false declarations, apart from charging the import duty. As I mentioned, however, the form that they all sign confirms that they would be committing an offence if the declaration was incorrect and, in a debate that I introduced before Christmas on consumer labelling of settlement goods, the Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Canning Town (Jim Fitzpatrick), clearly said that claiming preference on settlement goods was “an offence”.

Section 167 of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 is the provision that is used to take action against people who are thought to be smuggling cigarettes by pretending that they are for personal use when they are actually bringing them into the country for resale. Those individuals can be fined or detained and persistent offenders imprisoned for up to seven years. I do not understand why the same rigour is not used against those who are doing it, for purely commercial reasons, from settlements in Israel.

I now turn to a specific case relating to cosmetics in which it seems to me that even more blatant fraud is occurring. Cosmetics, particularly from Dead sea products, are very significant imports into the UK; there were 417 consignments of beauty and skincare products in 2009. I want to focus on Ahava, a firm that is part-owned by two co-operatives based at Mizpe Shalem and Kibbutz Kalia. Both are in the occupied Jordan valley and both are on the EU list of settlements. The products that Ahava produces are based on Dead sea mud, which is extracted at both those sites and processed at Mizpe Shalem. There is no evidence of any other production facilities and certainly none within Green Line Israel, although the head office is near Tel Aviv.

The Ahava website and product labels clearly give the postcode at Mizpe Shalem and then say “Israel”, which is an incorrect description. Its chief executive was totally open in a BBC interview a year or so ago about the fact that it uses the head office address, not the site of production, to justify the “Made in Israel” claim. That could not be more blatant. There is no argument about this one, and when challenged—

4.12 pm

Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.

4.22 pm

On resuming—

Dr. Starkey: I was just talking about Ahava and mentioning that when the firm was challenged about where its site of production was, it made no attempt to rebut its site in the occupied territories, but just waffled about how “the Dead Sea treasures are international and do not belong to one nation”, which was an interesting response to an HMRC request.

In answer to another written parliamentary question, HMRC confirmed that all such cosmetics—not just Ahava ones—are imported as “from Israel”. Many other companies working with Dead sea products and which are known to have their facilities in the west bank must also be using some other address to get the “Made in Israel” designation. It means that Ahava products, although labelled as “from the occupied territories”, must be designated as originating from Israel on the EUR1 form, which means that it is putting down the head office, not the site of production. Other companies that use products where the Dead sea mud and other minerals are processed or mixed with other ingredients from Israel should, on the EUR1 form, be setting out the proportions that originate from Israel and the proportion originating not from there, but from the west bank. However, they are obviously not doing that.
There is an additional issue that is beyond HMRC, which is whether Ahava and the others are violating article 55 of the Hague regulations on exporting non-renewable resources from an occupied territory. The Ahava case is so blatant that Dutch customs have now agreed to investigate after questions in Parliament from Socialist party MPs. Surprisingly, HMRC claims not to have shared any information with the Dutch authorities, which seems extraordinary. The HMRC claims to closely monitor imports, but has so far identified no cases where doubt existed over the place of production of imported cosmetics. However, it has asked the European Commission to check that the Israeli authorities are including the place of production and not the head office on the proof of origin.

That brings me to the role of the European Union. Apparently, UK Customs does not have the power to visit the occupied territories to check production facilities and so on, but the European Commission does. Any irregularities reported to the Commission are supposed to be disseminated to European Union member states, including information about the action taken. That does not seem to be happening in relation to Ahava or, in the German case, to BRITA.

Officials from the Commission origin unit visited Palestine and Israel in 2009, apparently to get a clearer picture of where the production sites were. However, the European Anti-Fraud Office, OLAF, which can enter the premises of Israeli exporters and examine their bookkeeping, has apparently not passed on any information about what came out of that visit. I should point out that because movements in the west bank are controlled by the Israeli army, OLAF cannot make unannounced inspections of premises in the settlements themselves. What information has the European Commission gathered? Has that information been communicated to member states, and will HMRC be acting on it? If not, will the Minister press for more effective action by the Commission?

To summarise, the Israeli authorities, the export companies and the producers all have a strong interest in misrepresenting the origin of settlement produce. First, they have a direct financial incentive, through the exemption from import duty if the goods are alleged to be from Israel. Secondly, there is the possibility of evading consumer boycotts aimed at settlement products; that has become particularly important now that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has insisted that guidance more clearly identifies settlement produce. In 2009, UK importers made claims to Israeli preference on some 20,300 import declarations; the total value of the goods concerned was £419 million. That was equivalent to 63 per cent. of all imports from Israel. Within that overall figure, there were about 3,600 claims to preference on agricultural products, which again equated to 63 per cent. of all imports of agricultural products from Israel.

The high total volume of imports means that Revenue and Customs can undertake checks, which may be the physical examination of goods at the time of importation or post-importation documentary checks on the basis of risk. In the case of physical examinations, Revenue and Customs and the UK Border Agency, which undertakes the examinations at the frontier, must ensure that the right balance is struck between the levels of customs controls and the free movement of legitimate goods, and that is particularly important with regard to perishable fresh produce.

Revenue and Customs selects imports for check on the basis of information and intelligence received from the European Commission, interested parties, the media and other Government Departments, and on the basis of irregularities, which it has already identified.

On 1 February 2005, the technical arrangements, to which my hon. Friend referred, came into force. They require exporters in Israel to insert the place of production and accompanying postcode on all proofs of preferential origin issued. However, it does not constitute a requirement for all goods to be marked with the place of production.

Revenue and Customs welcomed the technical arrangement, because it enables the Department to check the place of production against the list of settlements locations, which have been circulated to member states...
customs by the European Commission. The list was last updated in September 2009.

Under the terms of the arrangement, Revenue and Customs immediately refuses, without the need to return the certificate to Israel, a claim to preference made under the agreement where the place of production is in a settlement. Since 1 February 2005, the Department has rejected some 515 proofs of preferential origin under the arrangement, and has issued customs duty demands totalling £289,000. The figure of 515 represents about 56 per cent. of all Israeli proofs of preferential origin, which have, to date, been checked on the basis of risk.

However, since the introduction of the technical arrangement, Revenue and Customs has initiated some 27 verification inquiries with the authorities in Israel when it has had concerns about the accuracy of the place of production that has been inserted on the proof of preferential origin.

I mentioned earlier that Revenue and Customs is always prepared to consider and act, where possible, upon any new intelligence that will help it to improve its risk assessment and targeting. It will, therefore, undertake further checks in respect of known settlements producers, and pay particular attention to imports of cosmetic products from Ahava.

My hon. Friend may be interested to know that each year, Revenue and Customs checks around 3,000 import declarations on which a preferential rate of duty has been claimed. Those checks result in around 370 verification inquiries, covering some 2,400 proofs of preferential origin. The monitoring of Israeli imports is an important part of those overall checks.

In June 2008, Revenue and Customs received information that suggested that the fact that an Israeli place of production and postcode is included on the proof of preferential origin does not necessarily mean that the products concerned—notably fresh fruit, vegetables and herbs—originated in Israel. There were concerns that the location and code may simply refer to a company’s head office or distribution centre in the state, the produce concerned having actually been grown or produced on a farm in a settlement.

Such concerns were repeated in various press articles and television news stories, which also raised concerns about the labelling by UK supermarkets of fresh produce, such as herbs and avocado pears, which some had admitted to purchasing from Israeli-managed farms in the settlements. While the correct labelling of products after importation is not the responsibility of Revenue and Customs, it recognised that it is not possible to establish from documentary checks alone whether produce is labelled as originating in a place other than an Israeli location.

Since the end of July 2008, officials in the UK Border Agency have, at the request of Revenue and Customs, undertaken 51 targeted physical examinations of dates, frozen sweetcorn, fresh herbs, avocado pears, grapes and tomatoes imported under the EU-Israel agreement. We now understand that in the case of avocados, the intelligence received may have been flawed.

Only two labelling irregularities have been identified so far, and they concerned imports of fresh herbs. The packaging showed that the produce originated in the Jordan valley, while the accompanying proof of preferential origin showed that the herbs were produced in a location in the state of Israel.

There is no blanket legal requirement for the place of production to be inserted on all produce or its packaging. In the absence of such a marking, as was the case in a number of the examinations undertaken to date, there is little that customs can do when the accompanying proof of preferential origin shows that the produce was produced in an Israeli location. Similarly, the Department does not have sufficient evidence to the effect that the goods were not produced in Israel where “produce of Israel” has been inserted on the product or its packaging. Most of the products that have been examined to date bore such an origin marking.

With the voluntary labelling guidelines that Revenue and Customs contributed to DEFRA’s issuance of its guidelines, we are hopeful that those UK supermarkets that decide to implement the voluntary arrangement will persuade their suppliers to display clearly the place of production on their products or their packaging. That could have a useful knock-on effect in helping Revenue and Customs with its series of targeted physical examinations. In the meantime, we will extend our series of targeted examinations to include peppers, halva and tahini.

We are aware that certain supermarkets may be able to identify the origin of their products from their tracking systems and we would be very happy to utilise those systems, where possible, to refuse claims to preference immediately at the time of importation into the UK. However, when we look at our import declaration database, supermarkets are rarely shown as the importers on the customs declaration. In effect, it would be possible only to utilise a tracking system post-importation of the goods and the checks would have to start at the supermarket end of the chain.

We are prepared to explore with supermarkets the feasibility of using their tracking systems to link particular products that the systems show as originating in the settlements with particular customs import declarations and any claims to preference made on them.

The Revenue and Customs delegate to the European Union’s origin committee has advised the European Commission and other member states in the committee’s meetings of the UK’s actions in respect of monitoring of the EU-Israel agreement, particularly in relation to the series of targeted physical examinations.

Outside of those meetings, Revenue and Customs has asked the Commission to ensure that the Israelis are correctly complying with the requirements of the 2005 technical arrangement by inserting the precise place of production rather than a head office or distribution centre on the proof of preferential origin. We will continue to press this point with the Commission.

We are aware of the Commission’s fact-finding missions to Israel and Palestine in 2009 and we have asked the Commission to provide us with reports of those missions as soon as they are available.

My hon. Friend referred to provisions in section 167 of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979, which enable Revenue and Customs to take action against traders who commit an offence. Under those provisions, we can only take criminal action against the UK importer where there is firm evidence to the effect
that they knew that the goods originated in a settlement but nevertheless claimed Israeli preference. The provisions do not enable the Department to take action against the exporter in Israel who has drawn up a proof of preferential origin containing an incorrect place of production or an incorrect origin declaration.

However, new civil penalty provisions came into force on 24 December 2009, as a result of which Revenue and Customs can issue a financial penalty where an importer persistently claims preference on products that are not entitled to such treatment, which will be in addition to the liability to pay the full rate of customs duty.

Although legal constraints mean that the Department has no alternative other than to initiate verification inquiries with the Israeli customs authorities, it is happy to make improvements to its risk assessment and to include further fresh produce in its series of targeted physical examinations. We will also pay further attention to imports of particular products, such as cosmetics, which were mentioned by my hon. Friend. We will explore with supermarkets the possibility and feasibility of using their tracking systems post-importation to identify imports of goods that were not entitled to the preference claimed.

We will continue to work closely with the European Commission and other Government Departments with the objective of ensuring compliance with the rules in this complex and sensitive area. That will include pressing the Commission to monitor the operation of the 2005 technical arrangement even more closely.

**Water and Sewerage (South-west)**

4.39 pm

**Mr. Adrian Sanders** (Torbay) (LD): I am grateful to have the opportunity of raising this very important issue—

**Miss Anne Begg (in the Chair):** Order. May I ask the hon. Gentleman to go back to where he was sitting before? He must not speak from the Front Bench even in a half-hour debate.

**Mr. Sanders:** I just thought it was more comfortable.

**Miss Anne Begg (in the Chair):** I apologise. You could have sat on the Front Bench, but not where your party’s spokesperson would normally sit.

**Mr. Sanders:** Wherever, this is still an opportunity to raise a vital issue that affects my constituents in Torbay and many other people across the far south-west, and it has done so for more than 20 years.

The high water bills facing South West Water customers have been in place since privatisation and stem from the iniquitous requirement for 3 per cent. of the population to pay for the clean sweep programme for 33 per cent. of the UK’s coastline. The average bill for South West Water customers is £490, a staggering £723 for unmetered customers. The next highest average bill is Wessex Water at £412 and the national average is £343.

Ofwat has only recently, since the publication of the interim Anna Walker report, paid some attention to that disparity in water and sewerage charges. South West Water customers with water meters can look forward to a £6 fall in prices by 2015. That is not much, but it is a move in the right direction. Ofwat’s action will also be of little help to unmetered customers, whose bills are set to rise by 29 per cent., taking their average up to £935 a year. While many more will move to metered billing, a number will remain who cannot have meters installed, the majority of whom live in blocks of flats. Their bills will increase exponentially, plunging thousands into water poverty. The £6 reduction itself will be little consolation to many of my constituents on low incomes who are struggling to pay the historically high bills.

The south-west has some of the lowest incomes in the UK coupled with some of the highest housing costs.

The Walker review of charging for household water and sewerage services is long overdue. It has now published its final report and, rightly, there is an entire section dedicated to the unique problems faced by consumers in the south-west. Chapter 14 begins by reinforcing the underlying inequalities facing the region: the high proportion of pensioners; the large rural area to be covered; the lower disposable incomes and—importantly in terms of water costs—the domination of tourism in the local economy.

A great attraction in the south-west is its coastline; an estimated 18 million people visit the region every year, and research shows that at least 7 million of those visit specifically to go to the seaside. There is, therefore, an important challenge to keep the coastline clean. More crucially, in terms of water bills, the Walker report recognises the low asset base that South West Water started with at the time of privatisation. That has
improved now that the clean sweep programme has been implemented. The company has the highest capital expenditure by far—over 150 per cent. of the average of the water companies.

Mr. Oliver Letwin (West Dorset) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sanders: The usual courtesy is for the Member who initiates the debate to be informed if a Member wishes to intervene, but on this occasion I will give way.

Mr. Letwin: I am very grateful. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there seems to be a strong case for some kind of spreading of cost, as the Walker report suggests, because the coastline is there for the nation as a whole, including all the tourists he mentioned?

Mr. Sanders: The hon. Gentleman makes a point that has been made at meeting after meeting by the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Linda Gilroy), her colleague, the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Alison Seabeck), and Liberal Democrats. May I finish, because it is an important point. For example, we all contribute to the wonderful museums and galleries here in London that are a national asset—but they are based in London. The same logic should apply to water charges.

Linda Gilroy (Plymouth, Sutton) (Lab/Co-op): The hon. Gentleman referred to chapter 14 of the Walker report. I am sure he understands that the Prime Minister put that in train several years ago following the affordability pilot. However, since the scale of the problem we were lumbered with 20 years ago is so big, does he agree that, equally, the solutions to it will probably come from more than one direction, as outlined in the Walker report?

Mr. Sanders: The hon. Lady is right and I shall cover some of that ground in a moment.

The report rightly states:

“These high...prices compared to the rest of the country cause the sense of unfairness. They also, of course, aggravate issues of affordability.”

Fortunately, Anna Walker has suggested some potential remedies for that injustice. There is a clear financial imbalance in the way the water companies were set up at privatisation. South West Water customers shouldered a disproportionate burden of the programme to clean up our coastline and improve our bathing waters.

It is clear from the report’s recommendations that retrospective financial redress is necessary, not least to fund the continuing cost of South West Water’s investments. One remedy is a one-off payment, which, as the report states

“is equivalent to reducing the financial burden of the regulatory asset base per customer in the South West Water area.”

That would cost approximately £650 million. Another alternative is an annual subsidy to South West Water. Walker estimated a figure of about £33 million a year. There are options on how to fund the subsidy: direct Government funding or a levy of about £1.50 to every household water and sewerage bill in the rest of the country.

Dan Rogerson (North Cornwall) (LD): My hon. Friend is making an excellent case, and I congratulate him on securing the debate and on all the work that he has done in the past. The scale of the figures that he is talking about shows the size of the investment that bill payers are being asked to make. That is the crucial point. If the Government cannot help with the lump sum because its scale in the current circumstances is so high, that shows what is being asked of ordinary bill payers in the south-west, and, indeed, what has been asked of them during the past 20 years since the botched privatisation.

Mr. Sanders: That is certainly one conclusion that we could rightly draw.

On the matter of an annual or lump sum subsidy, while a one-off payment would go some way to redress the balance—as Walker points out, there are strong arguments in favour of a one-off adjustment—it would not completely rectify the long-term problems facing the region. A further subsidy would be necessary in the future, especially if we envisage a time when another widespread series of improvements are necessary. An annual subsidy would resolve that problem for the foreseeable future. However, those solutions throw up a wider problem surrounding fairness. Aside from South West Water, customers in Wales or Wessex are also paying above the average—in their case, £100 more per year than those, say, in the Thames Water area. If we are to adjust for inexcusably high bills in the south-west, why not in Wales or any other area? Would not the logical extension of the argument be that water bills should be equalised throughout the United Kingdom?

Julia Goldsworthy (Falmouth and Camborne) (LD): Referring back to what my hon. Friend said about the need for equalisation, does he agree that it is important that we deal with the problem now as a matter of urgency? In future, there will be a need for considerable investment in other parts of the country, and it might be the case that for other national goods the cost needs to be spread throughout the country. Would it not be a double unfairness for South West Water customers to have to pay for their retrospective costs while also having to help foot the bill for the other bill payers in the country?

Mr. Sanders: We need an answer, and we need it soon. Of course, privatisation should not have happened to this industry. Water is not something that lends itself easily to competition on the free market. Indeed, all we have is a system of regional monopolies, unlike the other utilities, which have seen rigorous competition and benefits for consumers as a result of their privatisations. In effect, all privatisation has done is to siphon off funds to shareholders that could have been invested in a more effective clean sweep programme.

Mr. Letwin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sanders: Other hon. Members asked in advance, but I shall give way.

Mr. Letwin: I am extremely grateful. I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for intervening. He is very generous. I totally agree with what he is saying. This is long overdue and most welcome. But would he not concede that historic costs involved pre-privatisation would have had to be paid for by the taxpayer anyway, to do with...
the infrastructure work of South West Water—the Victorian ducts and so forth? Those costs would have had to have been met by the taxpayer in some way, shape or form, regardless of privatisation.

Mr. Sanders: Indeed those costs would have had to have been met, but they would have been equalised out across the whole of the United Kingdom. They would not have just fallen on those in the far south-west.

In my constituency, customers have not only suffered from high water bills, but a reduction in standards for the clean swim programme. In the early 1990s, South West Water announced a £95 million project to provide a supertunnel for sewage from the three towns in Torbay. Not only would it have stopped any raw sewage entering the sea, it would have had more than enough capacity to deal with the flash flooding that has become more and more common. The Government of the day reduced the environmental standard required of the clean swim programme, and so the Torbay scheme—effectively the last big capital works programme—was downsized. Consequently, we have a system of combined sewerage overflows that pollute the sea several times a year. For a tourist economy that in no small part relies on the cleanliness of its beaches and water, it is simply not good enough. Torbay can still boast more blue flag beaches than any other UK seaside resort. If the previous Government had not reduced the environmental standard, we would now be able to market Torbay as an area where every beach is a blue flag beach.

Even more worrying is the flooding that has become a common occurrence in parts of Torbay. The residents of Station lane in Paignton, for example, have suffered frequently as a direct result of the scaled-down clean swim scheme. I ask the Minister to take separate and urgent action to bring a more satisfactory solution to solve the long-running sores of flooding and sewerage outfalls in my constituency.

Returning to the Walker report, there are recommendations, on which I hope the Minister will comment, that would be of benefit to consumers across the United Kingdom. Chapter 11 focuses on water affordability. The recommendations would help many vulnerable and low-income residents in my constituency: a 20 per cent. discount for those in receipt of tax credits and other benefits; a discounted tariff for low-income families with children; and reforms to the WaterSure scheme. All those will help. There is also scope for targeted water efficiency work interlocking with Warm Front and the decent homes initiatives. Walker recommends focusing these efforts on high water cost areas—the south-west, in particular. For the south-west there is the further suggestion of a seasonal tariff to take into account the population swell and increased water demand during the peak tourist season. Such a scheme is currently being piloted by Wessex Water, but this one focuses more on environmental than affordability criteria. The practicality of such a scheme across the far south-west, with en masse meter readings, is very doubtful. The potential solutions are not, unfortunately, quite as straightforward as they sound.

There will be a great deal of groundwork to be undertaken by Ofwat. For the overall system of redressing the financial balance, there will be, as Walker points out, a range of legal, technical, financial and economic issues. They will need to be contemplated, and financial corrections will need to avoid distorting markets and state aid considerations. Ofwat is best placed to advise Government on how to progress this, and I urge the Minister to instruct Ofwat to waste no time in looking into these matters.

There are difficulties with all the proposals, but the one with the most resonance and the most practicality is an annual levy on other water company areas to address the low customer base in the south-west. It would avoid state aid issues and appears the fairest option to pursue. I hope also that the Minister has had sufficient time to consider the report carefully, as he indicated he would in a parliamentary answer to me earlier this month.

The people of the south-west have suffered from the burden of high water bills for more than 20 years, and I hope that the Minister will give an indication today that such an injustice can finally be put to an end.

4.53 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Huw Irranca-Davies): I am very pleased to respond to this debate. I congratulate the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Sanders) on securing the debate and also on the considered and intelligent way that he made his points on behalf of his constituents and others in the south-west. I am pleased to see several hon. Members who have lobbied me intensively during my time as a Minister in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. I am sure they lobbied my predecessors as well. I hope that my progress report today will reassure them.

It is worth pointing out that I responded last year to three separate debates on this issue, all of which were well attended. I could certainly forecast at that point that it would not be long after Anna Walker produced her final report that I would be here once again, and the hon. Gentleman has not disappointed me—quite rightly, too.

Since the last debate in October, we have made a lot of progress on water matters, as the hon. Gentleman said. Ofwat issued its final determinations of water price limits on 26 November, which will reduce bills by an average of £3 and a little more within the south-west. That is good, but it does not solve the underlying issues. Bills in the UK will fall by an average of £3 before inflation between 2010 and 2015. At the same time, critically, provision will also be made for £22 billion in investment.

On 22 December, DEFRA published river basin management plans for 10 river basin districts in England and Wales. The plans set out how we will achieve good water status for each lake, stretch of a river, estuary and coastline. To respond to the hon. Gentleman’s understandable comments, several strands of work in the south-west river basin plan are directly relevant to him and his constituents. We are working with South West Water to investigate urban drainage systems to identify and remedy misconceptions and other sources of diffuse pollution that are putting the quality of the coastal water at risk. Because planned development in the area will be concentrated around Torbay, future management of urban drainage in the future is an important consideration. We support how the SeaTorbay partnership is working to improve public understanding of and involvement in coastal wildlife and conservation.
On 19 November, we published the Flood and Water Management Bill. The Bill received Second Reading in the House on 15 December. Last Thursday it completed Committee stage, and Report and Third Reading are provisionally scheduled for 1 February.

Last but by no means least, Anna Walker published her final report on charging for household water and sewerage services on 8 December. It included a package of recommendations to DEFRA Ministers and Welsh Ministers. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman referred to the situation in Wales as well. Welsh constituents are covered not only by Welsh Water/Dwr Cymru but by Severn Trent.

I reiterate my thanks and congratulations to Anna Walker. I think that all Members appreciate the outstanding work that she and her team have done in grappling with a range of complex and incredibly difficult issues, not only in the south-west but nationally, involving the fairness of current charges. Her final recommendations reflect extensive and exhaustive stakeholder engagement, including workshops across England and Wales. Two were held in Plymouth, and I know that some hon. Members attended both the first and second to make their views known. The thoroughness of Anna Walker’s work is reflected by a chapter in the report dedicated to the south-west. She recognised, as do we, that there are issues to be resolved.

Julia Goldsworthy: The Minister is absolutely right to say that the Walker report homed in on some of the issues in the south-west that cause the greatest problems for people on low incomes, but is water poverty not a national issue? Should the Government not consider it in the same way as fuel poverty? We would not expect fuel customers in the north-east to be responsible for their own winter fuel payments because it is colder up there. Surely, as a point of principle, we should not expect South West Water customers to pay for the fuel-poor; the burden should be spread nationally.

Huw Irranca-Davies: I will turn to the detail of the Walker recommendations and the possible way forward in a moment. Anna Walker rightly identified that, curiously, the issue in the south-west—she highlighted the causes, to which I will turn in a moment—could well in future be a burden somewhere else in the country. We do not want to replicate the mistakes of the past. If I have time, I will turn in my remarks to what discussions have taken place on the Flood and Water Management Bill in light of that. I will come to the hon. Lady’s points in a moment.

Anna Walker concluded that the regulatory regime in England and Wales has served customers well over the last 20 years, but that we now face considerable new challenges across the UK. In particular, demand for water is growing and water supply is already under pressure across the south and east of England. On top of that, we face challenges such as climate change and water affordability.

The final report highlights that water affordability is a real issue for some households across the whole of the UK, but notably in the south-west. It therefore recommended a package of measures for the Government to consider how to help low-income customers. My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Linda Gilroy) made the comment that there is a package there, which is quite interesting. There are a range of possible solutions that she puts forward as a package.

Anna Walker proposed that the WaterSure tariff should be retained for low-income customers with high essential use for medical reasons, but that bills should be capped at the national or regional average, depending on which is lower. That would be paid for by regional water customers. She also suggested that all metered customers on certain means-tested benefits should be offered a 20 per cent. discount on their bills or, failing that, that a discount should be introduced for low-income households with one or more children.

Let me just add that during the Committee stage of the Flood and Water Management Bill, the issue of social tariffs operated by companies was raised. It was raised across the room by Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs. I agreed to take away and consider whether a new clause should and could be brought forward on Report to enable companies to operate social tariffs. I thought it would be interesting to put that on the table. The Bill is essentially concerned with the implementation of the recommendations. We are trying to deal with the issue of debt in water companies, which impacts on the wider consumer base, and if we can get it right, we may be able to do something about enabling power around social tariffs.

Turning to the chapter in Anna’s report on the south-west, I have acknowledged repeatedly in debates here and elsewhere that South West Water customers pay more for water and sewerage services than other customers do. This year, the average household bill is around £490, which is 43 per cent. more than the national average. Anna looked closely at why that is the case. She concluded that one of the key reasons that bills in the south-west are relatively high when compared to other parts of the country was, frankly, the poor state of the local sewerage infrastructure at the time of privatisation in 1989. The source of the problem goes back to the birth of privatisation and, I do not hesitate to say it, to the midwives who conceived this particular child. She found that South West Water had an underdeveloped set of assets due to the reliance on sewage disposal at sea, which meant that the region had the smallest regulatory asset base per property of any water and sewerage company at that point in time. That meant that South West Water had to spend a lot of money on infrastructure development to meet national standards, with the result that South West Water went from the company with the smallest regulatory asset base per property to the one with the highest, and here we are.

The cost of investing in the sewerage system in Devon and Cornwall, post privatisation, as the hon. Gentleman knows, has been met by the company’s customers. Anna Walker identified a number of options that could potentially address that. One option would be a one-off financial adjustment funded by the Government to address the specific circumstances of South West Water at the time of privatisation. A further option that she identified was an annual transfer to the south-west from the Government. Alternatively, she proposed that bills in the South West Water area could be adjusted—either as a one-off, or annually—through contributions by other water customers across the rest of the country.
In addition to her more general recommendations on affordability, Anna suggested that households in the south-west could be helped by a seasonal tariff that would charge more for water during the summer months. That would take account of the fact that water use in the south-west in the summer is up by one third on the rest of the year. Anna Walker indicated that if water in the summer months was charged at three or four times the normal unit cost, then average residents’ bills could be reduced by around £40 to £60 a year. However, I know that there is some concern about seasonal tariffs and their impact on the tourism industry in the south-west.

I understand that. Under Anna Walker’s proposal, water bills would increase for hotels, guest houses, restaurants and other seasonal businesses during the summer months. That brings us back to the question of what is the fairest way of charging for water.

Let me pose some questions that Anna rightly posed too. First, is it fair for local or national water customers, or the taxpayer, to pick up the tab, given that it is visitors to the south-west in the summer months who make use of peak-period water? Curiously, the analogy is correct. When I went on holiday to the south-west last year, I had north-east MPs say to me, “Whatever you do, you must make sure that you do not replicate the mistakes of the past and have us paying.” It is a tricky one. Visitors to the south-west in the summer months during the peak period make use of the water and sewerage services. All I am saying is—I am not proposing this as a solution—that a seasonal tariff may offer the opportunity, as Anna proposed, to provide part of a fairer distribution of costs.

Mr. Sanders: May I focus on a part of the matter that is often overlooked? Visitors already pay a contribution through their accommodation tariff—all hotel accommodation is water-metered. Is it second home owners that we are getting at? I think that the tourism industry, which is still the biggest industry and the largest employer in Devon and Cornwall, would see the seasonal tariff as a stealth tax. I would like to knock that one off the table as soon as possible.

Huw Irranca-Davies: I hear what the hon. Gentleman is saying, and I am certainly not favouring one proposal over another, or even proposing a mix at the moment. As we take the matter forward, it is important that the hon. Gentleman and others, their constituents and the wider consumer representation base have the opportunity to properly wrestle with the recommendations and try to find the right way forward. I know that earlier today we were hopeful of securing, with a delegation led by my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton alongside honourable colleagues, a meeting with the Prime Minister. Unfortunately he has been delayed, as we know, by some other business. However, I understand that the meeting will be rearranged to not only raise the issue with him, but to secure—I am convinced that he will give this—his support for resolving the matter. Anna Walker was only one stage.

Linda Gilroy: The hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Sanders) asked in his speech whether the Minister would refer the options for the south-west to the regulator. I know that the Government have to respond to the whole report and will take time to do that. Will the Minister please comment on that? Hopefully, we will be able to secure the Prime Minister’s interest in doing so too.

Huw Irranca-Davies: Yes, I am happy to do so. As I said, things have progressed, and we are not waiting to get on with it. In our response to the final report, I and colleagues in the Welsh Assembly Government said:

“We welcome the publication of Anna Walker’s final report of her independent review of charging for household water and sewerage services. Anna Walker and her team have done an excellent job engaging with stakeholders and tackling difficult issues around charging for water, fairness and affordability. We will consider Anna Walker’s recommendations carefully”—it is right that we do so—“ahead of a full public consultation.”

Also, in line with the specific recommendations that Anna made for the south-west, I have already asked Ofwat to consider and advise on the options for dealing with bills in the south-west.

Mr. Hugo Swire (East Devon) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Huw Irranca-Davies: I am running out of time. Just to conclude that remark, Ofwat will be working with South West Water over the coming months to complete the task.

Mr. Swire: Neither my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Mr. Letwin) nor I were aware of the delegation to the Prime Minister. We have not been operating in a vacuum; we have been discussing the issue with South West Water and other stakeholders, which may or may not be of interest to people following the general election. Would it not be in order, as it affects all our constituents in the south-west, for the Conservatives to at least be invited to come along to the delegation, or is it a Lib-Lab pact?

Huw Irranca-Davies: Personally, I would have welcomed any representation that the hon. Gentleman and his party wanted to make. I would only point out that in the year and a half that I have been Minister, I have received no delegation, request for a delegation or representations from the hon. Gentleman and his party whatever. However, even at this late stage, I would welcome any requests for a meeting with me to express their views.

In conclusion, we are awaiting Ofwat’s advice on Anna Walker’s proposals on water charges in the south-west. It is, of course, for Ofwat to consider the practicality and fairness of these proposals ahead of advising Ministers and to decide how much time it needs to complete the task.

5.10 pm

Sitting adjourned without Question put (Standing Order No. 10(11)).
Written Ministerial Statements

Wednesday 27 January 2010

TREASURY

Oil Field Allowance

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Alistair Darling): The Government recognise the importance of the UK oil and gas industry to our economy and the dependable foundation it provides for the UK’s energy security.

While we are trying to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels we must and do recognise that this will be a long transition and our oil and gas reserves will continue to play a vital role in supplying our energy needs for many years to come.

We must ensure that the UK taxpayer receives a fair return from the extraction of our national resources. We are, however, committed to maximising the economic production of the UK’s reserves, for the fuel this delivers, for the contribution this makes to our economy, and for the jobs and skills the industry supports and develops.

For these reasons, today I am announcing secondary legislation that is to be laid before the House of Commons in due course and, subject to approval by the House, will support the development of remote gas fields in the west of Shetland region. The area to the west of the Shetland islands is the last major area in the UK continental shelf to be developed and infrastructure is critical to fully unlocking the gas potential of the region. It is estimated that the area contains around 20 per cent. of the UK’s remaining oil and gas reserves.

The legislation, if approved by the House, will extend the field allowance, announced in Budget 2009, to remote deep water gas fields, which are found in the west of Shetland area. The field allowance works by exempting an amount of income from the supplementary charge. All profits generated by qualifying fields are still subject to ring fence corporation tax.

The legislation is to be introduced by Order and it is our intention that it will be effective from the day after the day on which it is made. Full details of this measure, including the proposed legislation, will be issued on HMRC’s website in due course when the legislation is laid before the House of Commons.

Tax Information Exchange

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Timms): Tax Information Exchange Agreements were signed with Antigua and Barbuda, St. Christopher and Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines in London on 18 January 2010.

The text of each TIEA has been deposited in the Libraries of both Houses and made available on Her Majesty’s Revenue & Customs website. The texts will be scheduled to draft Orders in Council and laid before the House of Commons in due course.

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Planning

The Minister for Housing (John Healey): Today I am announcing measures to give local authorities powers to manage better the quality and supply of private rented accommodation in their areas and to promote better balanced communities in local neighbourhoods. The private rented sector has an important, and growing, role in the housing market. This Government want to support the private sector. But, as well as a bigger
sector, we want a better sector with standards that meet the needs of those who depend on private rented accommodation.

Local authorities need to be able to plan for the right housing mix and deal effectively with problems as they arise. Such problems can include antisocial behaviour, poorly maintained and dangerous properties, and pressures on community services.

The Government recognise the important contribution houses in multiple occupation make to the private rented sector. They provide housing to meet the needs of specific groups and households and make a contribution to the overall provision of affordable housing stock. However, localised problems caused by high concentrations of HMOs have been highlighted as concerns in some towns and cities across the country.

Following research to look at the issues we set out a number of options to deal with this problem in a public consultation paper, “Houses in multiple occupation and possible planning responses”.

In the light of the responses to this consultation I have decided to amend the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, as amended, to provide for a specific definition of an HMO. Planning permission will then be required, where a material change of use occurs, to change the use of a property from C3 dwelling house to an HMO.

At the same time as amending the Use Classes Order, I will amend the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, as amended, to provide that a change from an HMO back to the C3 class dwelling house will not require planning permission.

The consultation responses and research work have indicated that good practice alone cannot solve the problems encountered in a number of communities. This measure is strongly supported by responses to the consultation and it will enable local planning authorities to identify new HMOs with more certainty and act in particular neighbourhoods where there is concern about the mix and balance of communities and concerns about standards of conversion and maintenance of properties, to improve community balance.

I intend to introduce the necessary secondary legislation in time for it to come into force on 6 April 2010.

A summary of responses to the consultation, which includes a statement of the Government’s intention, is being published today.

I can also announce the publication today of a short consultation on potential changes to the consent regime for discretionary licensing schemes under the Housing Act 2004. The licensing provisions under the Housing Act 2004 represent another local power available to local authorities in tackling problems associated with HMOs and other privately rented accommodation. I propose the introduction of a general consent, enabling local authorities to introduce discretionary licensing schemes without seeking approval from my Department. I believe it is right that these local decisions should be made by those who know their area best and who are directly accountable to local communities. The consultation will close on Friday 12 March, and any future general consent will come into effect from the common commencement date of 6 April 2010.

I am publishing today also the second part of research undertaken by the Building Research Establishment for the Department in 2008 into the implementation of HMO licensing following the 2004 Housing Act. This shows emerging evidence of improvements to the condition and management of properties as a direct result of HMO licensing, although it also indicates that local authorities have still to complete the task of licensing all HMOs subject to mandatory licensing. I am therefore reviewing the support available to local authorities in relation to regulation of the private rented sector, including publishing draft guidance on licensing provisions, and will put in place any changes before the commencement of the new powers I am announcing today. This work is part of our programme of reform and support for the private rented sector. We consulted last summer on a comprehensive package of proposals aimed at improving quality and professionalism in the sector and ensuring the best possible deal for tenants.

The proposed national register for landlords is a key element of the measures that we plan. By allowing local authorities to pinpoint private rented housing, the national register will give important support to local authorities seeking to use existing powers, including licensing, in a strategic and proportionate way.

The national register will also provide a mechanism by which landlords and tenants can be kept properly informed of their rights and responsibilities and by which tenants will, for the first time, be able perform basic checks on potential landlords. More broadly, I want to ensure that all tenants have easy access to clear advice, and know where to turn when things go wrong.

I will be making a more detailed announcement on these and other proposals for the private rented sector shortly, including a summary of responses to our summer 2009 consultation following the Rugg review.

I am placing copies of the consultation document for discretionary licensing schemes, the HMO summary of consultation responses, the BRE report and the draft guidance in the Library of the House.

JUSTICE

National Victims’ Service

The Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor (Mr. Jack Straw): On behalf of the Home Secretary, the Attorney-General and myself, I am announcing today details of the new national victims’ service as the next stage of reforms aimed at ensuring the justice system is firmly on the side of the law-abiding citizen. Its aim will be to provide clear, universal entitlements to all victims of crime and to the most vulnerable.

The £8 million national victims’ service guarantees victims of crime and antisocial behaviour, referred from the police, more comprehensive and dedicated support. The service will be rolled out in two phases, beginning in March, helping families bereaved by murder or manslaughter and providing intensive support, care and attention, tailored to their individual needs, beyond the conclusion of any investigation or trial. Each person will be given a named, dedicated support worker who will meet with them regularly to identify their needs and
liaise with the authorities on their behalf. The individual may need immediate practical assistance—for example with security, or childcare, or making bill payments—and will be helped through all of this.

Emotional support and expert assistance will also be offered where needed—counselling, for instance, or legal and financial advice. This support will not stop when the criminal justice process comes to a conclusion.

From 1 April we will begin to roll out the national victims’ service for all victims of crime across England and Wales.

The most vulnerable victims will be entitled to:

- fast contact to establish their support needs, seven days a week;
- a one-to-one caseworker responsible for pulling together public sector agencies and third sector providers to respond to their needs, across housing, health, employment, social services and other areas;
- quick referral to, and/or the commissioning of, specialist support from other agencies and third sector organisations when needed;
- In addition, all victims of crime who are in need of specific assistance, no matter where they live or what offence has been committed against them, will receive a better service targeted to their needs. They will be entitled to:
  - immediate emotional support from a trained support worker;
  - an in-depth health check of their practical, emotional, health, security and housing needs;
  - an individually tailored support plan;
  - support, not just nine to five, but seven days a week;
  - tailored information about what is likely to happen in their case, and practical advice.

From July this year, all victims of crime who need it will also be entitled to a caseworker who will guide them through the criminal justice process and give them help and assistance as long as they need it.

This provision will be complementary to the work which the police and Crown Prosecution Service do already in support of victims and bereaved victims. Following the implementation of the 1999 Lawrence inquiry report, a comprehensive national system of police family liaison officers has been in place in homicide cases, which has proved very effective and helpful.

Prosecutors also now can speak to victims and witnesses directly, something unheard of and indeed once prohibited. The CPS has consolidated this by providing targeted support to the community through the introduction of community prosecutors.

The new national victims’ service is a key part of the Government’s wider strategy to protect core public services which the public depend on, while at the same time making them more personalised to meet individuals’ needs. Today’s announcement also builds on the wide-ranging measures the Government have introduced over the past 13 years for victims of crime, including a victims’ champion, victim personal statements, a victims’ service in the voluntary sector.

The establishment of the national victims’ service is another key milestone in rebalancing the criminal justice service. It will make sure that victims across England and Wales are given consistent personal support throughout the criminal justice process and beyond. If victims need help, we will continue to be there for them, for as long as they need it.

Copies of “The National Victims Service: An initial response to the Victims’ Champion’s report” have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. Copies of the document will also be available on the criminal justice system website at: www.cjsonline.gov.uk.

**Working Group on Libel**

The Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor (Mr. Jack Straw): In response to concerns about the possibility that our libel laws are having a chilling effect on freedom of expression, the Government have set up a working group to examine issues relating to the substantive law on libel.

The terms of reference of this group are—

“to consider whether the law of libel, including the law relating to libel tourism, in England and Wales needs reform, and if so to make recommendations as to solutions”.

A list of members of the working group is attached.

The scope of the group’s considerations will extend to all aspects of substantive libel law in England and Wales, but will exclude issues relating to costs in defamation proceedings, where work is already under way. The working group is intended to have an intensive, short-term focus and has been requested to make recommendations by mid-March.

Working Group on Libel List of Members

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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>David Banks</td>
<td>(Media Law Consultant)</td>
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<td>Sir Leszek Borysiewicz</td>
<td>(Chief Executive of the Medical Research Council)</td>
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<td>Tracey Brown</td>
<td>(Managing Director, Sense About Science)</td>
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<td>Desmond Browne QC</td>
<td>(Barrister, 5 Raymond Buildings)</td>
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<td>Rod Christie-Miller</td>
<td>(Partner and Chief Executive at Schillings, Solicitors)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robin Esser</td>
<td>(Executive Managing Editor, Daily Mail)</td>
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<td>Jo Glanville</td>
<td>(Editor, Index on Censorship)</td>
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<td>Jonathan Heawood</td>
<td>(Director, English PEN)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tony Jaffa</td>
<td>(Head of the Media Team at Foot Anstey, Solicitors)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sarah Jones</td>
<td>(Head of Litigation and Intellectual Property, BBC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marcus Partington</td>
<td>(Chair of Media Lawyers Association, and Legal Director, Mirror Group Newspapers)</td>
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<td>Gillian Phillips</td>
<td>(Director of Editorial Legal Services, The Guardian)</td>
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<td>Gavin Phillipson</td>
<td>(Professor at Durham Law School)</td>
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<td>Mark Stephens</td>
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<td>Andrew Stephenson</td>
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<td>Paul Tweed</td>
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<td>John Witherow</td>
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The working group will be chaired by Rowena Collins-Rice, Director-General, Democracy, Constitution and Law and Chief Legal Officer at the Ministry of Justice.

**WOMEN AND EQUALITY**

**Equality Bill**

The Parliamentary Secretary, Government Equalities Office (Michael Jabez Foster): The Equality Bill, currently before the House of Lords, will outlaw unjustifiable age discrimination against adults aged 18 or over in the provision of services and the exercise of public functions. It also includes powers to make exceptions from the ban, so that we can make clear the beneficial and justifiable age-based practices which will be allowed to continue.
On 29 June 2009, we issued the consultation document “Equality Bill: Making it work—Ending age discrimination in services and public functions” inviting views on our developing policy for exceptions from the age discrimination ban and when the ban should be implemented. The consultation ended on 30 September 2009. Today we have issued “Equality Bill: Making it work—Ending age discrimination in services and public functions. A Policy Statement”. This document summarises the consultation responses and sets out our plans for specific exceptions from the ban.

We want the legislation to have the same effects in health and social care as in other sectors, that is:

- to eradicate harmful discrimination; and
- to permit service providers to treat people of different ages differently where this is beneficial or justifiable or for good public policy reasons;

and to ensure that:

- when services deal with individuals, they focus on the individual, taking account of his or her age where it is appropriate to do so, and where this helps to offer a personalised service.

In doing this, we will act in accordance with the relevant recommendations of the recent review “Achieving age equality in health and social care”.

We will create a specific exception to allow financial service providers to treat people of different ages differently, where this is proportionate to risks and costs. Prices can still be varied by age, where this genuinely reflects risk or costs and is not an arbitrary decision.

We will improve transparency by requiring financial service providers to publish aggregate data in respect of certain products that anyone can check.

We will improve access by requiring the providers of certain insurance products to operate a signposting and referrals system. Where this requirement applies and an insurer does not provide the service to a person because of their age, they will be required to refer the person to a supplier who can meet their needs or refer them to a dedicated signposting service.

Alongside the provisions relating to healthcare and financial services, we will enable any service provider in the public or private sector to use age as a criterion to determine the eligibility for concessions or benefits, where the purpose of the concession is to benefit the age group to which it applies.

We will provide an exception from the ban on age-discrimination to allow specialist group holidays to continue to be provided for people in particular age groups, provided that the age range for the holiday is clearly stated in the promotional material.

If holiday accommodation providers still use age limits then they will need to be able to objectively justify them.

We will explore the issues further before deciding the way forward on vehicle hire where we had not proposed an exception for age limits given firms ability to vary premiums in line with costs relating to insurance premiums.

These exceptions will be set out in an Order made under the power in clause 195 of the Bill. We intend to consult on the draft order in autumn 2010, giving people a further opportunity to comment before the exceptions are debated by both Houses of Parliament.

We are placing copies of the document in the Libraries of both Houses. Copies will also be available on the Government Equalities Office website at: www.equalities.gov.uk.

National Equality Panel

The Minister for Women and Equality (Ms Harriet Harman): Today the Government have published their Official response to the National Equality Panel’s report, “An Anatomy of Economic Inequality in the UK”. The National Equality Panel’s report, which has also been published today, and the full Government response document can be found online at: www.equalities.gov.uk, and I have placed copies in the House of Commons Library. Printed copies of the NEP report and the Government’s response are available upon request from the Government Equalities Office.

To build a modern, prosperous society, we have to tackle the barriers that unfairly hold people back and give everyone the opportunity to succeed. Equality matters in the modern world:

- for individuals, who are entitled to fairness and to have the opportunity to fulfil their potential and achieve their aspirations and not be held back;
- for the economy, because the economy that will succeed in the future is one that draws on the talents of all; and, for society, because an equal society is more cohesive and at ease with itself.

That is why I commissioned the National Equality Panel in 2008, chaired by Professor John Hills, to undertake an in-depth analysis of economic inequality in the UK today. The panel has examined how a range of factors—including gender, race, disability, social background and where you live—are associated with and influence how people fare at school and at work, their earnings, income and wealth.

The panel’s report sets out the scale of the challenges that will need to be addressed if we are to effectively tackle inequality in the UK. The National Equality Panel’s report confirms our strongly held view that public policy intervention can and does make a difference to economic inequalities.

We welcome the panel’s groundbreaking report. We have made progress over the last 13 years. Some of the widest gaps in outcomes between social groups have been reduced, and trends reversed in the last decade. For example the attainment gap between black and white pupils fell from 18 per cent. in 1997 to 6 per cent. in 2008. The pay gap between men and women has also narrowed. But we are also determined to build on this and achieve more to create a fairer and more prosperous society. It is unacceptable that social background and other factors make so big a difference to the ability of people to fulfil their aspirations and potential.

The Government will continue to make the choices that prioritise fairness and aspiration.
Petitions

Wednesday 27 January 2010

PRESENTED PETITION

Petition presented to the House but not read on the Floor

Badman Report (Sheffield Hallam)

The Petition of persons resident in the Sheffield, Hallam parliamentary constituency.

Declares that they are concerned about the recommendations of the Badman Report, which suggests closer monitoring of home educators, including a compulsory annual registration scheme and right of access to people’s homes for local authority officials; further declares that the Petitioners believe the recommendations are based on a review that was extremely rushed, failed to give due consideration to the evidence, failed to ensure that the data it collected were sufficiently robust, and failed to take proper account of the existing legislative framework.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families either not to bring forward, or to withdraw, proposed legislative measures providing for tighter registration and monitoring of children educated at home in the absence of a thorough independent inquiry into the condition and future of elective home education in England; but instead to take the steps necessary to ensure that the existing Elective Home Education Guidelines for Local Authorities are properly implemented, learning from current best practice, in all local authorities in England.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.  

[Petitions in same terms were presented by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Ms Keeble) [P000716]; the hon. Member for Sherwood (Paddy Tipping) [P000714]; the hon. Member for South-West Devon (Mr. Streeter) [P000713]; the hon. Member for Reading, East (Mr. Wilson) [P000700]; the hon. Member for Coventry, South (Mr. Cunningham) [P000697]; the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) [P000695]; the hon. Member for City of York (Hugh Bayley) [P000694]; the hon. Member for Maldon and East Chelmsford (Mr. Whittingdale) [P000693]; the hon. Member for Totnes (Mr. Steen) [P000689]; the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) [P000686]; the right hon. Member for East Yorkshire (Mr. Knight) [P000665]; the hon. Member for Forest of Dean (Mr. Harper) [P000653]; the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Mr. Burstow) [P000652]; the hon. Member for Vale of York (Miss McIntosh) [P000651]; the hon. Member for Graveshamp (Mr. Holloway) [P000646]; the hon. Member for Colchester (Bob Russell) [P000645]; the hon. Member for Ceredigion (Mark Williams) [P000644]; the hon. Member for Blydon (Mr. Anderson) [P000643]; the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Angela Browning) [P000642]; the hon. Member for Scarborough and Whitby (Mr. Goodwill) [P000641]; the hon. Member for North Essex (Mr. Jenkin) [P000633]; the hon. Member for Aldershot (Mr. Howarth) [P000631]; the hon. Member for Castle Point (Bob Spink) [P000628]; the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Randall) [P000624]; the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnorshire (Mr. Williams) [P000623]; the hon. Member for Romford (Andrew Rosindell) [P000622]; the hon. Member for Lincoln (Gillian Merron) [P000614]; the hon. Member for Watford (Claire Ward) [P000613]; the hon. Member for Chelwood (Mark Hunter) [P000612]; the hon. Member for Arundel and South Downs (Nick Herbert) [P000599]; the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) [P000586]; the hon. Member for Gainsborough (Mr. Leigh) [P000583]; the hon. Member for Barnsley, East and Mexborough (Jeff Ennis) [P000581]; the hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Amess) [P000571]; the hon. Member for Leominster (Bill Wiggin) [P000569]; the hon. Member for Poole (Mr. Symms) [P000568]; the hon. Member for North Southwark and Bermondsey (Simon Hughes) [P000566]; the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) [P000565]; the hon. Member for South Cambridgeshire (Mr. Lansley) [P000564]; the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mrs. Laing) [P000562]; the hon. Member for Meliorionydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llywyd) [P000559]; the hon. Member for South Norfolk (Mr. Bacon) [P000554]; the hon. Member for Brent, East (Sarah Teather) [P000553]; the hon. Member for Tunbridge Wells (Greg Clark) [P000551]; the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) [P000550]; the hon. Member for Richmond Park (Susan Kramer) [P000549]; the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Lynne Jones) [P000548]; the hon. Member

OBSERVATIONS

CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES

Badman Report (Beverley and Holderness)

The Petition of persons resident in the Beverley and Holderness parliamentary constituency.

Declares that they are concerned about the recommendations of the Badman Report, which suggests closer monitoring of home educators, including a compulsory annual registration scheme and right of access to people’s homes for local authority officials; further declares that the Petitioners believe the recommendations are based on a review that was extremely rushed, failed to give due consideration to the evidence, failed to ensure that the data it collected were sufficiently robust, and failed to take proper account of the existing legislative framework.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families either not to bring forward, or to withdraw, proposed legislative measures providing for tighter registration and monitoring of children educated at home in the absence of a thorough independent inquiry into the condition and future of elective home education in England; but instead to take the steps necessary to ensure that the existing Elective Home Education Guidelines for Local Authorities are properly implemented, learning from current best practice, in all local authorities in England.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.
for Broxbourne (Mr. Walker) [P000545]; the hon. Member for Cities of London and Westminster (Mr. Field) [P000544]; the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Sanders) [P000543]; the hon. Member for Tewkesbury (Mr. Robertson) [P000542]; the hon. Member for North-East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt) [P000541]; the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mr. Timpson) [P000540]; the hon. Member for Windsor (Adam Afriyie) [P000539]; the hon. Member for North Shropshire (Mr. Paterson) [P000538]; the hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling) [P000537]; the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Vaizey) [P000536]; the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Hollobone) [P000535]; the hon. Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Charlotte Atkins) [P000534]; the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Goodman) [P000533]; the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski) [P000532]; the hon. Member for East Devon (Mr. Swire) [P000531]; the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey) [P000528]; the hon. Member for Regent’s Park and Kensington, North (Ms Buck) [P000527]; the hon. Member for Somerleyton (Mr. Heath) [P000526]; the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Burrows) [P000525]; the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Drew) [P000524]; the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Dr. Naysmith) [P000523]; the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Sir Alan Beith) [P000522]; the right hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) [P000521]; the hon. Member for Luton, North (Kelvin Hopkins) [P000520]; the hon. Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Pelling) [P000519]; the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) [P000518]; the hon. Member for South Suffolk (Mr. Yeo) [P000517]; the hon. Member for Elmet (Colin Burgon) [P000516]; the right hon. Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) [P000515]; the hon. Member for North Wiltshire (Mr. Gray) [P000512]; the right hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) [P000511]; the hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Andrew Stunell) [P000510]; the right hon. Member for North-East Hampshire (Mr. Arbuthnot) [P000509]; the hon. Member for South-West Hertfordshire (Mr. Gauke) [P000508]; the hon. Member for Congleton (Ann Winterton) [P000507]; the hon. Member for High Peak (Tom Levitt) [P000506]; the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) [P000505]; the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) [P000504]; the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Miss Kirkbride) [P000503]; the hon. Member for North-East Milton Keynes (Mr. Lancaster) [P000501]; the hon. Member for Wealden (Charles Hendry) [P000499]; the hon. Member for Newark (Patrick Mercer) [P000498]; the hon. Member for Cotswold (Mr. Clifton-Brown) [P000497]; the hon. Member for St. Albans (Anne Main) [P000496]; the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Sir Nicholas Winterton) [P000495]; the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Leech) [P000492]; the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Maddow) [P000487]; the hon. Member for Sittingbourne and Sheppey (Derek Wyatt) [P000486]; the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Bone) [P000484]; the hon. Member for Billericay (Mr. Baron) [P000483]; the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake) [P000481]; the hon. Member for Henley (John Howell) [P000480]; the hon. Member for East Surrey (Mr. Ainsworth) [P000478]; the hon. Member for South-West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) [P000477]; the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Stephen Williams) [P000476]; the hon. Member for Wimbledon (Stephen Hammond) [P000475]; the hon. Member for Fareham (Mr. Hoban) [P000474]; the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam) [P000473]; the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Benyon) [P000472]; the hon. Member for Edisbury (Mr. O’Brien) [P000471]; the hon. and learned Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) [P000470]; the hon. Member for Guildford (Anne Milton) [P000469]; the hon. Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire (Mr. Crabb) [P000468]; the hon. Member for Ashford (Damian Green) [P000467]; the hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Djanogly) [P000463]; the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (David Lepper) [P000462]; the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (John Thurso) [P000461]; the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) [P000460]; the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) [P000459]; the hon. Member for Easington (John Cummings) [P000458]; the hon. Member for Mid-Dorset and North Poole (Annette Brooke) [P000457]; the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Prisk) [P000451]; the hon. Member for Burton (Mrs. Dean) [P000448]; the hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Derek Conway) [P000447]; the hon. Member for Bournemouth, Yardley (John Hemming) [P000443]; the hon. Member for West Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) [P000440]; the hon. Member for Hemel Hempstead (Mike Penning) [P000439]; the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Jim Dobbin) [P000438]; the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) [P000437]; and the hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. Liddell-Grainger) [P000436].

Petitions in the same terms were also presented from persons resident in the following constituencies: Northampton, South [P000722]; Southampton, Test [P000717]; Runnymede and Weybridge [P000704]; Sheffield, Heeley [P000703]; Newcastle upon Tyne, North [P000701]; Stockport [P000698]; Exeter [P000696]; North-East Cambridgeshire [P000692]; Mid-Worcestershire [P000690]; Kent [P000685]; Leyton and Wanstead [P000684]; Bolton, South-East [P000683]; Leigh [P000682]; Rugby and Kenilworth [P000681]; Market Harborough [P000680]; Hackney, South and Shoreditch [P000679]; Birmingham, Perry Bar [P000678]; Carmarthen, East and Dinefwr [P000677]; Streatham [P000676]; City of Chester [P000675]; Maidstone and The Weald [P000674]; Wallasey [P000673]; Wirral, West [P000672]; South-West Surrey [P000671]; Birkenhead [P000670]; Glasgow, East [P000669]; Dulwich and West Norwood [P000668]; Wirral, South [P000667]; Derbyshire [P000666]; Holborn and St. Pancras [P000665]; Stockton, South [P000662]; Chingford and Woodford Green [P000661]; Hackney, North and Stoke Newington [P000660]; Lewisham, Deptford [P000659]; Edmonton [P000658]; Twickenham [P000657]; Falmouth and Camborne [P000656]; Brentford and Isleworth [P000647]; Bournemouth, West [P000654]; Aylesbury [P000634]; Charnwood [P000632]; North Swindon [P000630]; Chichester [P000618]; Reigate [P000617]; Kingston upon Hull, West and Hessle [P000616]; Maidenhead [P000615]; Ealing, Southall [P000580]; Kensington and Chelsea [P000560]; Stevenage [P000558]; Hitchen and Harpenden [P000516]; Sheffield, Hillsborough [P000514]; Gloucester [P000502]; Chipping Barnet [P000485]; Hove [P000479]; Cannock Chase [P000465]; Swansea, West [P000458]; Bath [P000457]; Portsmouth, North [P000456]; Hampstead and Highgate [P000449]; Wallasey [P000447]; Harrow, East [P000445]; Brent, South [P000552]; Buckingham [P000500]; Witney [P000547]; North-East Hertfordshire [P000621]; Finchley and Golders Green [P000620]; Northampton, South [P000619];
After these reforms are implemented, for their children to take SATs tests or specific public examinations. The reforms will not require home educators to adopt on-line courses, and—for the first time—backed by real resources. Our education system and the vast majority of home educators who do a good job will find monitoring supportive and encouraging. We have also committed around £21 million in support and encouragement for home educating families. We will put in place light touch regulation which has now had second reading in the House of Commons. They will put in place light touch regulation on support and encouragement for home educating families and local authorities; that an annual meeting between local authorities and home educators; that an annual statement of educational approach and was supportive of most of the recommendations. It agreed that a short statement of educational approach was agreed that a short statement of educational approach was needed; and that better support for home educators and better training for local authorities would together lead to an improvement on the current arrangements.

Home Education registration and monitoring proposals are included in the Children, Schools and Families Bill which has now had second reading in the House of Commons. They will put in place light touch regulation and monitoring arrangements and our guidance will make clear that this will be proportionate and focused on support and encouragement for home educating families; that an annual meeting between local authorities and home educators was needed; and that better support for home educators and better training for local authorities would together lead to an improvement on the current arrangements.

Home Education registration and monitoring proposals are included in the Children, Schools and Families Bill which has now had second reading in the House of Commons. They will put in place light touch regulation and monitoring arrangements and our guidance will make clear that this will be proportionate and focused on support and encouragement for home educating families; that an annual meeting between local authorities and home educators was needed; and that better support for home educators and better training for local authorities would together lead to an improvement on the current arrangements.

Home education is an established part of the British education system and the vast majority of home educators who do a good job will find monitoring supportive and—for the first time—backed by real resources. Our reforms will not require home educators to adopt a particular approach, to teach a specific curriculum, or for their children to take SATs tests or specific public examinations. After these reforms are implemented, England will remain one of the most liberal countries in the developed world for home educators to live in.
that the Government Response will be published shortly. Proposals will be taken forward at the earliest legislative opportunity.

(3) Reforms to the Mobile Homes Act 1983 to improve the transparency and workability of the terms implied in residents’ agreements. As part of these reforms we will consider what changes are needed to the sales process. We will consult on proposals in 2010.

Planning and Development (Essex)

The Petition of Darryl Godbold, Trish Lepulelei, local residents and others,

Declares that the proposed development at the Hadleigh Tennis Club should be rejected because the new and much larger building, pathway and proposed new uses of the club would bring unacceptable problems, including parking, inaccessibility for the emergency services, increase in hard surfaces, increased demands on insufficient foul and surface water drainage capacity, conflict with wildlife, and possible further encroachment onto the green belt following improper green belt encroachment a few years ago for a new driveway; further declares it would bring about an unacceptable intensification of use in this residential cul-de-sac, including a bar, social and fund raising functions; and further declares that previous planning conditions to avoid street parking difficulties have not been honoured.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to encourage Castle Point Borough Councillors, rather than officers, to consider this objection and Petition and to reject the application and to be held to account for their decision.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Bob Spink, Official Report, 30 November 2009; Vol. 501, c. 943.]

[P000435]

Observations from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government:

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government is aware that a planning application had been submitted to Castle Point Borough Council in respect of the above development and he is advised that the council rejected the application on 4 December.
Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 27 January 2010

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Bars

Michael Fabricant: To ask the hon. Member for North Devon, representing the House of Commons Commission what the rules are governing (a) the use by and (b) the admission of guests of (i) hon. Members, (ii) hon. Members’ staff and (iii) House of Commons staff in respect of each bar on the House of Commons part of the parliamentary estate. [312634]

Nick Harvey: Bars on the House of Commons part of the parliamentary estate currently available to staff of the House (all grades) and Members’ staff are:

Bellamy’s Bar (Mon-Thurs 12.00-23.00 or rise of House, whichever is the earlier, but not before 22.00) with up to two guests.

Moncrieff’s CaféBar (Mon-Tue 09.00 (bar 12.00)-20.00; Weds-Thurs 09.00 (bar 12.00)-22.00 or rise of House, whichever is the later; Fri 09.00 (bar 12.00)-16.00) with up to three guests.

Additionally, senior staff of the House of Commons may use the following bar facilities:

Strangers’ Bar (Mon-Weds 12.00-23.00 or rise of House, whichever is the later; Thursday 12.00-22.00; Fri 12.00-15.15 or rise of House, whichever is the later, but not before 22.00) with up to three guests; Staff Grade B may not take in guests.

June-July only: Terrace Pavilion Bar (open 13.00-23.00 Mon-Weds). Access as for Strangers’ Bar.

Pugin Room (Bar service open Mon-Tue 11.00-15.00 and 17.30-midnight or 15 minutes after the rise of House, whichever is the earlier; Weds 11.00-15.00 and 17.30-23.00; Thurs 11.00-15.00 and 17.30-22.00; closed Fridays). Open to staff grade A2 and above with up to three guests.

Members and up to three guests have access to all the bar facilities listed above. Also, the Members’ Smoking Room is provided for the exclusive use of Members of Parliament (Mon-Tue 14.00-17.00 and 18.00-midnight; Weds 14.00-17.00 and 18.00-23.00; Thurs 13.00-17.00 and 18.00-19.00; closed Fridays).

The following bars are provided elsewhere on the parliamentary estate for all parliamentary pass holders, including Members, their staff and all staff of the House of Commons:

Sports and Social Club bar 12.00-23.00 Monday to Friday (sitting weeks) and at reduced time, depending on the level of trade, during recess.

Lords Bar (Mon-Thurs 10.30-21.00; Fri 10.30-19.30) with up to two guests.

Department of Resources

Mr. Laws: To ask the hon. Member for North Devon, representing the House of Commons Commission how much was spent on running costs for the Department of Resources and its predecessors in each year from 2005-06 to 2008-09; what estimate has been made of such costs in 2009-10; and if he will make a statement. [312213]

Finance and Administration have been:

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>2005-06</td>
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These figures include staff and directly related accommodation costs, but not other expenditure managed on behalf of the House as a whole. They also exclude ICT infrastructure costs which are managed jointly by the parliamentary ICT for both Houses.

Fluctuations in expenditure represent organisational and other work changes that have arisen during the period. For example, the departmental ICT team was amalgamated into PICT on 1 January 2006, the Internal Audit team transferred to the Office of the Chief Executive on 1 January 2008, and there have been additional resources consumed recently because of FOI, Legg Review and other Member related work.

Members: Allowances

Sir Nicholas Winterton: To ask the hon. Member for North Devon, representing the House of Commons Commission what remunerated positions Sir Thomas Legg declared prior to his appointment to review payments from the additional cost allowance; and whether Sir Thomas was required to declare the amount of remuneration he receives from such positions. [313437]

Nick Harvey: Sir Thomas Legg has declared the following positions: non-executive director of Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, consultant to Clifford Chance, and Commissioner of the Audit Commission. Sir Thomas was not required to inform the House Administration of the amount of remuneration from these positions.

JUSTICE

Back Office: Central Government

Mr. Todd: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what assessment he has made of the reasons for the cost of the finance function of his Department’s core headquarters referred to in the publication Benchmarking the Back Office: Central Government; and if he will make a statement. [312681]

Mr. Wills: The cost of the finance function for the Ministry of Justice’s headquarters is made up of:

the costs of finance teams that provide support to a number of the MOJ’s Directorates, including the corporate centre which provides support and challenge to the entire Department;

the costs for transaction processing for the former Department for Constitutional Affairs parts of the Department (including HM Courts Service and the Tribunal Service) that are funded and managed through a central contract.
The cost differences reflected in the publication ‘Benchmarking the Back Office: Central Government’ may have a number of causes including, as the report notes: “different bodies in central Government have very different business models to deliver their different services”. I believe that, given the MOJ’s business model, this level of headquarters expenditure is reasonable in supporting a wider business area and providing support and challenge to help the board and Ministers to achieve outcomes efficiently.

The MOJ supports the work on benchmarking, and is working with other Government Departments to help us to better understand the variations in costs these data illustrate and to drive further efficiencies across the MOJ through the shared services programme started in July 2009. The MOJ also has in place plans, annexed to ‘Putting the Frontline First’, to improve the efficiency of both its finance and human resources functions across its headquarters, agencies and non-departmental public bodies. These include moving all human resources and finance transaction processing into a single shared service.

Convictions: Knives

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many people have been (a) charged and (b) convicted of an offence of carrying a knife in each of the last five years. [312767]

Claire Ward: The number of persons proceeded against at magistrates courts and found guilty at all courts for offences relating to carrying a knife, England and Wales 2003 to 2007 (latest available) is shown in the following table.

The Ministry of Justice do not collect charging data; proceeded against information has been provided in lieu.

Court proceedings data for 2008 are planned for publication on 28 January 2010.

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Average fine imposed at all courts for offences of using a motor vehicle uninsured against third party risks, by police force area, England and Wales, 1997 to 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Police force area</th>
<th>Average amount of fines (£)</th>
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<td>Avon and Somerset</td>
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Average fine imposed at all courts for offences of using a motor vehicle uninsured against third party risks, by police force area, England and Wales, 1997 to 2007

<table>
<thead>
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1 Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts and police forces. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are use.

Source: Justice Statistics Analytical Services—Ministry of Justice

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**Family Courts: Mass Media**

**Mr. Timpson**: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice when an assessment will be made of the effectiveness of the changes introduced in April 2009 to arrangements for the media to attend family court hearings. [312933]

**Bridget Prentice**: The Ministry of Justice published a study into the impact of the April 2009 rule changes on 21 January 2010. The study can be found on the Ministry of Justice website and copies have been laid in the House of Commons Library.

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**Legal Advice and Assistance**

**Lynne Jones**: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice pursuant to the answer of 7 January 2010, Official Report, column 546W, on legal advice and assistance, whether seasonal fluctuations in workload of new matter start allocations for providers of the Advice and Assistance Scheme (Legal Help) were taken into account when deciding upon the period 9 April to August 2009 to assess the annual run-rate. [312922]

**Bridget Prentice**: Seasonal fluctuations were not taken into account when calculating the annual run-rate of firms, which predict the number of matter starts that might potentially be required by each provider to year end. However, any provider who had their allocation of matter starts reduced following the review can request a review by the Legal Services Commission and present evidence in support of a request to reinstate matter starts, including data regarding seasonal fluctuations. Seasonal fluctuations vary greatly from firm to firm and among categories of law and therefore it is not possible to apply a standard formula to take these into account.

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**National Offender Management Service**

**Mr. David Anderson**: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what assessment he has made of the merits of proposals to set up separate operational arms in the National Offender Management Service. [312662]

**Maria Eagle**: As part of the restructure of the Ministry of Justice in 2008, a single NOMS delivery organisation has been created to join together and streamline headquarters, and deliver prison and probation services more effectively. This delivery arm is an executive agency. The expectations on prisons and probation are unchanged: to protect the public and reduce reoffending.

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**National Offender Management Service: Probation**

**Mr. David Anderson**: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice if he will take steps to increase the number of staff at the National Offender Management Service HQ who have a background in probation. [312663]
Maria Eagle: The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) fully recognises the benefits of using the specialist skills of probation staff in appropriate posts. Where there is a business need for a particular post to be filled by someone with a probation service employment background, NOMS headquarters groups may second or advertise externally, in line with NOMS and civil service recruitment policy.

NOMS has recently obtained special permission from the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners for secondments from probation services to last for up to three years, rather than the two years normally allowed by the Commissioners’ Recruitment Principles. Certain senior posts in the regional teams within NOMS headquarters are now reserved for probation service personnel on secondment. In addition, NOMS is developing a facility for vacant posts, where appropriate, to be simultaneously advertised internally to Ministry of Justice employees, and as secondment opportunities to probation service employees.

National Offender Management Service: Recruitment

Kelvin Hopkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice whether probation staff (a) are permitted to apply for and (b) may be appointed to vacancies in the National Offender Management Service.

Maria Eagle: Probation service employees may apply for posts in the National Offender Management Service Agency that are advertised externally. They may also apply for internally advertised posts on secondment. Where appropriate, posts may also be reserved solely for secondment of personnel from probation areas or trusts.

Prison Accommodation

Alan Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) how many hospital beds in each prison are being used to ease overcrowding elsewhere in the prison; (2) how many prisons used hospital beds to ease overcrowding elsewhere in the prison in 2009.

Maria Eagle: Places in in-patient health care centres may be added to the certified normal accommodation and/or operational capacity of a prison when routinely used to accommodate patients but not simply to provide additional accommodation to manage population pressures.

Prisoner Escapes

Alan Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many escape list prisoners there are in each category of prison accommodation.

Maria Eagle: This information is not held centrally. To collate this information would involve contacting every closed establishment in order to identify how many prisoners are currently on each local escape list. This would incur a disproportionate cost. All closed prisons are required to have in place a system to identify and manage prisoners who are placed on the escape list. A prisoner may be placed on the escape list if they pose a current and significant threat of escaping that cannot be addressed through normal security arrangements.

Prisoners Release

Philip Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) how many prisoners were released before their agreed release date in the latest year for which figures are available; (2) how many offences were committed by people released from prison in error in the latest period for which figures are available; (3) how many people released from prison in error were returned to prison in the latest period for which figures are available.

Maria Eagle: As at 21 January 2010, 54 prisoners were recorded as released in error when an authority to retain them in custody was in place. This figure covers the period between 1 January 2009 and 31 December 2009.

Most prisoners released in error are returned quickly to custody. Of those released in error during 2009 seven remain unaccounted for.

Figures relating to offences committed by those at large following a release in error are not available centrally. Releases in error are reported to the police who are responsible for apprehending prisoners. Information on further offences committed could only be collated by contacting each prison and police force across England and Wales which would incur disproportionate cost.

The number of releases in error is small, accounting for less than 0.05 per cent. of discharges from prison. All incidents are subject to investigation. There is no indication from the available information of any significant level of offending by prisoners who should have been in custody at the time.

These figures have been drawn from live administrative data systems which may be amended at any time. Although care is taken when processing and analysing the returns, the detail collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large scale recording system.

The number of releases in error reported for 2009 may change should further incidents be reported.

Prisoners Release: Reoffenders

Philip Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many offences were committed by prisoners released for Christmas 2009.

Maria Eagle: No offences were recorded against any offender released on temporary licence (ROTL) over the Christmas period. Every prisoner who submits a request for ROTL is seen by a board which consists of prison and probation staff. A stringent risk assessment is carried out before any decision is made to grant the application. Throughout the whole process public protection is paramount.

These figures have been drawn from live administrative data systems which may be amended at any time. Although care is taken when processing and analysing the returns, the detail collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large scale recording system.
These figures may change should any further offences relating to this period be identified and reported to National Offender Management Service.

**Prisoners: Foreigners**

**Alan Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many (a) male and (b) female foreign national prisoners there are, broken down by (i) offence category and (ii) length of sentence.

**Maria Eagle:** The most recent data available relate to June 2009. The following tables give the numbers of (a) male and (b) female foreign national prisoners (FNPs) showing both (i) offence category and (ii) length of sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offence category</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violence against the person</td>
<td>1,588</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1,640</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual offences</td>
<td>881</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burglary</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theft and handling</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>322</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fraud and forgery</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug offences</td>
<td>1,841</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>2,138</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motoring offences</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>131</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other offences</td>
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<td>515</td>
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<tr>
<td>Offence not recorded</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6,884</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>7,502</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence length</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Less than or equal to six months</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>674</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greater than six and less than 12 months</td>
<td>280</td>
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<td>12 months less to than four years</td>
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<td>Four years to less than life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indeterminate (including life)</td>
<td>1,028</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1,052</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6,884</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>7,502</td>
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</table>

In addition to the 7,502 sentenced prisoners, a further 3,848 were either untried, convicted unsentenced, a fine defaulter or non-criminals giving a total of 11,350.

These figures have been drawn from administrative IT systems which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing.

**Prisoners: Gender Identity Disorder**

**Lyne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice pursuant to the answer of 11 January 2010, Official Report, columns 789-90W, on gender identity disorder: prisoners, from whom the draft guidance on the treatment of prisoners with gender dysphoria is available for (a) prisons and (b) prisons.

**Maria Eagle:** As was indicated in the previous answer given to the House on 11 January 2010, Official Report column. 789-90W, the responsibility for the production of the draft guidance on the treatment, care and management of transsexual prisoners is split between officials in the Department of Health and Ministry of Justice but in the majority of instances where prison staff have requested advice these have been directed to the latter and more specifically officials in Safer Custody and Offender Policy Group in the National Offender Management Service. As the document is still in draft form it is not readily available for wider distribution beyond policy officials and prison staff but where necessary the advice and information contained within is made available to prisoner(s) who require it.

**Prisons: Drugs**

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what recent assessment his Department has made of the merits of (a) maintenance and (b) abstinence-based drug treatment programmes for prisoners.

**Maria Eagle:** Contracts are in place with two groups of researchers for evaluation of different aspects of the Integrated Drug Treatment System (IDTS)—this will include the impact of methadone maintenance in particular. The contracts were let in 2008 and each group of researchers will submit a final report by April 2012.

All accredited drug treatment programmes available in prisons aim ultimately for abstinence and are based on good practice found in the community. Offenders in custody are subject to drug testing and usually receive a range of interventions and support aimed at reducing reoffending. It is practically difficult to pinpoint the precise effect of any one of these interventions on overall drug misuse or reoffending. Evaluations to date specifically of prison drug treatment programmes run in England and Wales are limited and have not always met the highest methodological standards. However, they suggest that accredited programmes can reduce reoffending (Ramsay, M. (ed) (2003) Prisoners’ Drug Use and Treatment: Seven Research Studies. Home Office Research Study 267. London: Home Office). International evidence supports these findings.

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many prisoners were participating in (a) maintenance and (b) abstinence-based drug treatment programmes on the latest date for which figures are available.

**Maria Eagle:** In 2008-09, 64,767 prisoners received a clinical drug intervention. Of these 45,135 received detoxification and 19,632 received a maintenance prescription for opioid dependency.

The table shows the numbers of commencements on accredited drug treatment programmes for the last period for which data are available. Data are not collected centrally on the number of individual prisoners enrolled on such programmes at any one time.

Although all accredited drug treatment programmes run in prisons aim ultimately for abstinence, the short duration programme (SDP) has been designed to be appropriate for prisoners undergoing clinical maintenance as well as those that remain abstinent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention type (2008-09)</th>
<th>Intervention starts (rounded to nearest 10)</th>
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<td>12-Step Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Therapeutic Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) programmes</td>
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867W

Written Answers
27 JANUARY 2010
Written Answers
868W

Intervention type (2008-09)

<table>
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<th>Intervention starts (rounded to nearest 10)</th>
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<td>Of which:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Prisons have in place a range of CBT accredited drug programmes, including: PASRO (Prisoner Addressing Substance Related Offending), STOP (Substance Treatment and Offending Programme), FOCUS (high security prisons only) and the Short Duration Programme.

**Prisons: Mother and Baby Units**

**Alan Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) how many women prisoners have given birth since April 2009; (2) how many women became pregnant while serving a prison sentence in the last year for which data is available.

**Maria Eagle:** Information on the number of women who have given birth in prison or became pregnant while serving a prison sentence is not collected centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost, as in order to provide this information staff would need to look at each individual’s record.

In addition, it would not be possible to guarantee the accuracy of the data about when women become pregnant as this would be reliant on information being provided by the prisoners themselves.

**Probation**

**Mr. David Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what steps he plans to take to increase the level of contact time between probation staff and offenders.

**Maria Eagle:** The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) is taking a number of actions to increase the amount of contact time between probation staff and offenders. These include:

- Allocating resources to the assessment and management of offenders according to the level of risk;
- As part of the Probation Trusts Programme all areas (including locally initiated mergers) have identified efficiencies through for example the reduction in management overheads, and development, of shared services, to the benefit of front line staffing levels;
- A national programme of specifying probation work, and benchmarking performance, to support the effective deployment of front line staff;
- Identifying opportunities for reducing bureaucracy and other demands currently placed on front-line staff; and
- Expanding the use of video conferencing to reduce the time probation staff spend travelling to interview prisoners.

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**

**Agriculture: Subsidies**

**Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what cross-compliance regulations in respect of single payments and the Integrated Administration and Control System scheme apply to turbines and related infrastructure built on farmland; and if he will make a statement.

**Lembit Öpik:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how cross-compliance regulations in respect of single payments and the Integrated Administration and Control System scheme apply to turbines and related infrastructure built on farmland; and if he will make a statement.

**Jim Fitzpatrick:** Any area of farm land occupied by a wind turbine, electricity pylon or other item of non-agricultural infrastructure would not form part of the agricultural area eligible to support claims under the single payment scheme. As such the standards of cross-compliance would not apply to these features.

**Chemicals: Animal Experiments**

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if he will bring forward proposals to require the chemical industry to minimise the number of animals used in testing covered by the provisions of the EU Regulation on the registration, evaluation and authorisation of chemicals.

**Dan Norris:** The Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) Regulation contains strong provisions to minimise the amount of animal testing by EU-based companies when compiling their substance registration dossiers. These require that animal tests be the last resort, with the use of non-animal test methods instead wherever possible, and prohibit the repetition and duplication of animal tests. REACH also requires that when preparing registration dossiers, data derived from animal tests must be shared between all members of a Substance Information Exchange Forum (SIEF) in order to achieve this. Where further tests are necessary to complete registrations for substances on the market in quantities of 10 tonnes or more per year, then proposals must be submitted to the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) for approval before any such tests are undertaken, so pre-emptive testing would be illegal. Part of this approval process involves a 45-day public consultation on the test proposals, so that third parties have the opportunity to provide information on the substance that would render the proposed animal tests unnecessary.

In order to help companies address the issue of using animal tests when preparing registration dossiers, a short guidance note has been published on the DEFRA website:

www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/chemicals/reach/index.htm

which draws attention to these legal requirements, and suggests a number of possible non-animal alternative test methods including chemical grouping and read-across approaches, use of (Quantitative) Structural Activity Relationships (QSARs), and in vitro tests. Information can also be provided by way of a weight of evidence...
assessment, and certain tests specified in REACH may also be waived where it can be shown that exposure of humans or the environment to a substance is insignificant or absent.

It is important that companies remember that they should not be undertaking animal testing for REACH registration before their test proposals are approved by ECHA as being necessary. Companies should actively look for alternatives to animal testing wherever possible, and refer to the REACH Test Methods Regulation for what is available for use. Other internationally-valid non-animal test methods that do not appear in the Test Methods Regulation may also be used. However, where animal tests are the last resort, then companies should use the most refined method possible to reduce the numbers of animals involved.

ECHA has published detailed guidance on data-sharing and information requirements for the REACH registration process on its website, and the UK REACH Competent Authority (provided by the Health and Safety Executive) is also shortly to publish a guidance leaflet for industry on animal testing and use of alternatives on its website. This will explain the REACH testing obligations, help with identifying the most appropriate test method, with information on the various available non-animal test methods.

**Departmental Assets**

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what departmental assets are planned to be sold in (a) 2009-10 and (b) 2010-11; what the (i) description and (ii) book value is of each such asset; what the expected revenue is from each such sale; and by what date each asset is expected to have been sold.

**Dan Norris:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Twickenham (Dr. Cable) on 11 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 676W.

The Government have stated its intention to realise £16 billion from asset and property sales over the period by 2013-14. On 7 December the Government published the “Operational Efficiency Programme: Asset Portfolio”, setting out the next steps for the delivery of the £16 billion by 2013-14.

DEFRA has approximately £6.9 million (book value £10.2 million) of surplus properties for disposal in 2009-10, arising from the sale of land, residential and office premises. Anticipated disposals from land and laboratory premises are expected to realise £9 million in 2010-11 (book value £8 million).

Not all future asset disposals have been finalised, and for reasons of commercial sensitivity it is not possible to identify publicly each asset to be disposed of or to set out deadlines for sales as this can have a negative impact on values.

DEFRA’s latest published asset management strategy is available on its website at:

The strategy is currently being updated following the creation of the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) and the transfer of certain functions from DEFRA to DECC, and it is planned that the new version of the strategy will be published in the spring.

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**Departmental Carbon Emissions**

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether (a) his Department and (b) its agencies plan to sign up to the 10:10 campaign to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in 2010.

**Dan Norris:** DEFRA has a long term commitment to reduce its carbon emissions. Performance in 2008-09 shows that DEFRA’s carbon emissions from offices has reduced by 18 per cent. on the 1999-2000 baseline, exceeding the 2010 Sustainable Operations on the Government Estate (SOGE) target by 6 per cent. Since 2006-07 the Department has delivered a reduction of 4 per cent. carbon emissions (year on year) from its estate through its Carbon Reduction Programme.

DEFRA’s achievements have been recognised through the award of the Carbon Trust Standard in May 2008, where the Department was one of the first 12 pathfinder organisations to receive the award. This built upon the earlier success of the Department achieving Energy Efficiency Accreditation Scheme (EEAS) status in July 2007. Both of these awards clearly demonstrate that DEFRA has an ongoing commitment to long term, year on year carbon emissions reductions.

The Department is expecting to continue to deliver significant year on year savings, anticipated at as much as 6 per cent. year on year.

A strategic long term investment plan allows the delivery of projects which provide long term benefits through reducing energy demand and minimising the need to reinvest in the short to medium term. To disrupt these long term plans in order to achieve 10:10 would impact negatively on DEFRA’s ability to achieve its long term goals and would not deliver value for money. However, the combination of DEFRA’s long term plans, a minimum 6 per cent. reduction in 2010 and a short term call to action all constitute a credible contribution to tackling climate change.

In light of the above, achieving a 10 per cent. saving across the DEFRA Estate in a single year would require my Department to divert significant funds from its long term delivery plan; therefore The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and its Executive Agencies have not signed up to the 10:10 campaign.

**Departmental Information and Communications Technology**

**Adam Afriyie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on what pay band his Department’s Chief Information Officer (CIO) is employed; whether the CIO is employed on a fixed-term or permanent contract; and what the size is of the budget for which the CIO is responsible in the period 2009-10.

**Dan Norris:** DEFRA’s chief information officer is employed as a senior civil servant (SCS-Contractor) on a fixed term contract basis. The size of the budget the CIO is responsible for is £76 million for 2009-10.
**Departmental Internet**

**Grant Shapps**: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs which websites his Department’s staff are blocked from accessing on departmental networked computers. [310054]

**Dan Norris**: The Department has blocked access to: www.facebook.com

There are also a number of other websites that the Department blocks for reasons of IT security. The security policies informing these IT security decisions are in line with HMG Security Policy Framework (SPF) http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/spf.aspx

**Grant Shapps**: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much was paid in such bonuses in each such year.

**Dan Norris**: An element of DEFRA’s overall pay award is allocated to non-consolidated variable pay related to performance. These payments are used to drive high performance and form part of the pay award for members of staff who demonstrate exceptional performance, for example by exceeding targets set or meeting challenging objectives.

Non-consolidated variable pay awards are funded from within existing pay bill controls, and have to be re-earned each year against pre-determined targets and, as such, do not add to future pay bill costs. The percentage of the pay bill set aside for performance-related awards for the SCS is based on recommendations from the independent Senior Salaries Review Body.

The following table details the number and the total amount of non-consolidated variable pay awards awarded under DEFRA’s standard pay and performance management process for the three most recent performance years for which the relevant payments have been published in the Department’s accounts.

For DEFRA, the data cover staff at grade 6 and below in core-DEFRA and those Executive agencies covered by the core-Department’s terms and conditions i.e. Animal Health, Veterinary Medicines Directorate and the Marine and Fisheries Agency. It also includes senior civil servants in core-DEFRA and its Executive agencies (Animal Health, Veterinary Medicines Directorate, Marine and Fisheries Agency, Rural Payments Agency, Veterinary Laboratories Agency, Centre for the Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science and the Central Science Laboratory—which is now part of the Food and Environment Research Agency, which was created on 1 April 2009.

For those Executive agencies which operate delegated pay arrangements (Rural Payments Agency (RPA), Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA), Centre for the Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) and the Central Science Laboratory (CSL)—which is now part of the Food and Environment Research Agency, which was created on 1 April 2009 the data cover staff at grade 6 and below only.

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**Departmental Pay**

**Grant Shapps**: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many (a) year-end and (b) in-year bonuses were paid to officials in his Department in each of the last three years; and how much was paid in such bonuses in each such year. [307099]

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**Dan Norris**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Number of staff who received a non-consolidated performance payment</th>
<th>Total amount of payments (£)</th>
<th>Wages and salaries for the year (£)</th>
<th>Non-consolidated performance payments as a percentage of wages and salaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEFRA</td>
<td>2,395</td>
<td>3,171,792</td>
<td>294,379,000</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VLA</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>39,120</td>
<td>39,485,000</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPA</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>243,072</td>
<td>88,093,000</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEFAS</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>566,766</td>
<td>16,881,000</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSL</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>176,901</td>
<td>21,703,000</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Performance year 2006-07**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Number of staff who received a non-consolidated performance payment</th>
<th>Total amount of payments (£)</th>
<th>Wages and salaries for the year (£)</th>
<th>Non-consolidated performance payments as a percentage of wages and salaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEFRA</td>
<td>1,959</td>
<td>3,325,664</td>
<td>252,501,000</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VLA</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>45,327</td>
<td>40,846,000</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPA</td>
<td>813</td>
<td>425,417</td>
<td>99,667,000</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEFAS</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>610,125</td>
<td>19,203,000</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSL</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>253,049</td>
<td>22,127,000</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The costs shown for “Content Provision” are essentially the staff cost for the central team with responsibility for updating and maintaining DEFRA’s websites. An element of their work is “Strategy and Planning”, but the costs of such work cannot be easily separated.

This central team is also responsible for the DEFRA intranet, and the staff costs for the external DEFRA website alone cannot be readily disaggregated.

The costs shown in 2008-09 and 2009-10 under “Design and Build” and “Testing and Evaluation” are the costs for the project to redevelop the DEFRA website. The website was relaunched in September 2009, the first major website redesign since DEFRA came into being in 2001. The total cost of this work, spread over two years, was £181,378.

“Hosting and Infrastructure” of the DEFRA website—as well as a range of IT applications—are provided as part of DEFRA’s overall IT service provision, and the costs of this aspect of website maintenance cannot be readily disaggregated.

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**Departmental Pay**

**Grant Shapps**: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many (a) year-end and (b) in-year bonuses were paid to officials in his Department in each of the last three years; and how much was paid in such bonuses in each such year.
Incidents of fly-tipping cleared from private land by the landowner are not recorded.

### Garages and Petrol Stations: Contamination

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what duties there are on the owner of a petrol forecourt site to decontaminate the site once its use as a petrol station has ceased; and if he will make a statement.  

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate he has made of the monetary value of bonuses awarded to officials of the Rural Payments Agency in each of the last five years. 

**Dan Norris:** There are various measures which create duties to address contamination, depending on the circumstances of the case. Contaminated land legislation (Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990) makes persons liable for the cost of remediating a site if they caused or knowingly permitted it to become contaminated land. This allows direct action to be taken by regulators, and it creates an incentive for operators to avoid causing contamination in the first place, and to clean it up voluntarily if it occurs. For contamination caused after 1 March 2009, the Environmental Damage (Prevention and Remediation) Regulations 2009 would also be applicable in similar circumstances and to achieve similar objectives to Part 2A of the 1990 Act.

Legislation also directly applies to prevent contamination during the operation of a petrol station. Under the Groundwater Regulations 2009 there is a code of practice to prevent hazardous substances from reaching groundwater from underground tanks, such as those at petrol stations. The Environment Agency can serve a notice on the operator if it is likely that the code of practice is not being complied with. The Agency also has powers under the Anti-pollution Works Notices Regulations 1999 to serve notices where there is a threat of pollution to controlled waters or to require clean up where pollution of controlled waters has occurred.

Where a petrol forecourt is operated under a rental agreement, there may be further duties on the operator to deal with contamination as an indirect result of legislation.

### Rural Payments Agency: Pay

**Tim Farron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate he has made of the monetary value of bonuses awarded to officials of the Rural Payments Agency in each of the last five years.

**Dan Norris:** The payments made for non-consolidated performance payments awarded to employees at the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) in the last five years is shown in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Actual payment totals (£)</th>
<th>Percentage of the RPA paybill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>281,000</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>252,000</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>302,000</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>452,000</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>559,000</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**CEFAS** has relatively higher non consolidated pay when compared as a percentage against the DEFRA network, because they have specifically worked to structure a total rewards package with a greater non consolidated pay element, that is directly performance based and must be re-earned each year. This places a greater weight between performance and reward and while their percentage of non consolidated pay is larger than others this is more than offset by their consolidated pay (i.e. salaries) which is low relative to the DEFRA network and Whitehall.

### Departmental Training

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many sessions of media training were organised for Ministers in his Department in each of the last three years.  

**Dan Norris:** Training is provided to Ministers on a range of issues including handling the media, as part of their induction and continuing development in order to carry out their duties effectively under the ministerial code.

### Fly Tipping: Kent

**Damian Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate he has made of the number of incidents of fly-tipping in (a) Ashford constituency and (b) Kent in each of the last five years. 

**Dan Norris:** The number of incidents of fly-tipping recorded on the Flycapture database by (a) Ashford borough council and (b) all local authorities in Kent in each of the last five years is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ashford borough council</th>
<th>Kent local authorities (including Ashford)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>31,298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>1,177</td>
<td>38,878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>1,450</td>
<td>38,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>1,177</td>
<td>27,702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>1,123</td>
<td>21,038</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of incidents of fly-tipping recorded as having been dealt with by local authorities on the Flycapture database is published annually on the DEFRA website:
RPA performance payments are paid to RPA staff working on all aspects of the agency’s work which includes managing and making payments for some 60 schemes, making payments on a further 30 schemes delivered by others, carrying out inspections and operating the British Cattle Movement Service under two reward schemes:

(a) Staff who have achieved the required performance assessment following the end of year individual performance review. This arrangement is negotiated each year with the trade union side; and

(b) A special recognition scheme was introduced in 2007 and exists to recognise instances of people making additional or outstanding contributions to RPA’s work, giving an employee up to £500 for an outstanding performance.

These figures include non-consolidated performance payments paid to senior civil servants (SCS). The percentage of the pay bill set aside for performance-related awards for the SCS is based on recommendations from the independent senior salaries review body.

Wind Power: Planning Permission

Lembit Öpik: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether the Environment Agency receives payment from money submitted as payment with wind farm planning applications to cover the cost of its contribution to the planning process; and if he will make a statement.

The Environment Agency does not receive any payment from money submitted as payment for wind farm planning applications, or from any other planning applications. The Environment Agency is a statutory consultee in the planning process, and this activity is funded by its grant funding from central Government.

Aviation: Security

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what security checks will apply in respect of passengers who refuse to be scanned by an airport full body scanner.

Passengers who are selected for scanning, but decline to use the scanner, will not be permitted to fly.

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport whether full body scanners will be used to scan children at airports.

Paul Clark: We are confident that the introduction of these scanners is a proportionate and necessary next step in enhancing security of passengers, and that their use is consistent with the Protection of Children Act 1978. We will therefore be expecting children to use the scanners.

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what assessment he has made of the implications for human rights of the use of full body scanners at airports; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Clark: The Department for Transport is working with the industry and other Government Departments to produce a code of practice for the operation of body scanners. This will include an assessment of the legal, health and privacy issues surrounding their deployment.

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport for how long images obtained by airport full body scanners will be stored.

Paul Clark: The equipment being deployed in airports does not have the capacity to save an image in any form. Images are viewed remotely from the machine, and are deleted immediately after analysis. Images cannot be recovered at a later date from the machines.

Car Sharing: Road Traffic

Norman Baker: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what modelling the Government has done on (a) changes in car sharing rates and (b) the effect such changes have on road congestion; and if he will place in the Library a copy of the outcomes of such modelling.

Mr. Khan: The Department for Transport has not modelled changes in car sharing rates. However, research was published by DFT in 2005 “Smarter Choice—Changing the way we travel” (Cairns S, Stoman L, Newson C, Anable J, Kirkbride A and Goodwin P, 2004). This research analysed the potential impact of car sharing on commuting vehicle trips and vehicle mileage. The report is available at:

http://dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/smarterchoices/ctwwt/

Employment Tribunals Service

Grant Shapps: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport how many industrial tribunals relating to his Department there have been in each of the last five years; and what the cost to his Department was of such tribunals in each year.

Chris Mole: The total number of employment tribunal cases recorded in each of the last five years and the costs are broken down in the following table and also include figures to date for 2009-10:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Cost (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>86,917.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>312,679.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>156,513.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7,602.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20,196.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>598,909.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency is unable to provide the cost element to this question as the information is not held centrally and to obtain it will incur disproportionate costs. For the same reason the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency is unable to provide costs for 2004-05.
First Capital Connect: Industrial Disputes

Anne Main: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport on what date the Secretary of State was first notified of the recent industrial action by drivers on the First Capital Connect Thameslink route. [312504]

Chris Mole: The Secretary of State was first notified of the recent concerted action by drivers on the First Capital Connect Thameslink route on 26 October 2009.

Anne Main: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport whether the recent industrial action by drivers on the First Capital Connect Thameslink route constitutes a force majeure event under the terms of the franchise agreement with First Capital Connect. [312505]

Chris Mole: The Secretary of State was satisfied that in this instance the concerted action that was taken by the drivers on the First Capital Connect Thameslink route was industrial action for the purposes of schedule 10.4 of the franchise agreement, and therefore a force majeure event.

Anne Main: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what meetings Ministers in his Department have had with the management of First Capital Connect to discuss industrial action by drivers on the First Capital Connect Thameslink route in the last three months.

Chris Mole: The Secretary of State met with the managing director of First Capital Connect on 12 November 2009 to discuss the industrial action. Officials in the Department for Transport have also met with First Capital Connect on numerous occasions, within this period.

The Secretary of State has also spoken with the chief executive of First Group about First Capital Connect’s performance.

Heathrow Airport

Norman Baker: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what modelling the Government has done on the economic and environmental effects of a third runway at Heathrow; and if he will place a copy in the Library of the outcomes of such modelling. [313003]

Paul Clark: The Department for Transport published its latest assessment of the economic and environmental effects of a third runway at Heathrow in “Adding Capacity at Heathrow Airport—Impact Assessment” in January 2009. The publication coincided with the Secretary of State for Transport’s announcement of his policy decisions on the future development of Heathrow airport. Copies of the published documents, and earlier technical reports on the environmental modelling, have all been deposited in the Library.

Immobilisation of Vehicles

Mr. Amess: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport how many (a) cars, (b) vans, (c) lorries and (d) motorcycles of each make were (i) clamped and (ii) crushed in each of the last three years; in what circumstances and under what legislative authority such vehicles are (A) clamped and (B) crushed; and if he will make a statement. [313149]

Paul Clark: We do not keep information on the number of vehicles clamped or crushed by vehicle type. However, the following table provides the total number of vehicles wheel clamped; disposed of by crushing or via auction and immobilised in each of the last three calendar years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Clamped</th>
<th>Crushed or auctioned</th>
<th>Immobilised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>113,288</td>
<td>37,758</td>
<td>13,481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>124,428</td>
<td>38,531</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>108,385</td>
<td>39,872</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*May to December.*


Immobilisation of Vehicles: South East

Mr. Amess: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport how many cars have been impounded in (a) Southend West constituency, (b) Essex, (c) the Metropolitan Police area of London and (d) England and Wales in each year since 2005; and at what total cost in each case in each such year. [313277]

Paul Clark: It is not possible to provide the number of cars impounded or information by geographical area. A contract is in place to provide a wheel-clamping service, which may lead to impounding, on vehicles in the United Kingdom. The contract is on a fixed price basis for the entire service. Neither costs of impounding individual vehicles, nor costs of the operation within geographical locations are available.

London and South Eastern Railway: Snow and Ice

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what discussions his Department has had with Southeastern Railway on recent disruptions to its service caused by snow and ice. [312667]

Chris Mole: The Department for Transport communicated regularly with Southeastern and Network Rail during the recent service disruption caused by snow and ice. The Department was informed of the services that would be operating, taking into account the availability of infrastructure and trains, and challenged Southeastern to run as full a service as possible. The Department is now collecting information on the service that was offered to understand whether or not any improvements can be made to rail services during future adverse weather.
Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties

Mr. Goodwill: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what the estimated average cost is of processing a vehicle excise duty application (a) at a post office, (b) by post and (c) online.

Paul Clark: The average cost for processing a vehicle excise duty application during 2009-10 is as follows:
(a) Post Office: £1.47
(b) Not available
(c) 95 pence.

Railways: Hunting

Dr. Stoate: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport how many and what percentage of scheduled trains operated by each franchised train operating company in England (a) were cancelled and (b) arrived late in each of the last five years.

Chris Mole: The day to day running of the railways, and their safety is a matter for rail operators and the Office of Rail Regulation as the independent rail safety regulator.

The incident was included in the daily performance log submitted to the Department by the train operator involved. Aside from this, the Department is not involved in operational incidents of this nature (animals on the line).

Railways: Kent

Dr. Stoate: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what steps his Department has taken following the incident on 31 December 2009 in which six foxhounds belonging to the Duke of Beaufort’s hunt were killed by a high-speed passenger train near Wootton Bassett; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Mole: The Secretary of State has now received High Speed Two’s report which he is considering. Both the Secretary of State and his ministerial colleagues continue to meet regularly with key stakeholders to discuss a range of transport issues, including high speed rail.

Railways: Standards

Dr. Stoate: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport how many and what percentage of scheduled trains operated by each franchised train operating company in England (a) were cancelled and (b) arrived late in each of the last five years.

Chris Mole: The information requested is held by Network Rail but is also given in the following tables. The tables give the information for each of the last five complete financial years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Train operating company</th>
<th>Trains cancelled</th>
<th>Trains late at destination</th>
<th>Percentage cancelled</th>
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<td>13,969</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>14.3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Commuter trains are classified as ‘late’ if they arrive at destination five or more minutes later than their scheduled arrival time. Intercity trains are classified as late if they arrive 10 or more minutes later than the scheduled arrival time.

Roads: Royal Mail

**Damian Green:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport how many requests the Highways Agency has received from Royal Mail to clear the roads in (a) Ashford and (b) Kent in the last two years. [313511]

**Chris Mole:** The Highways Agency is responsible for the Strategic Road Network. It has not received any requests from Royal Mail to clear local authority or strategic roads either in Ashford or Kent in the last two years.

Rolling Stock: Construction

**Jim Cousins:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport when he expects to announce the location of the facility to assemble the super express Agility 881W
train; what locations are under consideration; and how many such trains he expects to comprise the super express fleet. [313255]

Chris Mole: The location of the manufacturing facility is a matter for Hitachi. The company has a number of locations under consideration, and I understand that it will make an announcement shortly. The super express fleet will comprise up to 1,400 rail vehicles.

Southend Airport

Mr. Amess: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport (1) what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the expansion of Southend airport on the local community in respect of (a) road traffic and (b) noise in the last three years; and if he will make a statement; [313145]

(2) which (a) individuals and (b) organisations he consulted regarding the expansion of Southend airport; if he will place in the Library copies of the representations he has received to date on this matter; and if he will make a statement; [313146]

(3) what discussions (a) he, (b) Ministers in his Department and (c) departmental officials have had with representatives of BAA plc on proposals for the expansion of Southend airport in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [313151]

Paul Clark: The Department for Transport has not consulted on the proposals to expand Southend airport, nor has it made any assessment of the effect of the proposed expansion on the local community in respect of road traffic or noise.

There have been no discussions between the Department for Transport and BAA on proposals for the expansion of Southend airport. Southend airport was purchased in December 2008 by Stobart Group Ltd. from Regional Airports Ltd.

“The Future of Air Transport” White Paper identified Southend airport as having a valuable role in meeting local demand and the potential to contribute to regional economic development. The White Paper supported further development in principle, subject to relevant environmental considerations. On 20 January Southend council made a decision to support the planning application for expansion proposals at Southend airport. The council’s recommendation has now been submitted to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for him to consider whether to call in the application for his own determination.

SCOTLAND

Departmental Official Engagements

Mr. MacNeil: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland at what speaking events (a) he and (b) his Under-Secretary of State has been represented by (i) a special adviser and (ii) another elected official from the Scotland Office since October 2007; for what reasons John McTernan withdrew from the Reform Scotland debate scheduled for 4 February 2010; on what date his Department informed Reform Scotland that he was unavailable to attend that debate; by what form of communication his Department informed Reform Scotland that John McTernan would take part in that debate; on what date this communication was sent; and on what date his Department informed Reform Scotland that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State would attend the event. [313580]

Mr. Jim Murphy: The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (PuSofS) and I have never been represented by a special adviser at a speaking event and the Scotland Office does not have elected officials.

The Scotland Office confirmed with Reform Scotland on 18 January 2010 that PuSofS would attend this debate if timing of parliamentary business allowed for this.

Departmental Publications

Mr. MacNeil: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what the (a) total, (b) production and (c) staff cost was of the preparation and publication of his Department’s White Paper on Scotland’s Future in the United Kingdom; how many copies were printed; and to whom they were distributed. [313053]

Ann McKechin: The production cost of Scotland’s Future in the United Kingdom, including typesetting, printing, binding, mailing and TSO fees was £5,968.39. The preparation of the White Paper was the work of civil servants employed in the Scotland Office as part of their normal duties and therefore incurred no additional cost. A total of 1,055 copies were printed; these were divided between the Scotland Office, Parliament and TSO. Of these 750 were used by the Scotland Office for laying in Parliament, distribution to stakeholders and internal departmental use.

Fuel: Taxation

Mr. MacNeil: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what (a) written correspondence, (b) electronic correspondence, (c) meetings and (d) other communications he had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on (i) the Scottish economy and (ii) road fuel duty taxation between August 2008 and March 2009. [310784]

Ann McKechin: My right hon. Friend is in regular contact with a range of Cabinet Ministers on issues affecting Scotland, and has been since his appointment in October 2008.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL

Arrest Warrants

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Solicitor-General if she will lift the European Arrest Warrant which has led to the detention of Wansanatha Bulugah Aitya in Frankfurt. [312772]

The Solicitor-General: The European Arrest Warrant was executed on 27 December 2009 and the extradition process is under way in Germany.
A decision in an individual case not to pursue an extradition request would in any event be made by the relevant prosecuting agency, not by me or any other Minister.

**Royal Family: Wills**

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Solicitor-General in which official capacity the then Attorney-General acted in discussions with (a) Buckingham Palace, (b) the then Senior President of the Family Division and (c) Farrers in respect of the creation of a practice for the sealing of royal wills.\[312448\]

**The Solicitor-General:** In discussing the practice for the sealing of royal wills, the Attorney-General acts in his capacity as Attorney-General, acting in the public interest.

**OLYMPICS**

**Departmental Sick Leave**

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Minister for the Olympics how many working days were lost due to (a) illness and (b) stress of employees within her Office in each of the last three years.\[309918\]

**Tessa Jowell:** My office is staffed by employees of the Cabinet Office. departmental reports are published quarterly giving details of sickness absences, and these are available at:

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/reports/absence.aspx

Copies are also available in the Libraries of the House.

Information for absences from my office can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

**Olympic Games 2012: Contracts**

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Minister for the Olympics how many businesses based in (a) England, (b) Scotland, (c) Wales, (d) Northern Ireland and (e) locations outside the UK have (i) registered with the London 2012 Business Network and (ii) secured Olympic contracts at each location.\[312401\]

**Ian Lucas:** I have been asked to reply.

The answer to the question is as follows:

The London 2012 Business Network hosts CompeteFor. CompeteFor is the chosen website of London 2012 for the publication of Games-related contract opportunities. Numbers of companies registered on CompeteFor and contracts awarded to CompeteFor suppliers are as follows;

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<th>Registrations</th>
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<tr>
<td>London</td>
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<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>2,089</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>5,575</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>17,396</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>5,829</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>7,565</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Region Registrations Contracts awarded to CompeteFor suppliers
Yorkshire 4,922 20
Northern Ireland 1,109 1
Scotland 2,806 7
Wales 2,200 2
Non-UK 4,376 3
Total 100,556 707

It is important to note that these are the number of awarded contracts that have been recorded on the site by buyers and there will be other contracts that have been awarded, but not yet recorded. In total 4,700 contracts have been placed on CompeteFor.

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Minister for the Olympics what the cost has been of maintaining the London 2012 Business Network in each year since its establishment.\[312402\]

**Ian Lucas:** I have been asked to reply.

The answer is as follows:

(a) CompeteFor cost £3.633 million to develop, which included concept development, specification, implementation and testing, and establishing the support structure.

(b) Running costs are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Contracts awarded to CompeteFor suppliers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 1 (December 2007 to March 2008)</td>
<td>220,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2 (April 2008 to March 2009)</td>
<td>1.241 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3 (April 2009 to March 2010)—projected at</td>
<td>1.241 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Olympic Games 2012: Illegal Immigrants**

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Minister for the Olympics (1) how many arrests have been made of illegal immigrants working on the Olympic site since construction began;\[305745\]

(2) what checks the Government makes to ensure that employees working on the Olympic site are entitled to work in the UK;\[305746\]

(3) whether any companies working on the Olympic site have been fined for the employment of illegal immigrants since construction began.\[305747\]

**Mr. Woolas:** I have been asked to reply.

Between 1 April 2009 and 10 December 2009, 49 people have been arrested attempting to gain employment, or working specifically at the Olympic park and athletes’ village sites, 40 of these were never actually employed at the sites.

Prior to April 2009, no data exclusively for arrests on the Olympic park site is available. Arrest figures collected between April 2008 and March 2009 are for projects in Stratford and the surrounding area, and include the Olympic park and Olympic village. Only an aggregate figure is available for this period and a total of 138 foreign nationals seeking to gain employment or working at these locations (including the Stratford City Westfield development) were arrested on suspicion of working in the UK without permission or presenting false documentation during this time.
These figures do not constitute part of National Statistics as they are based on internal management information. The information has not been quality assured under National Statistics protocols and should be treated as provisional and subject to change.

The responsibility for ensuring employees have the right to work in the UK rests with the employer. Since April 2008, UKBA staff have been working with the Olympic Delivery Authority and contractors to support the site security process of checking that people employed on the Olympic park and athletes village hold genuine identity documents and are legally entitled to work in the UK.

Three employers have been issued with Notices of Potential Liability for employing illegal workers and failing to carry out the appropriate checks to confirm that their employees are entitled to work in the UK. Two have been fined, one was found not to be liable.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Departmental Mobile Phones

Mr. Graham Stuart: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many (a) mobile telephones and (b) BlackBerrys were provided to (i) Ministers and (ii) special advisers in his Department since March 2009; and at what cost to the public purse.

Mr. Simon: The information is as follows:
My Department has:
(a) Mobile phones—three for our Ministers only.
(b) BlackBerry devices.
(i) Three for the Ministers
(ii) Two for special advisers
The total cost is £2361.02

Departmental Written Questions

David Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what average time his Department took to answer questions for (a) ordinary written answer and (b) written answer on a named day in the last 12 months.

Mr. Simon: Information on the average time taken to answer parliamentary questions is not readily available in the format requested and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Radio: Scotland

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what assessment has been made of the effects on rural communities in Scotland of ending FM/AM broadcasting in 2015.

Mr. Simon: There are no plans to end FM broadcasting in 2015.

Theatre: Young People

Mr. Hunt: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many tickets have been taken up under the A Night Less Ordinary scheme.

Margaret Hodge: Between February 2009 and November 2009, 121,742 tickets were taken up by young people under the 'A Night Less Ordinary' scheme.

Results from 1 December 2009 to 28 February 2010 will be made available in April.

DEFENCE

Armed Forces: Housing

Dr. Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many and what percentage of overseas (a) single living accommodation and (b) service family accommodation units are in each grade in each country.

Mr. Kevan Jones: Single living accommodation (SLA) is graded by its scale (this consists of a number of factors including size and amount of storage) as well as physical condition. The best available data indicates that as at October 2009, the following number and percentage of overseas SLA bed-spaces were at each grade:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2,146</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1,137</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gibraltar</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Atlantic Islands</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of world</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK (as at December 2008)</td>
<td>34,933</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19,498</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ The UK SLA figures, included for comparison purposes, are for the number of bed-spaces at each ‘condition grade’ rather than ‘Grade for Charge’.

Service family accommodation (SFA) is assessed for standard for condition (SfC), a measure of the physical condition of a property. The best available data indicates that as at October 2009, the following number and percentage of overseas SFA properties were at each SfC:
### Departmental Drinking Water

**Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department has spent on bottled drinking water in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement. [313185]

**Mr. Quentin Davies:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my noble Friend, the Minister for International Defence and Security, Baroness Taylor of Bolton, to the noble Lady, Baroness Warsi of Dewsbury, in another place on 19 May 2009, *Official Report, House of Lords*, column WA294.

### NATO

**Nick Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has made to the hon. Member for Ashfield on NATO’s (a) nuclear policy and (b) New Strategic Concept Group; and if he will make a statement. [313551]

**Mr. Bob Ainsworth:** My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon) has been appointed to the Group of Experts advising on NATO’s new Strategic Concept by Secretary-General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, in an independent capacity. Mr. Hoon is able to draw on support from the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on the full range of issues associated with this work.

### Trident Submarines

**Nick Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what his most recent assessment is of the likely effects on life extension of Vanguard-class submarines should continuous at-sea deterrence cease. [313549]

**Mr. Quentin Davies:** The Government remain committed to the policy of Continuous At Sea Deterrence, as set out in the 2006 White Paper “The Future of the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Deterrent” (Cm 6994). The 2006 White Paper indicated that it might be possible to extend the life of the current submarines by five years and these studies are ongoing, based on the operating posture of Continuous At Sea Deterrence.

### Warships: Portsmouth

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his review of the use of naval bases will include issues other than the relocation of Type 23 Frigates to Portsmouth; when the outcomes of the review will be published; and if he will make a statement. [312853]

**Mr. Quentin Davies:** As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced on 6 May 2009, *Official Report*, column 16WS, as part of work to consider the optimal base-porting arrangements for the less complex variants of the Future Surface Combatant (FSC), the Department would examine whether there is any case to change the base-porting of the Type 23 frigates. Under the Maritime Change Programme, key stakeholders, including representatives from Portsmouth and Plymouth city councils as well as naval base staff, are supporting Warwick university in developing a shared socio-economic model, which will help to greater understand the implications of any potential future change to warship base-porting arrangements at Portsmouth and Devonport.

The contiguous impact of three principal scenarios is to be initially investigated: the move of Trafalgar Class submarines from HM Naval Base Devonport to HM Naval Base Clyde; the decommissioning of Type 22 Frigates and any potential change to the current Type 23 base-porting arrangements. We aim to have this model ready in spring 2010 to help inform debate and decision making. The impact of any proposed base-porting changes across the Defence Lines of Development, including accommodation, support, personnel and infrastructure, will be also assessed during the decision making process.

Currently, no date has been agreed by when an announcement on any potential Type 23 base-porting arrangements will be made. As part of any future announcement, we will be able to confirm that there will be no base porting changes for around five years as we are committed to providing sufficient notice for Royal Navy personnel and their families and the wider community to plan for the future.

### Warships: Shipbuilding

**Dr. Julian Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the (a) Astute and (b) Military Afloat Reach and Sustainability programmes; and if he will make a statement. [313110]

**Mr. Quentin Davies** [holding answer 25 January 2010]:

The Major Projects Report 2009 reported delays to the Astute Class Programme which will lead to cost growth and reduction in planned submarine availability. Of the seven planned Astute Class submarines the first four boats have been ordered. Boat 1 (Astute) is currently undergoing an extensive programme of Sea Trials while Boats 2 to 4 (Ambush, Artful and Audacious) are in various stages of construction. Orders for long lead items for Boat 5 and the reactor core for Boat 6 have also been placed.
Mr. Michael Foster: The Department for International Development (DFID) is responsible for one non-departmental public body, the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSC). The CSC does not sell any information on a commercial basis to companies, individuals or other organisations.

Departmental Manpower

Mr. Philip Hammond: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many layers of management reporting from the most senior to the most junior there are in his Department; how many officials are employed in each such layer; and how much was spent on salaries and associated employment costs of staff at each such layer in the latest year for which information is available. [312832]

Mr. Michael Foster: The Department for International Development (DFID) has a senior civil service (SCS) structure consisting of four separate management grades. Below the SCS there are a further eight grades. The following table shows the total number of staff at each grade and their associated employment costs for the 2008-09 financial year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DFID grade</th>
<th>Traditional civil service grade</th>
<th>Number of staff1</th>
<th>Employment cost2 (£000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>Permanent Secretary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>312607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Director General</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>312608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>312609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy</td>
<td>Deputy Director</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>312610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Below the SCS

| A1 | G6 | 280 | 19,771 |
| A2 | G7 | 472 | 25,054 |
| A2(L) | G7 (Lower) | 133 | 5,853 |
| B1(D) | HEO(D)—Fast Stream | 51 | 1,773 |
| B1 | HEO | 268 | 10,009 |
| B2 | EO | 226 | 6,268 |
| C1 | AO | 161 | 3,554 |
| C2 | AA | 25  | 509   |

1 Staff numbers are on a headcount basis and include all DFID home civil service staff.
2 Employment cost consists of base salaries, overtime, performance related pay and includes the employer’s share of NI and pension contributions.
3 Cost withheld on confidentiality grounds as numbers in the grade are fewer than five.
4 Staff in these grades do not have line management responsibilities.

Developing Countries: Educational Visits

Mr. Lancaster: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much funding for school children to visit developing countries his Department allocated to pupils who attended National Challenge schools in (a) 2008-09 and (b) 2009-10; and if he will make a statement. [312735]
Mr. Michael Foster: The following table shows how much funding for school children to visit developing countries the Department for International Development (DFID) provided to National Challenge schools in 2008-09 and 2009-10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total UK bilateral aid</th>
<th>Total UK imputed multilateral aid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>5,370</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>3,900</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2009-10, fewer National Challenge schools applied for Global Curriculum Project grants compared to 2008-9. There were no unsuccessful applications from National Challenge schools in either 2008-09 or 2009-10.

This funding was provided through the Global School Partnerships programme implemented by the British Council.

Haiti: Overseas Aid

Mr. Dai Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what aid the Government has provided to Haiti in each year since 1997; for what purposes; and with which non-governmental organisations his Department has worked in Haiti over this period.

Mr. Michael Foster: The Department for International Development’s (DFID’s) aid expenditure is published annually in Statistics on International Development, which is available in the House Library and at: www.dfid.gov.uk

The relevant figures for Haiti are reproduced in the following table.


Mr. Dai Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much emergency aid has been provided to Haiti by the EU since the recent earthquake; and what discussions he has had at EU level on provision of aid.

Mr. Michael Foster: On 18 January I attended a meeting of EU Ministers responsible for development and humanitarian aid in Brussels to discuss the support that the EU would provide to Haiti in the short, medium and long term. At the meeting, the European Commission pledged €30 million for emergency assistance, along with €100 million for early rehabilitation. It was also indicated that some €200 million more will be available for longer term reconstruction. These contributions are in addition to the €92 million pledged by individual EU countries at the same meeting.

Since the earthquake struck on 12 January, the Secretary of State for international development has been in regular contact with the European Union High Representative Cathy Ashton together with other European Ministers.

Morocco: Overseas Aid

Daniel Kawczynski: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much aid his Department allocated to Morocco in (a) 2005, (b) 2006, (c) 2007, (d) 2008 and (e) 2009.

Mr. Michael Foster: The Department for International Development (DFID) does not have a bilateral programme in Morocco. In 2005-06 DFID spent £1 million on humanitarian assistance. No other bilateral aid has been allocated to Morocco between 2005 and 2009.

Details of DFID’s aid expenditure in developing countries are published in Statistics on International Development, which is available in the Library or online at: www.dfid.gov.uk

Overseas Aid

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent representations he has received on the policy of results-based aid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Thomas: I refer the hon. Member to the oral answer provided on 20 January 2010, Official Report, column 287-8, on results-based aid.

Sudan: Elections

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what funding his Department has made available to the government of (a) Sudan and (b) Southern Sudan to assist preparations for the forthcoming (i) elections and (ii) referendum.
Mr. Thomas: The Department for International Development (DFID) does not provide any funds directly to the Government of Sudan or the Government of Southern Sudan.

However, we have supported preparations for the election since 2007 through alternative means. DFID has spent £2.95 million providing training to the media and domestic observation groups as well as technical assistance on civic education and conflict management. We have also contributed £1.5 million to the Elections Basket Fund, managed by UN Development programme (UNDP). This fund provides support to all aspects of the electoral process, and continues the focus on civic and voter education and conflict prevention. On 6 January 2010, the UK announced a further £8.05 million contribution to the Elections Basket Fund bringing our total contribution to support elections in Sudan to £12.5 million.

The UK is looking into kind of what assistance we can provide to support the referendum due to take place in 2010. We continue to discuss the nature and co-ordination of this support with the parties in Sudan and all our international partners.

West Africa: Overseas Aid

Daniel Kawczyński: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will increase aid to Morocco, Tunisia and Libya to help these states tackle illegal immigration from Western Africa to Europe. [312849]

Mr. Michael Foster: The Department for International Development (DFID) aims to provide 90 per cent of funding to low income countries. Given the middle income status of the majority of North African countries they are not the focus for our bilateral aid programmes.

The UK works closely with EU member states and third country partners to tackle illegal immigration into the EU. Illegal immigration is an important issue for the UK and the EU and we continue to work with third country partners on a range of operational activities and agreements, both bilaterally and with our EU partners.

This work takes various forms such as the Assisted Voluntary Return scheme in Libya implemented by the International Organisation for Migration.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Caribbean: EU External Trade

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent progress has been made on individual Caribbean countries signing Economic Partnership Agreements with the EU; and what recent representations he has received on the fairness of such agreements. [309435]

Chris Bryant: The Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the CARIFORUM States and the European Community (EC) and its member states was signed by 13 CARIFORUM States on 15 October 2008: Antigua and Barbuda, The Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, The Commonwealth of Dominica, The Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, The Republic of Suriname and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The Republic of Guyana signed on 20 October 2008 and most recently The Republic of Haiti signed on 11 December 2009. With the signature of Haiti all 15 Caribbean states who chose to negotiate the EPA with the EC have now signed. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has not received any recent representations on the fairness of this agreement.

Departmental Carbon Emissions

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether (a) his Department and (b) each of its agencies have plans to sign up to the 10:10 campaign to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 10 per cent. in 2010. [311432]

Chris Bryant: Yes, on 8 February 2010, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary plans to sign up the UK operations of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and our Trading Fund, FCO Services, to the 10:10 campaign and will urge our network of overseas Posts to follow suit.

Departmental Disclosure of Information

David Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether (a) agencies and (b) non-departmental public bodies for which his Department is responsible sell information on a commercial basis to (i) companies or individuals in the private sector and (ii) other organisations. [313225]

Chris Bryant: Government Departments and agencies and non-departmental public bodies that have Crown status make most of their information available for free re-use under the Public Sector Information Click-Use Licence. Government trading funds, such as Foreign and Commonwealth Office Services, for which I have ministerial responsibility, are able under their trading fund status to charge for the services they provide in order to cover their costs. This covers information and its supply provided to other public bodies, commercial organisations and individuals. In common with other Government policy initiatives, some Foreign and Commonwealth Office information is published and sold as priced publications.

Departmental Mobile Phones

Mr. Graham Stuart: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many (a) mobile telephones and (b) Blackberries were provided to (i) Ministers and (ii) special advisers in his Department in 2009; and at what cost to the public purse. [313174]

Chris Bryant: At the start of 2009 a total of nine Blackberries and one car phone were in operation. Ministers had a total of six Blackberries and one car phone assigned between them. Special advisers were allocated a total of three Blackberries

After the reshuffle in June the total was reduced to four Blackberries, one mobile phone and one car phone.
Ministers had two Blackberries, one mobile phone and one car phone in use between them. Special advisers were allocated a total of two Blackberries.

Our billing cycle runs quarterly from 1 December to 30 November. Provision and usage of mobile phones for Ministers and special advisors over the 12-month period 1 December 2008 to 30 November 2009 has cost £7,263.56. This is broken down as follows:

- Provision and usage of mobile phones for Ministers: £6,246.53
- Provision and usage of mobile phones for special advisers: £1,017.03.

December 2009 expenditure will appear on our February statement.

**Diplomatic Service**

**Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs with reference to the evidence of the Permanent Under-Secretary to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee on 9 December 2009, HC 145-i, question 10, at which overseas posts local staff have (a) lost overtime payments, (b) been asked to take involuntary unpaid leave and (c) been asked to work four-day weeks. [311592]

**David Miliband:** Decisions about overtime, unpaid leave and working patterns for locally engaged staff are devolved to delegated budget holders and individual posts. Comprehensive information on these decisions are not held centrally and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

**Members: Correspondence**

**Sir Gerald Kaufman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he plans to reply to the letter of 9 December 2009 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. S Choudhry. [313438]

**David Miliband:** I replied to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton on 22 January 2010.

**Snow and Ice**

**Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of the human rights situation in the occupied Western Sahara which are deemed to be illegal. [312312]

**Chris Bryant:** This information is not held centrally and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

**Western Sahara**

**Mark Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what remedy exists under international law to remove settlements in the occupied Western Sahara which are deemed to be illegal. [312362]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** The Government see the status of the disputed territory of Western Sahara as undetermined and continue to believe that progress towards a negotiated solution to the dispute, providing for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, is best achieved under the auspices of the UN. Therefore, any issues relating to residence and property rights will need to be considered in this context.

**Western Sahara: Human Rights**

**Mark Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the human rights situation in Western Sahara; and what steps he is taking to assist in improvements to the human rights situation in that territory. [312312]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** Officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London and our embassy in Rabat visited Layounne in December 2009 to assess the situation. A similar visit was also carried out in March 2009 to the refugee camps in Tindouf (Algeria) by an official from our embassy in Algiers. We will continue our programme of visits and our embassy in Rabat is developing links with Moroccan and Sahrawi non-governmental organisations who work on the dispute.

The Government believe that greater openness and transparency on human rights by all the parties to the dispute would create a significantly better environment for political dialogue through the auspices of the UN. We support the call by the UN Secretary-General, in his latest report, for the parties to remain engaged in a continuous and constructive dialogue with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and to make progress on the human dimension of the conflict.

**HOME DEPARTMENT**

**Antisocial Behaviour**

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department with reference to the answer of 27 October 2009, Official Report, column 284W, on antisocial behaviour, what the names are of the expert practitioners on the action squad. [303784]

**Alan Johnson:** The antisocial behaviour squad is a group of established practitioners working with our ASB local delivery managers to ensure that antisocial behaviour is effectively tackled. It is made up of 66 skilled practitioners, drawn from a broad range of expertise and specialisms including the police, councils and housing organisations, with national coverage which can be called upon at short notice to help local areas deliver the package of measures I announced on 13 October 2009.

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department with reference to the answer of 27 October 2009, Official Report, column 283W, on antisocial behaviour orders, how many antisocial behaviour orders were breached following the imposition of a parenting order in the latest period for which figures are available. [303785]

**Alan Johnson:** Data collected centrally by my Department on breaches of antisocial behaviour orders (ASBOs) cover the period to the end of 2007 (latest currently...
available). ASBO breach data compiled by my Department do not include details of whether defendants proven in court to have breached their ASBO were subject to either an individual support order or a parenting order. This information could only be ascertained by examination of individual court files, which could be achieved only at disproportionate cost.

**Borders: Personal Records**

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether an automated authority to carry capability will be specified in his Department’s contract with Trusted Borders for services relating to the e-borders programme.

Mr. Woolas: The automated authority to carry capability did not form part of the core services in the e-Borders contract signed on 14 November 2007. However, it was included as an agreed option within the contract, as a potential future service.

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent progress has been made on the implementation of the e-borders programme; whether the programme met its project milestones in the latest period for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Woolas: The project milestone for processing 100 million annualised passenger movements per year, has been met by the e-Borders Programme.

The programme has not yet achieved the milestone for processing 60 per cent. of all passenger journeys into and out of the UK.

Currently, e-Borders is checking between 45 and 50 per cent,¹ of all passenger movements.

¹ This figure is subject to verification by statisticians.

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent assessment he has made of the level of compliance by airlines with the data requirements of the e-borders programme; and when he expects all airlines to implement that programme.

Mr. Woolas: Currently 111 carriers are providing data to the e-Borders system, covering approximately 2,454 routes.

It is expected that all commercial airlines will be compliant by the end of December 2010, in line with the Prime Minister’s statement of 20 January.

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent progress has been made on the implementation of the e-borders Programme; and when he expects to roll out.

Mr. Woolas: It is expected that all commercial airlines will be compliant by the end of December 2010, in line with the Prime Minister’s statement of 20 January.

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It is expected that all commercial airlines will be compliant by the end of December 2010, in line with the Prime Minister’s statement of 20 January.

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department expects to meet its target of capturing 100 million passenger movements through passenger name record checks; and how many such movements have been captured to date.

Mr. Woolas: We have met our target to capture the travel document information (TDI) for 100 million passenger movements.

To date, through the e-Borders system and its pilot project Semaphore, TDI data have been processed on over 147 million passengers travelling to and from the UK, at an annualised rate of over 100 million passenger movements per year.

e-Borders expects to capture 100 million passenger name record (PNR) movements into and out of the UK by 2013.

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent progress has been made on the inclusion of the category of other passenger information in the e-borders programme.

Mr. Woolas: Other passenger information (OPI) is known within the aviation industry as passenger name record (PNR).

OPI collection will be rolled out on a phased approach, with particular focus on higher risk routes first. The e-Borders/Semaphore system is already collecting OPI data on a voluntary basis and includes 121 carriers on 76 routes.

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent estimate he has made of the cost of implementing the authority to carry element of the e-borders programme.

Mr. Woolas: Following a limited trial last year and the Prime Minister’s recent statement on security and border protection, we are examining the options for preventing people travelling to the United Kingdom. No recent estimate has been made of the cost of implementing an authority to carry scheme through the e-Borders Programme.

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has plans to increase the number of security checks on (a) outbound and (b) transit passenger movements carried out by the UK Border Agency.

Mr. Woolas: UK Border Agency officers carry out a range of intelligence-led checks on outbound and transit passengers. More than 50 per cent. of the data analysed by our e-Borders system relate to people who are leaving British ports. This will increase as e-Borders continues to roll out.

Following the Prime Minister’s recent statement on security and border protection, we are examining the options for strengthening our checks further.

**British Nationality**

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what regulations govern the re-admission to the UK of a UK national who has taken US citizenship but whose citizenship has been revoked upon deportation from the United States.

Mr. Woolas [holding answer 25 January 2010]: All passengers, including deportees, who claim to be British nationals, must be able to demonstrate this on arrival in the UK. This is normally achieved by presentation of a valid travel document, confirming their nationality and identity. The requirement is irrespective of any other nationality currently or previously held by the passenger.

British nationals are not subject to immigration control; however, all arriving passengers are checked against the Watchlist. In certain circumstances, their arrival in the UK may be referred to other law enforcement agencies, for further action.
Community Safety Accreditation Schemes

Chris Huhne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in each area have been approved by the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme since it was introduced. [302192]

Alan Johnson: Community Safety Accreditation Schemes allow Chief Officers to designate limited powers to employees of organisations which contribute towards community safety and tackling antisocial behaviour (ASB) such as park wardens, train operators and private security guards. These powers enhance the contribution of people in roles that are already concerned with keeping communities safe; and mean that there are more people on the streets with powers to tackle and not tolerate ASB.

The Home Office does not hold the information requested centrally. In order to provide an answer, all police forces that have operated a scheme would have to be asked to provide figures and this could be done only at disproportionate cost. The Home Office does conduct an annual audit of persons accredited by each police force. This is a snapshot of accredited persons at one time and does not represent all people accredited over time. Figures for accredited persons in the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency are collected separately as theirs is a specialist role with a single power granted to stop vehicles for testing. The last published figures, for 2008, are set out in the following table. The 2009 CSAS audit was published on the Home Office website on 15 December 2009 and can be accessed at:


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Force area</th>
<th>Accredited persons (non-VOSA)</th>
<th>VOSA accredited persons</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>British Transport Police</td>
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<td>24</td>
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<td>Cleveland</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumbria</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
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<td>Lincolnshire</td>
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</table>

Counter-terrorism

Mr. Lancaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many journalists have been arrested under counter-terrorism legislation for taking photographs since 2000; and whether any such journalists have been prosecuted. [312736]

Mr. Hanson: The Home Office collates statistics showing the number of individuals convicted of offences related to terrorism. These were included in a bulletin published on 13 May 2009 (Statistics on Terrorism Arrests and Outcomes Great Britain 11 September 2001 to 31 March 2008), and subsequently on 26 November 2009 (Operation of police powers under the Terrorism Act 2000 and subsequent legislation: Arrests, outcomes and stops and searches Great Britain 2008-09).

These statistics, however, do not include details on the number of journalists that have been arrested and prosecuted for taking photographs under Counter Terrorism legislation since 2000. The Home Office does not hold these statistics.

Crime

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department with reference to the answer to the hon. Member for Twickenham of 16 October 2009, Official Report, column 1175W, on crime, what the equivalent figures are for each year from 1998-99 to 2001-02. [303786]

Alan Johnson: The available information is given in the table. The offence groups used are those in place at the time the data were published. The offence of indecent exposure was included in the ‘Other’ offences rather than, as now, in the sexual offences group. There have also been changes with respect to two other rarer offences (bigamy and concealing an infant death close to birth). Figures are given for the old offence group of ‘Theft and handling stolen goods’ which is now split into ‘Offences against vehicles’ and ‘Other theft’.
In addition, the National Crime Recording Standard was introduced in April 2002. Because of this and the differences referred to above, the data given in the table are not directly comparable with those provided in the answer on 16 October 2009.

Detection rates are a ratio of crime detected in a period to crimes recorded in a period. They are not based on tracking whether individual crimes recorded in a period have eventually been detected.

### Percentage of offences resulting in a specific method of detection by offence group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offence group and financial year</th>
<th>Charge or summons</th>
<th>Caution</th>
<th>Penalty notice for disorder</th>
<th>Offence taken into consideration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Violence against the person</strong></td>
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<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Robbery</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td><strong>Theft and handling stolen goods</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>2000-01</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
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<td><strong>Fraud and forgery</strong></td>
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<td>1998-99</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Criminal damage</strong></td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offence group and financial year</th>
<th>Charge or summons</th>
<th>Caution</th>
<th>Penalty notice for disorder</th>
<th>Offence taken into consideration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Drug offences</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>39</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
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<td>2000-01</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other offences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n-a = not available. Penalty notices for disorder were only introduced in August 2002.

1 Estimated based on returns from 42 police forces.

### Departmental Internet

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which websites his Department’s staff are blocked from accessing from networked computers in his Department.

Mr. Woolas: The Security Policy Framework, the Data Handling Report and the National Information Assurance Strategy produced by the Cabinet Office provide a strategic framework for protecting information that Government handles and put in place a set of mandatory measures to which Departments must adhere.

It is not in the interest of the security of the Department, or that of the public, to disclose detailed information relating to security of departmental IT systems. Disclosing such information would carry a significant risk of enabling criminals and those who would attempt to cause disruptive threats to the department to deduce how to conduct attacks and therefore potentially enhance their capability to carry out such attacks.

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much has been spent on (a) strategy and planning, (b) design and build, (c) hosting and infrastructure, (d) content provision and (e) testing and evaluation for his Department’s websites in each of the last three years; and how much has been allocated for each such category of expenditure in 2009-10.

Mr. Woolas: The information is as follows:

(a) Strategy and planning costs are embedded in other costs and cannot be extracted from other running costs for the years required.

(b) Design and build costs as follows:
£

2006-07 1
2007-08 56,000
2008-09 36,000
2009-10 Nil

* Not available as a separate figure.

(c) The costs of hosting, licensing, domain registration, and updates.

£

2006-07 750,100
2007-08 620,000
2008-09 577,000
2009-10 583,000

(d) Content provision is partly incorporated in the costs given for hosting etc and partly with other costs. It is not possible to extract these costs.

(e) Testing and evaluation costs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>23,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>179,003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This includes allocations for user research and information architecture development, resulting from the movement of content to Direct.gov

### Deportamental Pay

**John Mason:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what (a) bonuses and (b) incentives have been paid to (i) consultants and (ii) contractors engaged by his Department in each of the last three years.

[300657]

**Mr. Woolas:** The Home Department does not have any direct employer-employee relationships with individual consultants or contractors.

The Department engages consultants and contractors through suppliers on consultancy and contractor assignments. We do not, therefore, pay the salaries, nor any incentives or bonuses for these individuals.

### Deportation

**Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many deportations of residents of the London borough of Bexley without leave to remain there have been in each of the last three years.

[310687]

**Mr. Woolas:** Information of the number of individuals who were resident in the London borough of Bexley who have been removed in each of the last three years could be obtained only by undertaking a search of case files which would incur disproportionate cost.

Published statistics on immigration and asylum are available from the Library of the House and from the Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate website at:


### Drugs: Cannabis

**Chris Huhne:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (a) simple cautions for cannabis possession and (b) cannabis warnings have been issued by each police force in each year since 2004.

[300754]

**Alan Johnson:** The number of cautions and cannabis warnings recorded by the police in England and Wales as a method of detection for possession of cannabis offences are given in Tables 1 and 2 respectively.

*Table 1: Number of cautions recorded as method of detection for possession of cannabis offences, by police force area in England and Wales, 2004-05 to 2008-09*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avon and Somerset</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedfordshire</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>215</td>
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<tr>
<td>British Transport Police</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>1,009</td>
<td>975</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridgeshire</td>
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<td>243</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Devon and Cornwall</td>
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<td>4,929</td>
<td>4,458</td>
<td>4,643</td>
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<td>241</td>
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<td>276</td>
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<td>Northamptonshire</td>
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<td>384</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>329</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1,045</td>
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<td>592</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>346</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Wales</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Yorkshire</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>124</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nottinghamshire</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>542</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Wales</td>
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<td>275</td>
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<td>405</td>
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<td>South Yorkshire</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffordshire</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>473</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suffolk</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>857</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>252</td>
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<tr>
<td>Surrey</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sussex</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>865</td>
<td>1,076</td>
<td>672</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thames Valley</td>
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<td>1,618</td>
<td>1,303</td>
<td>1,401</td>
<td>1,444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warwickshire</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>269</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Mercia</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>423</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
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<td>1,797</td>
<td>1,784</td>
<td>1,964</td>
<td>2,165</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1,064</td>
<td>1,036</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>621</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Number of cautions recorded as method of detection for possession of cannabis offences, by police force area in England and Wales, 2004-05 to 2008-09

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avon and Somerset</td>
<td>977</td>
<td>2,578</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>2,554</td>
<td>2,598</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bedfordshire</td>
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<td>643</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>347</td>
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<tr>
<td>British Transport</td>
<td>659</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>1,707</td>
<td>3,214</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essex</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>697</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>1,348</td>
<td>1,597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucestershire</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>529</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4,943</td>
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<td>5,136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwent</td>
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<td>396</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>998</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hampshire</td>
<td>698</td>
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<td>1,477</td>
<td>2,260</td>
<td>1,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1,394</td>
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<td>1,897</td>
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<tr>
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<td>895</td>
<td>991</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kent</td>
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<td>652</td>
<td>846</td>
<td>1,276</td>
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<tr>
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<td>528</td>
<td>791</td>
</tr>
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<td>Leicestershire</td>
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<td>1,555</td>
<td>1,967</td>
<td>1,701</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lincolnshire</td>
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<td>508</td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
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<td>London City of</td>
<td>505</td>
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<td>373</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merseyside</td>
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<td>8,561</td>
<td>7,204</td>
<td>7,229</td>
<td>8,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan Police</td>
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<td>21,040</td>
<td>30,554</td>
<td>46,979</td>
<td>47,204</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norfolk</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>731</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>971</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northamptonshire</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumbria</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>916</td>
<td>1,459</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Wales</td>
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<td>971</td>
<td>985</td>
<td>1,059</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Yorkshire</td>
<td>727</td>
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<td>554</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>665</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nottinghamshire</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>855</td>
<td>1,077</td>
<td>1,210</td>
<td>950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Wales</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>1,266</td>
<td>2,414</td>
<td>2,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Yorkshire</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>1,023</td>
<td>1,027</td>
<td>1,296</td>
<td>1,627</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staffordshire</td>
<td>867</td>
<td>1,323</td>
<td>1,282</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>1,153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffolk</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>599</td>
<td>744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrey</td>
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<td>482</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sussex</td>
<td>866</td>
<td>1,350</td>
<td>1,971</td>
<td>2,447</td>
<td>1,369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thames Valley</td>
<td>2,232</td>
<td>1,883</td>
<td>2,431</td>
<td>2,753</td>
<td>2,518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warwickshire</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Mercia</td>
<td>572</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>756</td>
<td>872</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>2,025</td>
<td>3,451</td>
<td>2,852</td>
<td>2,286</td>
<td>2,229</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Yorkshire</td>
<td>1,212</td>
<td>1,839</td>
<td>1,539</td>
<td>1,340</td>
<td>1,245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wirral</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Number of cannabis warnings recorded as method of detection for possession of cannabis offences, by police force area in England and Wales, 2004-05 to 2008-09

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England and Wales</td>
<td>39,718</td>
<td>63,480</td>
<td>80,653</td>
<td>103,804</td>
<td>107,251</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. 'Suspended' cases are where the individual has either absconded or is missing prior to a decision being made.
2. 'No decision recorded' means the decision has not been officially logged with UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC). This is where the reasonable grounds decision is either still being considered or where the decision has yet to be recorded on the UKHTC system.

Human Trafficking

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how many referrals of potential victims of trafficking to the National Referral Mechanism (a) a positive conclusive grounds decision has been made, (b) a negative conclusive grounds decision has been made, (c) a decision is pending and (d) no decision has been made.

Mr. Woolas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how many referrals of potential victims of trafficking to the National Referral Mechanism (a) a positive conclusive grounds decision has been made, (b) a negative conclusive grounds decision has been made, (c) a decision is pending and (d) no decision has been made.

Immigration Controls

Philip Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions immigration judges have overturned a decision on an application made under each tier of the points-based immigration system since the implementation of that system.

Mr. Woolas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions immigration judges have overturned a decision on an application made under each tier of the points-based immigration system since the implementation of that system.
Number of appeals allowed under each tier of PBS: 29 February 2008 - 31 December 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier</th>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Q2</th>
<th>Q3</th>
<th>Q4</th>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Q2</th>
<th>Q3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n/a = Not applicable as tier had not been introduced.

1 For in-country applications only. Outside the UK a refusal of entry clearance under PBS does not attract a full right of appeal.

2 1 or 2.

Notes:
1. All figures rounded to nearest 5.
2. All figures quoted are provisional and derived from internal management information. The information has not been quality assured through National Statistics protocols.

Islam4UK: Wootton Bassett

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received in respect of proposals by Islam4UK to march in Wootton Bassett.

Mr. Hanson [holding answer 11 January 2010]: The Government received a number of public and parliamentary representations about proposals from Islam4UK to march in Wootton Bassett. The Government condemn any group that promotes hatred and discord and the Home Secretary issued a statement on 4 January that he would support the operational judgment of the police in consenting to a ban if Wiltshire police and the local authority received an application to march from Islam4UK and, under the provisions of the Public Order Act 1986, sought a banning order.

The Home Secretary laid an order on 11 January which came into force on 14 January and which provides that Islam4UK and a number of other names should be treated as alternative names for an organisation which is already proscribed as Al Ghurabaa and The Saved Sect.

Mr. Ellwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will refuse permission to Islam4UK to hold a demonstration in the town of Wootton Bassett if that group requests permission.

Mr. Hanson [holding answer 11 January 2010]: The Home Secretary issued a statement on 4 January that he would support the operational judgment of the police in consenting to a ban if Wiltshire police and the local authority received an application to march from Islam4UK and, under the provisions of the Public Order Act 1986, sought a banning order.

The Home Secretary laid an order on 11 January which came into force on 14 January and which provides that Islam4UK and a number of other names should be treated as alternative names for an organisation which is already proscribed as Al Ghurabaa and The Saved Sect. While the proposed march in Wootton Bassett was of no relevance to the consideration which led to this Order, one of the consequences of proscription is to criminalise any meeting organised by, in support of, or addressed by a member of Islam4UK.

Passports: Fees and Charges

Chris Huhne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much the visa section of the British embassy in Berne received in overseas passport fees in respect of passports issued in Switzerland in each of the last five years.

Our records show that our embassy in Berne received the following fees for passports over the last five years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>£</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>2,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>2,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>2,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>2,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Passports: Forgery

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many forged passports have been seized each year since 1997.

Mr. Woolas: The following table details the detections of false passports encountered by the Immigration and Nationality Directorate of the Home Office (before 31 March 2007), the Border and Immigration Agency (between 1 April 2007 and 31 March 2008) and the UK Border Agency (since 1 April 2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>4,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>6,338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>5,516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>5,394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>7,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>10,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>9,546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>10,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>7,712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>7,354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>6,939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>5,960</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures for 2009 are not yet available. Figures from 1997 to 2000 inclusive represent detections at the border only. Those from 2001 to 2008 inclusive detail detections at the border and those made in country by caseworking offices and enforcement officers. They do not include the numbers of inadequately documented passengers denied boarding by commercial carriers overseas working in conjunction with UK Immigration Liaison Officers and Managers (formerly Airline Liaison Officers) from the Risk and Liaison Overseas Network. Some of these passengers will have held false documents but precise figures for the numbers denied boarding for this reason are unavailable.

Police

Dr. Pugh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his most recent estimate is of the proportion of police (a) time and (b) budget spent on tackling (i) acquisitive, (ii) sex work-related and (iii) drug-related crime.

[310083]
Mr. Hanson: The table contains information on the percentages of police time and budget spent on dealing with acquisitive crimes, drugs offences, and non-crime incidents related to prostitution in 2007-08. It should be noted that prostitution is not in itself a crime.

Some incidences of other crime types (such as violence against the person) may be related to either sex work or drugs; time spent on these is not recorded separately, so it is not possible to give an estimate of time and budget spent upon them.

Table A: Time spent on dealing with acquisitive crimes, drugs offences, and non-crime incidents related to prostitution in 2007-08

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>(a) percentage of time spent on dealing with:</th>
<th>(b) percentage of budget spent on:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) Acquisitive crimes</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Prostitution-related incidents</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Drugs offences</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Crime prevention activity is excluded from these figures, as it is not possible to break this activity down by the crime prevented.

2 Figures in column (a) exclude data from Staffordshire, which are not available.

3 Figures in column (b) exclude data from Essex, Staffordshire, Suffolk and Thames Valley, which are not available.

4 Acquisitive crime includes burglary from a dwelling, burglary from commercial or other premises, robbery, theft of or from a motor vehicle, and other theft.

Police Patrolling

Lembit Öpik: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what his policy is on single patrols; and if he will make a statement; [312924]

(2) whether he has made a recent assessment of the level of risk to the safety of police officers of undertaking single patrols; and if he will make a statement. [312929]

Mr. Hanson: In the Home Office’s recent policing White Paper, “Protecting the Public: Supporting the Police to Succeed”, we reiterate our support for police forces to develop patrolling strategies which maximise visibility and public engagement, and which increase efficient and effective deployment.

The advantages of single patrols go well beyond increased cost-effectiveness. Research has demonstrated the effectiveness of single patrols at engaging communities, particularly at the level of neighbourhood foot patrol.

Greater community engagement and increased visibility are both crucial to increasing public confidence in the police. Figures released from the British Crime Survey on 21 January 2010 showed a 4 per cent. year-on-year increase in public confidence in the police and partners working together to tackle crime and antisocial behaviour (in the 12 months to September 2009).

The decision to employ single patrols is an operational priority for the Home Office.

Police: Manpower

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers in each police authority area are deployed (a) to Iraq, (b) to Afghanistan and (c) elsewhere outside the UK; and how many are serving in specialist units outside their force area. [312999]

Mr. Hanson [holding answer 25 January 2010]: There are currently eight serving and one retired UK civilian police officers deployed to Iraq. Of the serving officers two are from the Metropolitan Police Service, two from Hertfordshire and one from each of the following areas: Cheshire, Norfolk, Northumbria and South Wales.

There are currently 21 serving and eight retired UK civilian police officers deployed to Afghanistan. Of the serving officers 15 are from the Ministry of Defence police, one from the Police Service of Northern Ireland and one from each of the following areas: City of London, Leicestershire, Sussex, Kent and Northumbria.

There are currently 13 serving and two retired UK civilian police officers deployed to other countries on Peace Support Operations (mainly Kosovo and Georgia). Of the serving officers seven are from the Ministry of Defence police, two from the Metropolitan Police Service and one from each of the following areas: Hertfordshire, Surrey, Cheshire and South Wales.

In addition to the above longer term deployments, which are typically for six to 12 months, shorter term police assistance overseas is provided on a frequent basis. In 2009, the Home Office issued 943 authorisations under section 26 of the Police Act 1996 to police officers and staff from forces in England and Wales in respect of travel overseas to provide assistance to an international organisation or other body engaged outside the UK in policing activities. The majority of these authorisations were in respect of short-term assistance on a wide range of policing matters to numerous countries.

The Home Office does not collect information on the number of officers serving in specialist units in the UK outside their force area.

Shellfish: Testing

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many animals were used in the safety testing of shellfish in 2008; which shellfish were being tested; and for which poisons the animals were tested. [311019]


However, with respect to the animal numbers used, the information requested is not available, in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics (implementing the Statistics and Registration Act 2007) and the National Statistician’s guidance ‘Confidentiality of Official Statistics’.

Providing the information requested would breach statistical confidentiality relating to individual establishments and individual licensees.

Terrorism

Mr. Grieve: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in the Metropolitan Police Authority area detained on suspicion of terrorist or related offences were released because there was not enough evidence to charge them within 28 days in the last two years. [313344]

Mr. Hanson [holding answer 26 January 2010]: The Home Office does not hold statistics which will answer this question. Investigations into terrorism suspects in
Mr. Grieve: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the date of arrest was of each individual who has been held in pre-charge detention without charge under counter-terrorism legislation for more than 14 days.

Mr. Hanson [holding answer 26 January 2010]: To date, there have been three individuals who have been held in pre-charge detention under counter-terrorism legislation for more than 14 days and subsequently released without charge. Their date(s) of arrest were as follows:

1. 9 August 2006
2. 10 August 2006
3. 10 August 2006.

All three were released on 6 September 2006.

Mr. Grieve: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many potential prosecutions of terrorist suspects have been unable to proceed because of the expiry of the 28 day limit on detaining suspects without charge since the entry into force of that limit.

Mr. Hanson [holding answer 26 January 2010]: The Home Office does not hold statistics which are recorded in this way. However, the Home Office does collate statistics on the number of terrorism arrests and convictions and these are included in a Bulletin published for the first time on 13 May 2009 (Statistics on Terrorism Arrests and Outcomes Great Britain 11 September 2001 to 31 March 2008). The first edition of the Bulletin is available at:

http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb0409.pdf

The second issue of the Bulletin was published on 26 November 2009 and is available via the link below:

http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb1809.pdf

Mr. Hanson [holding answer 26 January 2010]: The Home Office does not hold statistics which are recorded in this way. However, the Home Office does collate statistics on the number of terrorism arrests and convictions and these are included in a Bulletin published for the first time on 13 May 2009 (Statistics on Terrorism Arrests and Outcomes Great Britain 11 September 2001 to 31 March 2008). The first edition of the Bulletin is available at:

http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb0409.pdf

Terrorism: Prosecutions

Mr. Grieve: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been detained without charge on suspicion of terrorist or related offences for over (a) 14 days and (b) 28 days in the last 10 years.

Mr. Hanson [holding answer 26 January 2010]: The Home Office does not hold statistics which are recorded in this way. However, the Home Office does collate statistics on the number of terrorism arrests and convictions and these are included in a Bulletin published for the first time on 13 May 2009 (Statistics on Terrorism Arrests and Outcomes Great Britain 11 September 2001 to 31 March 2008). The first edition of the Bulletin is available at:

http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb0409.pdf

The second issue of the Bulletin was published on 26 November 2009 and is available via the link below:

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http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb0409.pdf

Terrorism: Prosecutions

Mr. Grieve: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the date was of the most recent arrest under counter-terrorism legislation following which a suspect was held in pre-charge detention for over (a) 14 days and (b) 28 days.

Mr. Hanson [holding answer 26 January 2010]: The Home Office does not hold statistics which are recorded in this way. However, the Home Office does collate statistics on the number of terrorism arrests and convictions and these are included in a Bulletin published for the first time on 13 May 2009 (Statistics on Terrorism Arrests and Outcomes Great Britain 11 September 2001 to 31 March 2008). The first edition of the Bulletin is available at:

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http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb0409.pdf

Terrorism: Prosecutions

Mr. Grieve: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance his Department issued to police forces on the types of information to be disclosed in soft data disclosures under enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks.

Mr. Hanson [holding answer 26 January 2010]: The Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) is a standardised approach to processing local intelligence information held by Police Force Disclosure Units and was developed by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the CRB. QAF provides a step-by-step process framework that ensures that information is considered consistently and in the same way every time. Searches performed on local systems using the QAF Framework and document set produce an audit trail that can be used for quality assurance and to assure QAF compliance.

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Affordable Housing

Mr. Stewart Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether the Trusts Services Authority issues guidance to local authorities on obtaining information on the sexual orientation of social tenants and leaseholders.

Mr. Ian Austin: The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007 make it unlawful for public authorities (which includes local housing authorities) to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities and services, the disposal and management of premises and the exercise of public functions (among other things).
New statutory guidance for local authorities in England, published on 4 December 2009, advises that monitoring and evaluation systems should be put in place and lettings outcomes published so that people can see that the allocation scheme is being complied with and is fair, and that the authority is meeting its duties under the equalities legislation.

**Local Government: Empty Property**

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many empty properties local authorities have taken into ownership in the last three years. [312964]

Mr. Ian Austin: Information on the number of empty properties that local authorities have taken into ownership is not held centrally. Since 1 February 2007, 27 Empty Dwelling Management Orders have been issued. EDMOs do not result in a change of ownership but pass the management of the properties to the local authority in order that they can be brought back into use.

**Repossession Orders**

Paul Holmes: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many homes in (a) Chesterfield constituency, (b) Derbyshire and (c) England have been repossessed in each year since 1979. [310934]

Mr. Ian Austin: There are two independent sources of data on actual numbers of mortgage possessions: The Council of Mortgage Lenders (CML) and the Financial Services Authority (FSA). However both are only available for the United Kingdom as a whole.

**Social Rented Housing**

Mr. Stewart Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will take steps to encourage home-based working in (a) local authority and (b) housing association social housing tenancies. [313089]

Mr. Ian Austin: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 21 January 2010, Official Report, column 1511W, and the answer given to him on 21 January 2010, Official Report, columns 484-85W.

**Social Rented Housing: Unemployed**

Grant Shapps: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what proportion of social housing (a) tenants and (b) households of working age are not in employment, education or training. [311524]

Mr. Ian Austin: Estimates of the proportion of social tenants not in employment, education or training are provided in the following table. These estimates are based on data from the 2008 ONS Labour Force Survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic status of social tenants, England, 2008</th>
<th>All social tenants</th>
<th>In employment, education or training</th>
<th>Not in employment, education or training</th>
<th>Total (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All social tenants</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social tenants of working age</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social tenants with at least one household member of working age</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1 Excludes households where economic status unknown.
2 Working age is defined as 16 to 59 for females and 16 to 64 for males.
Source: ONS Labour Force Survey

**Sustainable Development**

Joan Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government when he will publish the new guidance on sustainability and spatial strategy; and if he will make a statement. [313628]

Mr. Ian Austin: The policy statement on Regional Strategy along with the proposed new guidance on sustainability appraisal was published for consultation between 6 August and 30 October 2009. We are actively considering the 153 responses received and look to publish the final Policy statement and guidance in mid February.

**TREASURY**

**Banks: Finance**

Jim Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for what reason his Department’s due diligence information on (a) banks in which the Government has a shareholding or which the Government owns and (b) on RBS assets guaranteed by the Government have not been made available to UK Financial Investments. [313261]

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: UK Financial Investments Limited (UKFI) has been set up to manage the Government’s investments in financial institutions at arm’s length and on a commercial basis.

UKFI’s objective is to dispose of the investments in an orderly and active manner, within the context of an overarching objective of protecting and creating value for the taxpayer, paying due regard to financial stability and promoting competition.

For the purpose of analysing detailed due diligence information to deliver the APS, the Treasury considered that advice from Treasury’s legal and financial advisers was deemed sufficient and that it was not necessary or appropriate to consult UKFI on this information. Sharing such information with UKFI could have led them becoming insiders and could thus compromise their ability to manage or dispose of the shareholdings.

**Banks: Iceland**

Dr. Cable: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what meetings (a) he and (b) his officials have had with the Icelandic Government regarding the repayment of debt to the Government for the compensation of depositors who held accounts with Icesave. [313619]
Sarah McCarthy-Fry: Treasury Ministers and officials have meetings and discussions with a wide variety of organisations in the public and private sectors as part of the process of policy development and delivery. As was the case with previous Administrations, it is not the Government’s practice to provide details of all such meetings and discussions.

Banks: Pay

Jim Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether (a) his Department and (b) UK Financial Investments advised (i) RBS and (ii) Lloyds Banking Group on the categories of employees to be (A) included in and (B) excluded from bonus pools.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: The Government’s shareholdings in the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) and Lloyds Banking Group are managed on a commercial and arm’s length basis by UK Financial Investments Ltd (UKFI). UKFI’s objective is to protect and create value for the taxpayer as shareholder, with due regard to the maintenance of financial stability, and to act in a way that promotes competition.

UKFI have agreed deferral and clawback terms for 2009 bonuses for both banks, who have signed up to the FSA code and G20 agreements. No decisions have yet been taken on the quantum of bonus payments.

Departmental Correspondence

Jim Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library a copy of his reply to the letter of 1 November 2009 sent to Lord Myners by Tim Bush.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: No correspondence from Mr Bush has been located in the Treasury. I am grateful to the hon. Member for the copy his office have now provided, and a reply will be prepared as soon as possible.

Departmental Food

Mr. Paice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the quantity of food waste for both banks, who have signed up to the FSA code and G20 agreements. No decisions have yet been taken on the quantum of bonus payments.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: The catering contractor for 1 Horse Guards Road introduced a food waste recycling programme in March 2008 under which food waste is removed from the building and is transported to a biogas plant where it is subjected to anaerobic digestion process. In addition, the process produces fertilizer and electricity as by-products.

Previously, volumes of food waste had been calculated using the industry standard of food produced but not used and was measured on the basis that each bag of food waste weighed around 3kg on average. When the food waste recycling programme was introduced in March 2008 for 1 HGR, the system changed from counting bags to physically weighing the waste before removing them from the site, and this explains the vastly increased figure from what was reported in earlier years.

The Rosebery Court office does not have on-site catering facilities.

Financial Services: EU Action

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the likely effects of proposed EU regulations on derivatives on businesses in the corporate sector which depend on very long-term hedging practices to manage risk and uncertainty; and if he will make a statement.


This paper sets out the UK’s preliminary thinking on future regulation, both globally and in the EU, on derivatives issues, including the implications for corporates.

Government Departments: ICT

Mr. Vaizey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the papers on which OGC’s best practice sets a framework for public sector project management which includes cost and budget management through the project lifecycle.

In addition, OGC’s project assurance tools, eg the OGC Gateway™ process, give visibility of cost control aspects of projects and recommendations are made as appropriate.

In addition, a major strand of the supply management initiative which was launched in 2006 is performance improvement via a two-way common assessment framework designed to address shortfalls in delivery and to deliver cash savings. Every six months, on a commercially confidential basis, departments review supplier performance on key ICT projects: one of the areas for review being ‘delivery to cost parameters’.

National Insurance Contributions: Local Government

Mr. Stewart Jackson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much and what proportion of the revenue from national insurance contributions for employers is attributable to local government employers.

Mr. Timms: The revenue from national insurance contributions for local Government employers was £4.7 billion in the 2007-08 tax year; equivalent to 8.3% of the total revenue from national insurance contributions for employers.
Revenue and Customs

Mr. Liddell-Grainger: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the objectives are of the HM Revenue and Customs Policy Development Programme. [312145]

Mr. Timms: HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) does not have a Policy Development Programme. HMRC’s Policy Delivery Programme is a portfolio of projects which implement and deliver policy measures and legislation, including EU legislation, for the Department.

Streatham

Keith Hill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out, with statistical evidence relating as closely as possible to Streatham constituency, the effects on that constituency of changes to his Department’s policies since 1997. [313391]

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: The Neighbourhood Statistics Service provides a wide range of statistical information at parliamentary constituency level, taken from the 2001 census and other sources. This service is available on the National Statistics website at http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk./

The Government have put in place a broad programme of reform since 1997. Over the decade to 2007, the economic performance of all parts of the UK has improved considerably.

The global recession has had a negative impact on economic activity in all areas of the UK. However, the economy was starting from a position of strength and is actively supported by policies implemented by the Government, including the fiscal stimulus and a significant package of support for those out of work. In Streatham people are benefiting from this investment. Over the second half of 2009, more than 900 people moved off of the claimant count each month on average. The claimant count fell for two consecutive months in November and December and now stands 2 per cent. below its October level. At the end of 2009, claimant count unemployment is still 30 per cent. lower and long-term unemployment 85 per cent. lower than in May 1997.

Taxation: Self-Assessment

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the sum to accrue to the Exchequer from penalty charges and interest surcharges on unpaid tax from self-assessment tax returns for the 2008-09 tax year. [313448]

Mr. Timms: No such estimate has been made.

WOMEN AND EQUALITY

Departmental Pay

Grant Shapps: To ask the Minister for Women and Equality how many (a) year-end and (b) in-year bonuses were paid to officials in the Government Equalities Office in each of the last three years; and how much was paid in such bonuses in each such year. [307101]

Michael Jabez Foster: Since its creation on 12 October 2007 the Government Equalities Office has awarded the following staff bonuses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial year</th>
<th>Number of bonuses</th>
<th>Total of bonuses (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>37,787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>58,850</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Government Equalities does not differentiate between in-year or year end bonuses.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Harper: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if she will publish the modelling her Department has (a) undertaken and (b) commissioned in relation to its consideration of the merits of (i) ending and (ii) changing the (A) attendance allowance and (B) disability living allowance scheme in the last five years. [307680]

Jonathan Shaw: We are developing our care and support proposals, based on the Green Paper “Shaping the Future of Care Together”.

The impact assessment was published with the Green Paper and is available on the Big Care Debate website at: http://careandsupport.direct.gov.uk/greenpaper/the-green-paper-and-supporting-documents/

A copy of the impact assessment has been placed in the Library.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. MacNeil: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people in each local authority area have received benefits through the Cold Weather Payment Scheme since 1 November 2009. [310785]

Helen Goodman: The information is not available.

Mr. MacNeil: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much has been spent on the Cold Weather Payment scheme since 1 November 2009. [310786]

Helen Goodman: The total expenditure authorised for cold weather payments in Great Britain since 1 November 2009 up to Tuesday 12 January 2010 is estimated to be £261 million.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate she has made of the number of pensioners who are eligible to receive cold weather payments in 2009-10. [313011]

Helen Goodman [holding answer 26 January 2010]: The number of pensioner benefit units in Great Britain who are eligible to receive cold weather payments in 2009-10 if the temperature criterion is met is estimated to be 2.6 million.
A benefit unit can be either a single person or a couple. A benefit unit receives only one cold weather payment for a given week. The number of individual pensioners who are potentially helped by cold weather payments is about 3.3 million, taking account of couple households.

Departmental Information Officers

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much press officers in her Department and its agencies claimed in reimbursable expenses in 2008-09.

Jim Knight: The Department for Work and Pensions operates a single press office to support the work of the Department as well as agencies such as Jobcentre Plus and the Pensions, Disability and Carers’ Service.

Press officers claimed £17,800.94 in reimbursable expenses in 2008-09.

Departmental Pay

Mr. Scott: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much has been paid in bonuses to civil servants in her Department in each year since 2003.

Jim Knight: The Department operates two pay-related employee reward schemes. They comprise end of year non-consolidated performance pay and in-year special awards.

End of year non-consolidated performance pay

DWP employees below the senior civil service are eligible for an annual individual non-consolidated performance payment if they attain a “top”, “higher” or “majority” rating under the annual performance and development system. The actual payment awarded is determined by the employee’s pay band and the performance level achieved.

For the senior civil service, end of year non-consolidated performance pay is determined by the relevant departmental pay committee, in line with recommendations by the independent Senior Salaries Review Body.

The total payments made in respect the years since 2003 are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial year</th>
<th>Total paid (£ million)</th>
<th>Work force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>30.82</td>
<td>140,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>25.29</td>
<td>139,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>36.61</td>
<td>141,476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>42.82</td>
<td>130,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>40.68</td>
<td>125,712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>36.61</td>
<td>118,909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>23.32</td>
<td>114,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>21.81</td>
<td>112,227</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average payments in the years between 2002-03 and 2009-10 were between £199.48 and £350.39.

Special awards

Individuals may be awarded a special award either as cash or in the form of retail vouchers. These are one-off recognition awards, payable at any time during the performance year to recognise exceptional achievements beyond what would normally be expected.

Figures for retail vouchers are available from 2007 when they were introduced to the Department. Figures for cash payments are not available prior to 2007-08.

The total amount paid in awards was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial year</th>
<th>Total paid (£ million)</th>
<th>Average for those receiving a payment (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 (April to August 2009)</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Voucher payments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial year</th>
<th>Total cost (£ million)</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>Between £25 and £50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>Between £25 and £50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 (April to August 2009)</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>Between £25 and £50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to individual performance bonus payments, DWP also paid team bonuses to selected units within the Department between the period 2002 and 2005. The total payments made were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial year</th>
<th>Total paid (£ million)</th>
<th>Average for those receiving a payment (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>557.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>735.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>293.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grant Shapps: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much has been allocated for (a) year-end and (b) in-year bonuses for (i) her Department’s and (ii) its agencies’ staff in 2009-10.

Jim Knight: The Department operates two pay-related employee reward schemes. They comprise end of year non-consolidated performance pay and in-year special awards.

End of Year Non-consolidated Performance Pay

DWP employees below the Senior Civil Service are eligible for an annual individual non-consolidated performance payment if they attain a “top”, “higher” or “majority” rating under the annual performance and development system. The actual payment awarded is determined by the employee’s pay band and the performance level achieved.

For the Senior Civil Service, end of year non-consolidated performance pay is determined by the relevant Departmental Pay Committee, in line with recommendations by the independent Senior Salaries Review Body.

Performance awards are payable in July and are attributable to performance in the previous financial year. In the 2009-10 financial year £21.81 million was paid in July 2009 for performance in the previous year. Of this £4.66 million was paid to employees in DWP.
Corporate and Shared Services, £13.98 million to those in Jobcentre Plus, and £3.17 million to those in the Pension, Disability and Carers Service. The average payment received was £199.48.

Special Awards

Individuals may be awarded a special award either as cash or in the form of retail vouchers. These are one-off recognition awards, payable at any time during the performance year, to recognise exceptional achievements beyond what would normally be expected.

Up to 0.25 per cent of the overall departmental staff budget is available to fund Special Awards and in 2009-10 this equates to £7.28 million of which £5.97 million is available to the Department’s agencies and £1.31 million to the rest of the Department.

For the period April to August 2009, the number of Special Awards made was 22,997, at a cost of £1.86 million. Departmental headcount at August 2009 was 118,356.

The average payment received was £80.88.

Departmental Trade Unions

Mr. Maude: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what office facilities her Department provides for the exclusive use of each trade union recognised by it; and what the notional value of such provision was in the latest period for which information is available.[312367]

Jonathan Shaw: I refer the right hon. Member to the written answer I gave to his question on 29 April 2009, Official Report, column 125W.

The information provided within the answer is still the current position. We are unable to provide a notional value of the facilities used because the information is not available.

Disability Living Allowance: West Yorkshire

John Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people in the West Yorkshire area were claiming disability living allowance in each of the last five years.[306998]

Jonathan Shaw: The available information is in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yorkshire and the Humber</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bradford South</td>
<td>5,600</td>
<td>5,790</td>
<td>5,920</td>
<td>6,030</td>
<td>6,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradford West</td>
<td>6,390</td>
<td>6,450</td>
<td>6,570</td>
<td>6,700</td>
<td>6,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brig and Goole</td>
<td>3,680</td>
<td>3,770</td>
<td>3,850</td>
<td>4,020</td>
<td>4,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calder Valley</td>
<td>3,860</td>
<td>3,980</td>
<td>4,090</td>
<td>4,210</td>
<td>4,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of York</td>
<td>3,330</td>
<td>3,430</td>
<td>3,540</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>3,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleethorpes</td>
<td>4,070</td>
<td>4,180</td>
<td>4,290</td>
<td>4,400</td>
<td>4,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colne Valley</td>
<td>4,250</td>
<td>4,340</td>
<td>4,480</td>
<td>4,640</td>
<td>4,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dewsbury</td>
<td>4,880</td>
<td>5,030</td>
<td>5,150</td>
<td>5,280</td>
<td>5,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doncaster Central</td>
<td>5,400</td>
<td>5,470</td>
<td>5,580</td>
<td>5,730</td>
<td>5,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doncaster North</td>
<td>6,050</td>
<td>6,120</td>
<td>6,280</td>
<td>6,360</td>
<td>6,570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Valley</td>
<td>5,810</td>
<td>5,890</td>
<td>6,040</td>
<td>6,190</td>
<td>6,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Yorkshire</td>
<td>5,220</td>
<td>5,300</td>
<td>5,440</td>
<td>5,560</td>
<td>5,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elmet</td>
<td>3,770</td>
<td>3,800</td>
<td>3,940</td>
<td>4,040</td>
<td>4,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Grimsby</td>
<td>4,390</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>4,610</td>
<td>4,770</td>
<td>4,990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halifax</td>
<td>4,850</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>5,050</td>
<td>5,140</td>
<td>5,290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halttemprice and Howden</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>2,560</td>
<td>2,670</td>
<td>2,780</td>
<td>2,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrogate and Knareborough</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>2,840</td>
<td>2,880</td>
<td>2,960</td>
<td>3,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hemsworth</td>
<td>7,960</td>
<td>8,070</td>
<td>8,190</td>
<td>8,260</td>
<td>8,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huddersfield</td>
<td>5,380</td>
<td>5,490</td>
<td>5,610</td>
<td>5,740</td>
<td>5,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keighley</td>
<td>3,680</td>
<td>3,770</td>
<td>3,870</td>
<td>3,970</td>
<td>4,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingston upon Hull East</td>
<td>5,530</td>
<td>5,660</td>
<td>5,830</td>
<td>5,900</td>
<td>5,990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingston upon Hull North</td>
<td>5,470</td>
<td>5,540</td>
<td>5,650</td>
<td>5,730</td>
<td>5,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle</td>
<td>5,120</td>
<td>5,220</td>
<td>5,360</td>
<td>5,410</td>
<td>5,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds Central</td>
<td>5,900</td>
<td>5,960</td>
<td>6,050</td>
<td>6,160</td>
<td>6,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds East</td>
<td>4,690</td>
<td>4,760</td>
<td>4,820</td>
<td>4,830</td>
<td>4,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds North East</td>
<td>3,630</td>
<td>3,660</td>
<td>3,740</td>
<td>3,790</td>
<td>3,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds North West</td>
<td>2,720</td>
<td>2,750</td>
<td>2,820</td>
<td>2,920</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds West</td>
<td>4,200</td>
<td>4,340</td>
<td>4,450</td>
<td>4,580</td>
<td>4,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morley and Rothwell</td>
<td>4,750</td>
<td>4,820</td>
<td>4,950</td>
<td>5,120</td>
<td>5,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normanton</td>
<td>4,270</td>
<td>4,360</td>
<td>4,470</td>
<td>4,570</td>
<td>4,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pontefract and Castleford</td>
<td>6,420</td>
<td>6,520</td>
<td>6,600</td>
<td>6,700</td>
<td>6,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pudsey</td>
<td>3,050</td>
<td>3,140</td>
<td>3,290</td>
<td>3,350</td>
<td>3,490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Yorkshire</td>
<td>2,760</td>
<td>2,860</td>
<td>2,980</td>
<td>3,120</td>
<td>3,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rother Valley</td>
<td>5,840</td>
<td>5,930</td>
<td>6,050</td>
<td>6,190</td>
<td>6,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotherham</td>
<td>6,040</td>
<td>6,150</td>
<td>6,320</td>
<td>6,460</td>
<td>6,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryedale</td>
<td>3,050</td>
<td>3,110</td>
<td>3,220</td>
<td>3,290</td>
<td>3,370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarborough and Whitby</td>
<td>5,210</td>
<td>5,360</td>
<td>5,560</td>
<td>5,680</td>
<td>5,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scunthorpe</td>
<td>4,370</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>4,620</td>
<td>4,740</td>
<td>4,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selby</td>
<td>2,900</td>
<td>2,960</td>
<td>3,090</td>
<td>3,240</td>
<td>3,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield Attercliffe</td>
<td>5,480</td>
<td>5,490</td>
<td>5,600</td>
<td>5,680</td>
<td>5,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield Brightside</td>
<td>6,230</td>
<td>6,380</td>
<td>6,550</td>
<td>6,630</td>
<td>6,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield Central</td>
<td>5,710</td>
<td>5,760</td>
<td>5,870</td>
<td>5,980</td>
<td>6,190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Disability living allowance—cases in payment for the Government office region of Yorkshire and the Humber by parliamentary constituency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yorkshire and the Humber</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield Hallam</td>
<td>1,750</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>1,840</td>
<td>1,890</td>
<td>1,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>5,130</td>
<td>5,250</td>
<td>5,410</td>
<td>5,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hesley</td>
<td>4,690</td>
<td>4,770</td>
<td>4,880</td>
<td>5,020</td>
<td>5,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillsborough</td>
<td>3,540</td>
<td>3,620</td>
<td>3,690</td>
<td>3,770</td>
<td>3,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipley</td>
<td>2,840</td>
<td>2,900</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>3,110</td>
<td>3,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipton and Ripon</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>2,540</td>
<td>2,630</td>
<td>2,720</td>
<td>2,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vale of York</td>
<td>5,260</td>
<td>5,380</td>
<td>5,530</td>
<td>5,580</td>
<td>5,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wentworth</td>
<td>6,530</td>
<td>6,640</td>
<td>6,790</td>
<td>6,820</td>
<td>6,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>263,790</td>
<td>268,840</td>
<td>275,310</td>
<td>281,170</td>
<td>289,690</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. Caseload figures are rounded to the nearest 10, totals may not sum due to rounding.
2. Totals show the number of people in receipt of an allowance, and exclude people with entitlement where the payment has been suspended, for example if they are in hospital.

Source:
DWP Information Directorate; Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study

Employment and Support Allowance

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions whether benefits are paid to a claimant appealing against a decision not to be moved from the work category to the support employment allowance category.

Jonathan Shaw [holding answer 25 January 2010]: Employment and support allowance continues to be paid to customers who are in the work related activity group pending the outcome of an appeal against a decision not to award the support component of the benefit.

Employment and support allowance can also be paid pending the outcome of an appeal where a decision has been made that the customer does not have limited capability for work following a work capability assessment.

Hazel Blears: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what percentage of applicants for employment and support allowance with mental health problems were classified as (a) unfit to work and (b) fit for work in 2009.

Steve Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many and what proportion of jobs created under the Future Jobs Fund scheme have been taken up by 18 to 24 year-olds; and if she will make a statement.

Jim Knight: Information on Future Jobs Fund starts is not currently available but will be made available from spring 2010 through a statistical release that is planned to cover the whole of the Young Persons Guarantee. This is normal practice for DWP employment programmes and it allows time for input from the UK Statistics Authority and for the information to be collected, understood, verified and reported.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many Future Jobs Fund jobs have been taken up by those leaving jobseeker’s allowance; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many hotel room nights were booked by officials in (a) her Department and (b) its agencies in each year since 2007; and how much (i) her Department and (ii) its agencies spent on the fees of third party agents in booking hotel accommodation in each of those years.

Jonathan Shaw: If an employment and support allowance claimant completes assessment they are placed in one of three groups:

Support group (for those with severe disabilities)—they receive a higher rate of benefit entitlement overall and exemption from mandatory involvement with Pathways to Work.

Work related activity group—they receive higher rate of benefit than those on jobseeker’s allowance and are mandated to engage with Pathways to Work.

Fit for work—the employment and support allowance claim should cease although individuals can ask for a reconsideration or appeal if they disagree with the decision.

People in the support group are not assessed on the basis of points scored but on the basis of the nature and severity of their condition. Most people in the work related activity group claim employment and support allowance on the basis of scoring enough points against an assessment of their functional capability.

The latest data on the assessment of employment and support allowance claimants was published on 19 January 2010 and can be found:
http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/esa_wca/esa_wca_arc.asp

This shows that 12 per cent. of employment and support allowance claims are placed in the work related activity group (or 23 per cent. of those claims which complete assessment). Note that 9 per cent. of people in the work related activity group are placed there on the basis of their condition (e.g. uncontrollable diseases) or their work capability assessment is deferred (e.g. hospital in-patients) rather than points scored.

Employment and Support Allowance: Mentally Ill

Hazel Blears: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what percentage of applicants for employment and support allowance with mental health problems were classified as (a) unfit to work and (b) fit for work in 2009.

[313317]

Jonathan Shaw: The information requested is not available.

Future Jobs Fund

Steve Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many and what proportion of jobs created under the Future Jobs Fund scheme have been taken up by 18 to 24 year-olds; and if she will make a statement.

Jim Knight: Information on Future Jobs Fund starts is not currently available but will be made available from spring 2010 through a statistical release that is planned to cover the whole of the Young Persons Guarantee. This is normal practice for DWP employment programmes and it allows time for input from the UK Statistics Authority and for the information to be collected, understood, verified and reported.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many Future Jobs Fund jobs have been taken up by those leaving jobseeker’s allowance; and if she will make a statement.

Jim Knight [holding answer 25 January 2010]: Information on Future Jobs Fund starts is not currently available but will be made available from spring 2010 through a statistical release that is planned to cover the whole of the Young Persons Guarantee. This is normal practice for DWP employment programmes and it allows time for input from the UK Statistics Authority and for the information to be collected, understood, verified and reported.

Hotels

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many hotel room nights were booked by officials in (a) her Department and (b) its agencies in each year since 2007; and how much (i) her Department and (ii) its agencies spent on the fees of third party agents in booking hotel accommodation in each of those years.

[309064]
Jim Knight: All official travel within the Department is carried out in accordance with the requirements of both the Civil Service Management Code:
http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/documents/doc/CSMC_April_08.doc and Departmental Business Travel Policy, which enable staff to stay overnight in hotel accommodation when travelling on detached duty for business purpose.

The following room nights were booked by DWP staff in the Department in each full financial year since 2007-08.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Room nights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2007-08</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total DWP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability and Carers Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Services/Headquarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Support Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Pension Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobcentre Plus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **2008-09** |
| Total DWP   | 143,923 |
| Disability and Carers Service | n/a |
| Corporate Services/Headquarters | 49,458 |
| Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission | 25,379 |
| Pension, Disability and Carers Service | 21,979 |
| Jobcentre Plus | 47,107 |

The Pension Service and the Disability and Carers Service merged into a single Agency in April 2008. The figures in the table need to be seen in the context of the Department’s total staffing of over 100,000. The Department’s booking agent is remunerated on a commission share basis by the hotels with whom it books accommodation and the Department itself pays no booking fees.

Jobcentre Plus: Telephone Services

John Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions with reference to the answer of 20 July 2009, Official Report, columns 848-9W, on Jobcentre Plus: telephone services, what progress has been made in her Department’s discussions with the Telephone Helplines Association and mobile telephone companies; what assessment she has made of the merits of automated textback helplines; for what reasons her Department does not instruct its operators to offer callbacks; and if she will make a statement.

[308317]

Jim Knight: A reply was sent to my right hon. Friend on 15 January 2010.

Sir Gerald Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many employees of her Department and its agencies have been convicted of a criminal offence of each type in each year since 1997.

Jim Knight: Information on the number of employees of the Department and its agencies who have been convicted of criminal offences and the type of offence in each year since 1997 is set out in the following table.

| Maternity and Paternity Pay |

Mrs. Maria Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions whether she has made an estimate of her Department’s expenditure on statutory (a) maternity and (b) paternity pay for people from each income quintile in each year since 1997.

Helen Goodman [holding answer 26 January 2010]: No.

Members: Correspondence

Sir Gerald Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) when she expects to reply to the letter dated 23 November 2009 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. McCarty;

Jim Knight: A reply was sent to my right hon. Friend on 15 January 2010.

(2) when she plans to reply to the letter dated 23 November 2009 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton, with regard to Mr. P McCarty.

Sir Gerald Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) when she expects to reply to the letter dated 30 November 2009 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. S. Winter;

Jim Knight: A reply was sent to my right hon. Friend on 15 January 2010.

(2) when she plans to reply to the letter dated 30 November 2009 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton, with regard to Mrs Alice Winter.

Jim Knight: A reply was sent to my right hon. Friend on 15 January 2010.

Offenders

Chris Huhne: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many employees of her Department and its agencies have been convicted of a criminal offence of each type in each year since 1997.

Jim Knight: Information on the number of employees of the Department and its agencies who have been convicted of criminal offences and the type of offence in each year since 1997 is set out in the following table.
The data is provided to the Department by the Home Office and is not available prior to 2006.

### Number of convictions by year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jobcentre Plus</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Centre</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Support Agency</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension, Disability and Carers Service</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Nature of Offence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jobcentre Plus</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Centre</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Support Agency</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension, Disability and Carers Service</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2006**

### Number of convictions by Agency

#### Nature of Offence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Offence</th>
<th>Jobcentre Plus</th>
<th>Corporate Centre</th>
<th>Child Support Agency</th>
<th>Pension, Disability and Carers Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theft - Shoplifting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act of outraging public decency</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession of a Class A substance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carried in a vehicle taken without consent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft - Burglary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escaping lawful custody</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2007**

### Number of convictions by Agency

#### Nature of Offence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Offence</th>
<th>Jobcentre Plus</th>
<th>Corporate Centre</th>
<th>Child Support Agency</th>
<th>Pension, Disability and Carers Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Failing to stop after an accident</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving without insurance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving whilst disqualified</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2008**

### Number of convictions by Agency

#### Nature of Offence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Offence</th>
<th>Jobcentre Plus</th>
<th>Corporate Centre</th>
<th>Child Support Agency</th>
<th>Pension, Disability and Carers Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Handling stolen goods</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failing to provide a specimen of breath</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault - Actual bodily harm</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common assault</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgery</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession of a Class A substance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Child Support Agency ceased to be an Agency of the Department from 1 November 2008.

### Olympic Games: Canada

**Mr. Don Foster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many (a) Ministers and (b) officials from her Department are planning to attend the winter Olympics in Vancouver in February 2010; and what estimate she has made of the cost of such attendance.

**Jonathan Shaw:** Since 1999 the Government have published on an annual basis a list of all overseas visits by Cabinet Ministers costing in excess of £500, as well as the total cost of all ministerial travel overseas. From 2007-08 the list was extended to include all Ministers. The list also provides information on the number of officials who accompany Ministers. Copies are available in the Libraries of the House. Information for 2009-10 will be published as soon as the information is available.

All travel by Ministers and civil servants is undertaken in accordance with the “Ministerial Code and Civil Service Management Code” respectively.
### Pathways to Work: Autism

**Miss Begg**: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what mechanisms are in place to ensure Pathways to Work providers support people with autism.

[310625]

**Jonathan Shaw**: Pathways is a flexible menu of different support options tailored to the needs of each customer. This includes work-focused interviews, help finding and applying for jobs, Condition Management Programmes, training and extra money to boost in-work income. Customers with autism receive a service which is tailored to them as Pathways is available to customers across the full range of health conditions and disabilities.

### Pensioners: Social Security Benefits

**Damian Green**: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many pensioners were in a household in receipt of (a) pension credit and (b) winter fuel allowance in Ashford constituency in 2008-09.

[313507]

**Angela Eagle**: The information requested is detailed in the following tables:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recipients of pension credit in Ashford constituency</th>
<th>Individual beneficiaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May each year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household recipients</td>
<td>Individual beneficiaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>4,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>4,160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes**:
1. Numbers rounded to the nearest 10.
2. Pension credit is claimed on a household basis—household recipients are those people who claim pension credit either for themselves only or on behalf of a partner and beneficiaries are the number of claimants in addition to the number of partners for whom they are also claiming.
3. Parliamentary constituencies and local authorities are assigned by matching postcodes against the relevant ONS postcode directory.

**Source**: DWP Information Directorate Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recipients of winter fuel payments in Ashford constituency</th>
<th>Individual beneficiaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Winter 2008-09[1]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household recipients</td>
<td>Individual beneficiaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17,180</td>
<td>24,310</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes**:
1. The last year for which information is available.
2. Figures rounded to the nearest 10.
3. Parliamentary constituencies and local authorities are assigned by matching postcodes against the relevant ONS postcode directory.

**Source**: DWP Information Directorate 100 per cent data.

### Social Security Benefits: Eligibility

**Mr. Oaten**: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if she will make it her policy to remove the benefits eligibility criterion that requires terminal illness to only be taken into account if it is terminal within a six month period.

[312483]

**Jonathan Shaw [holding answer 21 January 2010]**: The benefits eligibility criterion acknowledge that it is unreasonable to expect individuals who are in the last stages of a progressive disease and who are reasonably expected to die within six months to serve the normal qualifying periods before receiving benefit assistance. There are no plans to change the eligibility criterion.

### Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations

**Mr. Hancock**: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate has been made of the net effect on expenditure from the public purse of the reclassification of benefits claimants as a result of ATOS Medical assessments (a) since the start of the ATOS Medical contract and (b) in the last 12 months.

**Jonathan Shaw**: The information requested is not available.

### CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES

#### Children: Day Care

**Mr. Kemp**: To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many childcare places have been created in Houghton and Washington East constituency since 2000.

[313068]

**Dawn Primarolo**: Information on the number of child care places is not available for parliamentary constituencies.

#### Extracurricular Activities: Birmingham

**Mr. Godsiff**: To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many (a) out-of-school and (b) holiday play schemes were created in Birmingham, Sparkbrook and Small Heath constituency in the last three years.

[312191]
**Dawn Primarolo:** Ofsted have collected data on the number of registered child care providers on a quarterly basis from March 2003. Information on the number of out-of-school schemes is unavailable as this data is not collected for parliamentary constituencies. Ofsted do not collect data on the number of holiday play schemes and so this information is also unavailable.

**ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

**Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme**

**Gregory Barker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change for what reasons the Carbon Reduction Commitment User Guide on his Department’s website has not been updated to reflect changes made since the publication of the Government’s responses to the consultation on the draft order to implement the commitment in October 2009.

**Joan Ruddock:** The CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme User Guide has been updated and was placed on our website on 19 January 2010. The guide has been amended to reflect both policy changes set out in the Government Response to the CRC consultation published on 7 October and the legal detail of the final draft order to implement the CRC which we also laid in Parliament on 19 January 2010.

**Departmental Drinking Water**

**Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how much his Department has spent on bottled drinking water since its establishment; and if he will make a statement.

**Joan Ruddock:** The Department for Energy and Climate Change has spent nothing on bottled drinking water.

**Departmental Housing**

**Sarah Teather:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how many (a) empty and (b) occupied residential properties his Department owns; and what recent estimate he has made of the (i) potential annual rental and (ii) total book value of those (A) empty and (B) occupied residential properties.

**Joan Ruddock:** The Department does not own any properties.

**Departmental Internet**

**Gregory Barker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what guidance his Department provides to its employees on involvement in online social media in an official capacity.

**Joan Ruddock:** The Department for Energy and Climate Change provides the following guidance to its employees based on Cabinet Office guidelines. The guidance is available to all staff on the Department’s intranet.

“The Civil Service Code still applies when communicating online, whether through a blog, a discussion forum, leaving comments on videos or photos, or using social media channels such as Twitter. If your contribution is based on knowledge you have because you work at DECC, carefully consider whether you would be compromised if your posting was picked up by a journalist.

The main principles are:

- Be credible: Be accurate, fair, thorough and transparent.
- Be consistent: Encourage constructive criticism and deliberation.
- Be cordial, honest and professional at all times.
- Be responsive: When you gain insight, share it where appropriate.
- Be integrated: Wherever possible, align online participation with other offline communications.
- Be a civil servant: Remember that you are an ambassador for your organisation. Wherever possible, disclose your position as a representative of your department or agency.

You should:

- Disclose your position as a representative of your department or agency unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as a potential threat to personal security. Never give out personal details like home address and phone numbers.

Always remember that participation online results in your comments being permanently available and open to being republished in other media. Stay within the legal framework and be aware that libel, defamation, copyright and data protection laws apply. This means that you should not disclose information, make commitments or engage in activities on behalf of Government unless you are authorised to do so. This authority may already be delegated or may be explicitly granted depending on your organisation.

Also be aware that this may attract media interest in you as an individual, so proceed with care whether you are participating in an official or a personal capacity. If you have any doubts, take advice from your line manager.”

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change pursuant to the answer of 13 January 2010, *Official Report*, columns 1045-8W, on departmental internet, how many (a) unique visitors and (b) page impressions were received by each website listed in (i) each of the last three years and (ii) 2009-10 to date.

**Joan Ruddock** [holding answer 19 January 2010]: The unique visitors and page impressions for the last three years and 2009-10 to date are provided in the following table where the data is available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
<th>2006-07</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.decc.gov.uk">www.decc.gov.uk</a></td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>37,230</td>
<td>423,803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique visits</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>286,629</td>
<td>3,123,031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page impressions</td>
<td><a href="http://actonco2.direct.gov.uk/actonco2/home.html">http://actonco2.direct.gov.uk/actonco2/home.html</a></td>
<td>—</td>
<td>37,230</td>
<td>423,803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique visits</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>286,629</td>
<td>3,123,031</td>
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<tr>
<td>Page impressions</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>286,629</td>
<td>3,123,031</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Financial year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
<th>2006-07</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://www.energynpsconsultation.decc.gov.uk/">https://www.energynpsconsultation.decc.gov.uk/</a></td>
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<td>—</td>
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<td>Page impressions</td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>235,678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.sedbuk.com">www.sedbuk.com</a> (on a calendar year basis)</td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>64,778</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unique visits</td>
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<td>196,833</td>
<td>218,115</td>
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<tr>
<td>Page impressions</td>
<td>1,826,183</td>
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<td>2,775,346</td>
<td>235,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.Hffccat-demo.org">www.Hffccat-demo.org</a></td>
<td>54,372</td>
<td>64,572</td>
<td>91,601</td>
<td>7,820</td>
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<td>64,572</td>
<td>91,601</td>
<td>7,820</td>
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<tr>
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<td>—</td>
<td>2,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page impressions</td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>4,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>54,372</td>
<td>64,572</td>
<td>91,601</td>
<td>7,820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique visits</td>
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<td>2,020</td>
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<td>Page impressions</td>
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<td>4,010</td>
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<td>Unique visits</td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>235,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>97,000</td>
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<tr>
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<td>—</td>
<td>97,000</td>
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<td>Page impressions</td>
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<td>322,216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.ukrenewables.com">www.ukrenewables.com</a></td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>322,216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique visits (note 2008-09 figures available date from 8 February 2009 to 31 March 2009)</td>
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<td>Page impressions</td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>41,521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.ukrenewables.com">www.ukrenewables.com</a></td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>41,521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique visits</td>
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<td>41,521</td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>41,521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 To date.</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>884,505</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Insulation: Houseboats

**Mr. Todd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what assistance his Department provides to owners of residential craft in respect of insulation and heating efficiency where the craft is used as a main residence.

**Joan Ruddock:** The opportunities to reduce the carbon emissions and heating bills of residential craft homes are limited due to the inherent lack of scope for key energy efficiency measures, such as cavity wall and loft insulation. Moreover, under the carbon emissions reduction target (CERT), energy suppliers are only obliged to promote energy saving measures to residences connected directly to main energy networks.

However, owners of residential craft are able to take advantage of CERT subsidies if purchasing certain DIY materials and energy saving technologies. Items such as insulation panels and low energy light bulbs frequently receive heavy subsidies under CERT in national retail outlets and are available at discounted rates to all consumers.

### Radioactive Waste: Waste Management

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change whether the National Policy Statement on nuclear energy will include provisions on policy on disposal sites for nuclear waste.

**Mr. Kidney:** The policy on the disposal for higher activity radioactive wastes is set out in the Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) White Paper (June 2008).

The current consultation on the Nuclear National Policy Statement does not include the geological disposal facility development. The MRWS White Paper makes clear that no decision on whether geological disposal will be considered by the Independent Planning Commission (IPC) has yet been made. However, the Government are currently inclined to look towards applying the new planning system and we consider that a geological disposal facility is likely to be regarded as a nationally significant infrastructure project. Should the
Government decide in future that radioactive waste should be dealt with by the IPC, the Government would set out the national policy in a National Policy Statement, which would be finalised following an appraisal of sustainability, public consultation and parliamentary scrutiny.

Tidal Power

Mr. Hohan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what assessment he has made of the potential for the generation of electricity from tidal power off the south coast of England. [313409]

Mr. Kidney [holding answer 26 January 2010]: The Government commissioned the updating of the UK Marine Renewable Energy Resources Atlas http://www.renewables-atlas.info/ in 2007. The charts in the Atlas indicate the distribution of potential resource for the future deployment of renewable energy technologies—wind, wave and tidal. The Atlas represents the most detailed regional description of potential marine energy resources in UK waters completed to date at a national scale, and will be used to help guide policy and planning decisions for future site leasing rounds.

We also commissioned in 2009, a screening study for marine energy development in English and Welsh Waters and we will be considering the findings of the report before deciding on whether to progress with a strategic environmental assessment for English and Welsh waters.

Analysis of the data suggests there are pockets of potential for generating energy from tidal resource, in particular off the Isle of Wight and the Dorset coast, but these are at a level significantly lower than elsewhere in the UK. At present the South coast is not viewed by the commercial sector as a prime area for tidal resource but as technologies develop we may see devices which are well suited to the lower velocity of tidal flow available from the region.

Uranium: Exports

Mr. Dai Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how much reprocessed uranium in (a) oxide and (b) uranium hexafluoride (UF6) has been exported to each destination since January 2009, for what purpose in each case; who the owner is of each consignment; and what transport route was used for each consignment. [312699]

Mr. Kidney: Since January 2009 there has been only one export of reprocessed uranium from the UK. In compliance with all appropriate transport regulations, 107.5 tonnes of uranium in the form of uranium trioxide was exported from Sellafield to Russia on behalf of two existing reprocessing customers in Germany and the Netherlands. The uranium was transported by rail from Sellafield to Hull and then by ship to Russia. The uranium will be processed for manufacture into nuclear fuel.

The export licences for this shipment were approved following the receipt of satisfactory end user undertakings from the consignee. The details of the specific customers involved is commercially confidential information, contained in appropriate contractual documents.

HEALTH

Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse

Mr. Hunt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many alcohol-related (a) deaths and (b) hospital admissions there have been in each year since 1997. [313640]

Gillian Merron: Information on alcohol admissions is available at:
www.nwph.net/alcohol/lape/download.htm
Information on alcohol related death is available at:
www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=14496

James Brokenshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children under the age of 18 were admitted to hospital with an (a) primary and (b) secondary diagnosis related to alcohol in each strategic health authority in each of the last three years. [312632]

Gillian Merron: The number of admissions of patients under the age of 18 with a primary or secondary alcohol-related condition by strategic health authority of residence is presented in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic health authority</th>
<th>2006-07 Primary alcohol-related diagnosis</th>
<th>2007-08 Primary alcohol-related diagnosis</th>
<th>2008-09 Primary alcohol-related diagnosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>1,126</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>1,081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>3,093</td>
<td>1,388</td>
<td>2,933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire and The Humber</td>
<td>1,523</td>
<td>591</td>
<td>1,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>1,176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>1,723</td>
<td>763</td>
<td>1,631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East of England</td>
<td>1,032</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>1,073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>1,307</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>1,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East Coast</td>
<td>1,049</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>1,068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Central</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>1,572</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Primary diagnosis**

The number of alcohol-related admissions is based on the methodology developed by the North West Public Health Observatory. Figures for under 16s only include admissions where one or more of the following alcohol-specific conditions were listed:

- Alcoholic cardiomyopathy (I42.6)
- Alcoholic gastritis (K29.2)
- Alcoholic liver disease (K70)
- Alcoholic myopathy (G72.1)
- Alcoholic polynuropathy (G62.1)
- Alcohol-induced pseudo-Cushing’s syndrome (E24.4)
- Chronic pancreatitis (alcohol induced) (K86.0)
- Degeneration of nervous system due to alcohol (G31.2)
- Mental and behavioural disorders due to use of alcohol (F10)
- Accidental poisoning by and exposure to alcohol (X45)
- Ethanol poisoning (T51.0)
- Methanol poisoning (T51.1)
- Toxic effect of alcohol, unspecified (T51.9)

**Secondary diagnosis**

Number of episodes in which the patient had an alcohol-related primary or secondary diagnosis. These figures represent the number of episodes where an alcohol-related diagnosis was recorded in any of the 20 (14 from 2002-03 to 2006-07 and seven prior to 2002-03) primary and secondary diagnosis fields in a Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) record. Each episode is only counted once in each count, even if an alcohol-related diagnosis is recorded in more than one diagnosis field of the record.

**Notes:**

- Includes activity in English NHS Hospitals and English NHS commissioned activity in the independent sector.
- **Alcohol-related conditions**
- **Primary diagnosis**
- **Secondary diagnosis**
- **Unadjusted data**

**Finished admission episodes**

A finished admission episode is the first period of inpatient care under one consultant within one healthcare provider. Finished admission episodes are counted against the year in which the admission episode finishes. It should be noted that admissions do not represent the number of inpatients, as a person may have more than one admission within the year.

**Data quality**

HES are compiled from data sent by more than 300 NHS trusts and primary care trusts in England. Data is also received from a number of independent sector organisations for activity commissioned by the English NHS. The NHS Information Centre for health and social care liaises closely with these organisations to encourage submission of complete and valid data and seeks to minimise inaccuracies and the effect of missing and invalid data via HES processes. While this brings about improvement over time, some shortcomings remain.

**Assessing growth through time**

HES figures are available from 1989-90 onwards. The quality and coverage of the data have improved over time. These improvements in information submitted by the NHS have been particularly marked in the earlier years and need to be borne in mind when analysing time series. Some of the increase in figures for later years (particularly 2006-07 onwards) may be due to the improvement in the coverage of independent sector activity.

**Changes in NHS practice also need to be borne in mind when analysing time series.**

A number of procedures may now be undertaken in outpatient settings and may no longer be accounted for in the HES data. This may account for any reductions in activity over time.

**Assignment of episodes to years**

Years are assigned by the end of the first period of care in a patient’s hospital stay.

**Source:**

HospitalEpisodeStatistics(HES),TheNHSInformationCentreforhealthandsocialcare

### Asthma: Drugs

**Mark Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made by each primary care trust in the provision of inhalers which do not contain chlorofluorocarbons.

[313530]

**Ann Keen:** This information is not held centrally. However the vast majority of inhalers containing chlorofluorocarbons have now been phased out and those remaining are expected to be discontinued during 2010.

**Mark Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department has made to encourage general practitioners to implement the 2008 National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence guidance on inhaled corticosteroids for the treatment of chronic asthma.

[313560]

**Ann Keen:** The Department is currently preparing good practice guidelines for children and adults with asthma, for use by general practitioners and other health care professionals, that will make reference to existing National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence guidance on the management and treatment of asthma.

### Asthma: Health Services

**Mark Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department has taken to ensure...
that all asthma patients have personal asthma action plans.

Ann Keen: The Department has a commitment to ensure the national health service offers everyone with a long-term condition a care plan by the end of 2010. The NHS Next Stage Review ‘High Quality Care for All’ re-states this commitment. The Department has provided a range of support for implementing personalised care plans, including: publishing guidance for NHS commissioners on what care planning and self-care is (January 2009); support for NHS workforce, through publishing an information booklet (April 2009); and publication of a Primary Care Service Specification (November 2009) to support commissioning from primary care providers.

The Department is currently preparing good practice guidelines for children and adults with asthma that will reinforce the value of personal asthma action plans and continue to encourage clinicians to ensure that every patient has one tailored to their needs. This is entirely consistent with the recommendation that all patients with long-term conditions should have a personalised care plan by the end of 2010.

Mark Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what preparations his Department has made for managing the symptoms of asthma patients who contract (a) swine influenza and (b) seasonal influenza during the winter.

Ann Keen: Every year people of all ages, including those with asthma, are eligible for vaccination against seasonal influenza, and can have this at their general practitioner’s (GP’s) surgery. This year all people with asthma should also have been contacted by their GP’s surgery in order to receive a vaccination against swine influenza. This measure was introduced to ensure that people with asthma were protected from influenza of both kinds.

GP’s were advised by the Royal College of General Practitioners that people with asthma who contracted swine influenza may have additional respiratory difficulties. GP’s were advised to follow the clinical guidelines for management of asthma in the event that a patient’s asthma control worsened as a result of contracting swine influenza, in addition to prescribing antiviral therapy such as Tamiflu in order to shorten the course of swine influenza.

Blood: Donors

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have received blood components from 80 or more donors in each of the last five years.

Gillian Merron: This Information is not collected centrally.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received on making myalgic encephalomyelitis a notifiable illness for the purposes of blood donation.

Ann Keen: The Department has received 31 representations on making myalgic encephalomyelitis a notifiable illness in the last six months. There have also been a number of representations on this subject received by the Chief Medical Officer.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department plans to (a) commission and (b) evaluate research on the possible health effects of receiving blood donated by a person with myalgic encephalomyelitis.

Ann Keen: The Department has no current plans to directly commission research on this issue. However, the Medical research Council has designated myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome a priority research area, and will fund proposals of sufficient quality. The UK Blood Services together with the Health Protection Agency are undertaking a study of the prevalence of a rodent virus recently linked to myalgic encephalomyelitis, which will be used to inform a risk assessment.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department plans to test patients for xenotropic murine leukaemia virus-related illnesses.

Ann Keen: There are currently no plans to test patients for xenotropic murine leukaemia virus-related virus.

CJD

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many potential vCJD treatments are being tested in the UK; and what stage each trial has reached.

Gillian Merron: There is no proven therapy for patients with variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD), nor are there any clinical trials for vCJD treatments in progress in the United Kingdom.

Some current UK vCJD patients are being treated with Pentosan Polysulphate, which may extend life, on an individual basis.

The Department is currently providing funding for a six-year multi-million pound collaboration between the MRC Prion Unit and GlaxoSmithKline with the objective of developing an effective drug for human prion infection and disease. In addition the National Prion Monitoring Cohort study, also funded by the Department at the MRC Prion Unit, has as an objective to monitor use of anti-prion agents if and when used.

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of vCJD have been diagnosed in each of the last 10 years (a) in total and (b) in each genotype.

Gillian Merron: The National Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease Surveillance Unit:

http://www.cjd.ed.ac.uk/

reports the number of cases diagnosed as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Diagnosis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All cases of variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (vCJD) where the genotype is known are MM at codon 129 of the PrP gene.

There has been one case of possible vCJD reported in a patient with MV genotype at codon 129 of the PrP gene. This patient did not fulfil the probable clinical case definition for vCJD as set by the World Health Organization, and is therefore not included in the figures for definite or probable vCJD.

**Bob Russell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have contracted vCJD from contaminated blood via blood transfusion in each of the last five years; how many such people contracted vCJD from non-leucodepleted blood; and if he will make a statement.

**Gillian Merron:** None.

**Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence: Finance**

**Mr. Todd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the reason for the cost of the finance function for (a) the Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence and (b) the NHS Litigation Authority referred to in the publication Benchmarking the Back Office: Central Government; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Mike O’Brien:** The costs of these functions are currently under review as part of the Operational Efficiency programme.

**Departmental Disclosure of Information**

**David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether (a) agencies and (b) non-departmental public bodies for which his Department is responsible sell information on a commercial basis to (i) companies or individuals in the private sector and (ii) other organisations.

**Phil Hope:** In common with executive agencies, and non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) across central Government that have Crown status, the Department’s agencies and NDPBs make most of their information available for free re-use under the PSI Click-Use Licence. Some information is contained in priced publications. Government trading funds, including the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency for which Department’s Ministers have responsibility, are able to charge for the services they provide in order to cover their costs. This includes charging for the provision of information to other public bodies, commercial organisations and individuals.

**Departmental Pay**

**Norman Lamb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the total monetary value of Senior Civil Service (SCS) non-consolidated performance pay awards was in his Department in each of the last five years; how many and what proportion of SCS staff in each pay band received awards in each year; and how much in each award category was received by staff in each pay band each year.

**Phil Hope:** Non-consolidated performance payments to senior civil servants are made under the terms set out in the Government’s response to the recommendations of the independent Senior Salaries Review Body. A close and effective link between pay and performance and increased use of variable pay is a key element of the reward arrangements for the senior civil service. The total spend on non-consolidated performance pay in each of the last five years was given in the written answer I gave the hon. Member for Twickenham (Dr. Cable) on 25 January 2010, Official Report, columns 544-546W.

The numbers and proportions of senior civil servants receiving non-consolidated performance pay in 2004-05, 2005-06 and 2006-07 is available only at disproportionate cost as the Department’s human resources information system does not hold the information in a format which can easily be translated into performance groups. For the last two years, the numbers of senior civil servants in receipt of end year non-consolidated performance pay was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Number and percentage of staff in performance related pay category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2008-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCS 1</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCS 2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCS 3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Groups 1, 2 and 3B received non-consolidated performance pay whereas groups 3NB and 4 did not.
Number and percentage of staff in performance related pay category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3B</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Total no.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCSI</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCS2.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCS3.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
Groups 1, 2 and 3B received non-consolidated performance pay whereas group 4 did not.

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been paid in non-consolidated performance pay awards to officials in his Department in (a) each year between 1997 and 2004 and (b) 2008-09.

Phil Hope: A close and effective link between pay and performance and increased use of variable pay is a key element of the Department’s reward strategy for all its staff.

The Department changed its payroll provider in 2003-04. Information on performance bonus payments prior to 2004-05 is available only from individual payslips. To retrieve information for years prior to 2004-05 would therefore involve disproportionate cost. Information for the years 2004-05 and 2008-09 was given in the written answer I gave the hon. Member for Twickenham (Dr. Cable) on 25 January 2010, Official Report, columns 544-546W.

Mr. Scott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been paid in bonuses to civil servants in his Department in each year since 2006.

Phil Hope: I refer the hon. Member to the written answer I gave the hon. Member for Twickenham (Dr. Cable) on 25 January 2010, Official Report, columns 544-546W.

Grant Shapps: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many (a) year-end and (b) in-year bonuses were paid to officials in his Department in each of the last three years; and how much was paid in such bonuses in each such year.

Phil Hope: I refer the hon. Member to the written answer I gave the hon. Member for Twickenham (Dr. Cable) on 25 January 2010, Official Report, columns 544-546W.

Eyesight: Testing

Hazel Blears: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many pensioners in Salford constituency have received a free eye test in each of the last five years.

Ann Keen: The information is not available in the format requested.

The number of national health service sight tests for persons aged 60 and over, in England in 2008-09 is available in Table C1 of Annex C of the “General Ophthalmic Services: Activity Statistics for England and Wales, Year Ending 31 March 2009” report.

Information is provided by primary care trust (PCT) and by strategic health authority (SHA), but is not available by parliamentary constituency. Information on the number of NHS sight tests by patient eligibility is available at a local level from 2007-08. At a national level, the number of NHS sight tests by patient eligibility is provided from 1996-97 to 2008-09. This is available in Table A1 of Annex C in the same report.

This report, published on 19 August 2009, has already been placed in the Library and is also available on the website of the information centre for health and social care:

www.ic.nhs.uk/pubs/gosactivity0809p2

Notes:
1. From 1 April 1999, eligibility for a free NHS sight test was extended to everyone aged 60 or over. Patients may qualify for an NHS sight test on more than one criterion. However, they would only be recorded against one criterion on the form.
2. Patients are more likely to be recorded according to their clinical need rather than their age. For example, a patient aged over 60, with glaucoma is likely to be recorded in the glaucoma category only. The count by eligibility is therefore approximate. Patients may also have had more than one sight test in the specified time period.

Health Services: Houghton-le-Spring

Mr. Kemp: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much funding his Department has allocated for (a) the treatment of heart disease and (b) cancer care in Houghton and Washington East constituency in the last five years.

Ann Keen: The information requested is not collected centrally. Information on programme budgeting estimated expenditure of cancer and tumours and problems of circulation in the Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust (PCT) is shown in the following tables:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial year</th>
<th>Estimated expenditure on own population on cancer and tumours (£000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>19,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>23,126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>27,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>34,886</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Health Services: Reciprocal Arrangements

Sir Alan Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions he had with the Isle of Man government before he made his decision to terminate the reciprocal health agreement with the Isle of Man; whether he proposed any alternative financial terms for a continuing health agreement; what the reasons were for his decision; and if he will make a statement. [312835]

Gillian Merron: Ministers took the decision to end the current bilateral health care agreement with the Isle of Man on the basis that it did not represent value for money for the UK taxpayer and the wide availability of travel insurance. Discussions prior to the decision being made were at official level and the UK Government proposed no alternative financial mechanism.

Mr. David Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what date the reciprocal agreement for medical cover with (a) the Channel Islands and (b) the Isle of Man was terminated; and if he will make a statement. [313527]

Gillian Merron: The Government ended its agreement with the Channel Islands on 31 March 2009, and is ending its agreement with the Isle of Man on 1 April 2010, as they do not represent value for money for the United Kingdom taxpayer and travel insurance is widely available. Tourists will continue to receive free accident and emergency treatment. However, they will now be expected to have insurance to cover the cost of other treatment.

Health Services: Salford

Hazel Blears: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the average time was for which a resident of Salford waited for (a) cancer treatment to start, (b) a heart by-pass operation, (c) a hip replacement and (d) a cataract removal from the time of first presenting to a GP in (i) 1997 and (ii) the latest period for which figures are available. [313326]

Ann Keen: The information is not available in the format requested. Table 1 shows the average (median) referral to treatment waiting times in weeks for admitted patients’ resident within the Salford Primary Care Trust (PCT) area for the specialties listed.

Statistics on average waiting times between urgent referral and treatment for cancer are not collected centrally. The cancer waiting time standard of a maximum wait of 62 days from urgent referral for suspected cancer to first cancer treatment was introduced for all patients from December 2005. Statistics showing overall performance are published on a quarterly basis on the Department of Health website at:


Table 2 shows the performance against this standard for the first and latest available period on this standard1 (January - March 2006 and July - September 2009) for Salford residents and England overall.

Table 2 shows the performance against this standard for the first and latest available period on this standard1 (January - March 2006 and July - September 2009) for Salford residents and England overall.

---

1 Note that due to a change in reporting methodology from 1 January 2009, figures for the two periods are not directly comparable.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial year</th>
<th>Problems of circulation</th>
<th>Coronary heart disease</th>
<th>Cerebrovascular disease</th>
<th>Problems of rhythm</th>
<th>Problems of circulation (other)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>37,608</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>38,782</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>37,614</td>
<td>12,884</td>
<td>5,462</td>
<td>2,438</td>
<td>16,830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>43,542</td>
<td>19,965</td>
<td>2,482</td>
<td>3,749</td>
<td>17,346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>43,224</td>
<td>16,352</td>
<td>5,796</td>
<td>2,577</td>
<td>18,499</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. The programme budgeting data collection is complex, therefore expenditure figures are best estimates rather than precise measurements. Year on year comparisons are not straightforward due to annual refinements to the data collection methodology and changes to underlying data sources.
2. Subcategory level data were collected for the first time in 2006-07 and tend to be less robust than main category data as they are smaller sources.
3. Figures include expenditure across all sectors. Disease specific expenditure do not include expenditure on prevention or general practitioner expenditure.

Source:
Annual PCT programme budgeting financial returns

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Sunderland Teaching PCT—programme budgeting estimated expenditure on own population on problems of circulation category and subcategories (PCT) area for the specialities listed.

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Hazel Blears: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many (a) nurses, (b) doctors and (c) dentists there were in Salford in (i) 1997 and (ii) 2008.

Regarding the assessment made of the standard of healthcare provided in Salford in each of these periods, the role of the Department is to secure adequate resources for funding the NHS and to set out a strategic framework for the NHS to work within. This allows decisions about local NHS services to be taken at a local level. Local NHS organisations are best placed to decide what staff they require to deliver services that best meet the needs of the local population.

Ann Keen: The following table shows the number of nurses, doctors and dentists in national health service organisations in Salford in 1997 and 2008.

Regarding the assessment he has made of the standard of healthcare provided in Salford in each of those periods, [313327]

NHS Hospital and Community Health services (HCHS) qualified nurses, medical and dental doctors and general practitioners (GP) and GP practice nurses.

As at 30 September each year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NHS organisation</th>
<th>HCHS qualified nurses</th>
<th>HCHS medical and dental doctors</th>
<th>GPs</th>
<th>Practice nurses</th>
<th>HCHS qualified nurses</th>
<th>HCHS medical and dental doctors</th>
<th>GPs</th>
<th>Practice nurses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salford Primary Care Trust (PCT)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salford Royal Hospitals NHS Trust</td>
<td>1,112</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,727</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Manchester and Manchester</td>
<td>2,288</td>
<td>762</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3,274</td>
<td>994</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s University Hospitals</td>
<td>1—</td>
<td>1—</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3,264</td>
<td>1,242</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Trust</td>
<td>1,112</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,727</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust</td>
<td>1—</td>
<td>1—</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3,264</td>
<td>1,242</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Denotes not available
2 Denotes not applicable
3 The PCT figure excludes data for medical hospital practitioners and medical clinical assistants, most of whom are GPs working part time in hospitals and have been excluded to avoid double counting.
4 PCTs first came into existence in 2001, therefore data for 1997 is not available.
5 Central Manchester and Manchester Children’s University Hospitals NHS Trust was formed in 2001 from a complete merger of Central Manchester Healthcare NHS Trust and Manchester Children’s Hospital NHS Trust. Figures for 1997 are an aggregate of these two predecessor organisations.
6 Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust was formed in 2002 by merging acute services from four other NHS Trusts. It is not possible to accurately map figures from the workforce census for part mergers, therefore 1997 data has not been provided.

Data quality:
Workforce statistics are compiled from data sent by more than 300 NHS trusts and PCTs in England. The NHS Information Centre for health and social care liaises closely with these organisations to encourage submission of complete and valid data and seeks to minimise inaccuracies and the effect of missing and invalid data. Processing methods and procedures are continually being updated to improve data quality. Where this happens any impact on figures already published will be assessed but unless this is significant at national level they will not be changed. Where there is impact only at detailed or local level this will be footnoted in relevant analyses.

Source:
The Information Centre for health and social care

Hospital Wards

Derek Twigg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many single rooms there are in each hospital which they replaced. [312942]

Ann Keen: The Department collects data on the proportion of single rooms in new national health service hospitals opened since 2003 with a capital value of over £25 million. Information on these schemes is contained in the following table.

Information is not collected centrally on facilities that have been replaced as a result of new hospital schemes. All schemes with a capital value over £25 million have met the Department’s 2001 guidance, which stated that the proportion of single rooms in new hospital developments should aim to be 50 per cent. but should not fall below 20 per cent. and must be higher than the facilities they are replacing. The policy and design guidance for the provision of single rooms in mental health accommodation is 100 per cent.

Each trust makes an informed choice regarding the appropriate percentage of single room provision based on practical considerations such as site restrictions, affordability as well as clinical and operational limitations.

New hospital facilities costing over £25 million opened since 2003-04

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NHS organisation</th>
<th>Capital value (£ million)</th>
<th>Scheme description</th>
<th>Proportion of beds in single rooms (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Construction of new mental health facility at Fairmile.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>New District General Hospital</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumbria Healthcare NHS Trust</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Redevelopment of Hexham General Hospital</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Tees Acute Hospitals NHS Trust</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>Site redevelopment and centralisation of acute hospital services at James Cook University Hospital</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
New hospital facilities costing over £25 million opened since 2003-04

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NHS organisation</th>
<th>Capital value (£ million)</th>
<th>Scheme description</th>
<th>Proportion of beds in single rooms (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. George’s Healthcare NHS Trust</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Neuro cardiac unit</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden and Islington NHS Trust</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Adult Mental Health Unit</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrey Primary Care Trust (PCT)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>The provision of a local care centre at Farnham Hospital</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffordshire Partnership NHS Trust</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Maternity and gynaecology unit at Royal Preston Hospital</td>
<td>1—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wigan and Leigh NHS Trust</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>A and E and Children’s development at Royal Albert Edward Infirmary</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Mental health facilities at Woolfield Road and St. Charles</td>
<td>1—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Wolverhampton Hospitals NHS Trust</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Heart and Lung Centre</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Total site redevelopment</td>
<td>1—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnet PCT</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Edgware Community hospital development.</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dudley Group of Hospitals NHS Trust</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>Redevelopment and rationalisation</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University College London Hospitals NHS Trust</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>Rationalisation of sites</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West London Mental Health NHS Trust</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Dangerous and severe personalities Unit at Broadmoor</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guys and St. Thomas NHS Foundation Trust</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Evelina Children’s Hospital</td>
<td>1—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Renal Centre</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirklees PCT</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Provision of six Primary Care Centres</td>
<td>2—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandwell and Walsall Hospitals NHS Trust</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Ambulatory Care Centre at City Hospital</td>
<td>2—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East London NHS Foundation Trust</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Mental Health unit in Tower Hamlets</td>
<td>1—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>South West Cardiac/thoracic Unit Centre</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cardiothoracic Centre Liverpool NHS Trust</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Cardiac Centre in Liverpool</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wandsworth PCT</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Redevelopment of Queen Mary’s Roehampton. Including specialist rehabilitation and amputee services.</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West London Hospitals NHS Trust</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Modernisation of Central Middlesex Hospital</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2004-05

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust | 40 | Maternity and gynaecology unit at Royal Preston Hospital | 1— |
| Wrigthington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Trust | 25 | A and E and Children’s development at Royal Albert Edward Infirmary | 18 |
| Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust | 35 | Mental health facilities at Woolfield Road and St. Charles | 1— |
| Royal Wolverhampton Hospitals NHS Trust | 57 | Heart and Lung Centre | 27 |
| Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust | 32 | Total site redevelopment | 1— |
| Barnet PCT | 40 | Edgware Community hospital development. | 37 |

2003-06

Dudley Group of Hospitals NHS Trust | 137 | Redevelopment and rationalisation | 36 |
| University College London Hospitals NHS Trust | 422 | Rationalisation of sites | 34 |
| West London Mental Health NHS Trust | 36 | Dangerous and severe personalities Unit at Broadmoor | 100 |
| Guys and St. Thomas NHS Foundation Trust | 50 | Evelina Children’s Hospital | 1— |
| Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust | 25 | Renal Centre | 22 |
| Kirklees PCT | 27 | Provision of six Primary Care Centres | 2— |
| Sandwell and Walsall Hospitals NHS Trust | 26 | Ambulatory Care Centre at City Hospital | 2— |
| East London NHS Foundation Trust | 34 | Mental Health unit in Tower Hamlets | 1— |
| Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust | 31 | South West Cardiac/thoracic Unit Centre | 100 |
| The Cardiothoracic Centre Liverpool NHS Trust | 49 | Cardiac Centre in Liverpool | 43 |
| Wandsworth PCT | 75 | Redevelopment of Queen Mary’s Roehampton. Including specialist rehabilitation and amputee services. | 59 |
| North West London Hospitals NHS Trust | 69 | Modernisation of Central Middlesex Hospital | 33 |

2006-07

Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre NHS Trust | 45 | Cardiac Centre | 40 |

New hospital facilities costing over £25 million opened since 2003-04

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NHS organisation</th>
<th>Capital value (£ million)</th>
<th>Scheme description</th>
<th>Proportion of beds in single rooms (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buckinghamshire Hospitals NHS Trust</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Partial redevelopment of Stoke Mandeville Hospital</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Trust</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Reprovision of Mental Health services at St. George’s Hospital Morpeth</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Burnley Hospital development – Phase V</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>Redevelopment of Mental Health facilities, community care services and crisis homes</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>Closure of Blackburn Royal Infirmary and expansion of Queens Park hospital</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newham University Hospital NHS Trust</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Reprovision of Acute Services from St. Andrews to Newham General Hospital</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>New Distric General Hospital at Walsgrave</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southampton University Hospitals NHS Trust</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Cardiac Centre</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northamptonshire Teaching PCT</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Danetre Community Hospital in Daventry</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Whittington Hospital NHS Trust</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Redevelopment of Acute Hospital services</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lewisham University Hospital NHS Trust</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>Redevelopment of University Hospital including the separation of elective and emergency procedures</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>Rationalisation of two sites onto one adjacent to the existing Oldchurch hospital in Romford</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampshire PCT</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Redevelopment of Lymington Hospital</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>Reprovision of specialist services from the Radcliffe Infirmary to a new build on the John Radcliffe Hospital site</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre NHS Trust</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Orthopaedics/medicine redevelopment</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>New Hadfield Wing to replace Victorian Vickers wards</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge University Hospital NHS Trust</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Elective Care Centre, Genetics and Diabetes at Addenbrookes</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brighton and Sussex University NHS Trust</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Relocation of Royal Alexandra Hospital for sick Children</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West London Mental Health NHS Trust</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Women’s enhanced medium secure services</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basildon and Thurrock University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Essex Heart and Lung Centre</td>
<td>1—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingston Hospital NHS Trust</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Redevelopment of Kingston Hospital</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Hospitals: Admissions

**Mr. Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the number of people aged (a) between 0 and 15, (b) between 16 and 24, (c) between 25 and 39, (d) between 40 and 59 and (e) 60 years and over, who were admitted to hospital in December 2009 and January 2010 with conditions attributable to severe weather conditions. [313275]

**Mr. Mike O’Brien:** Data on hospital admissions directly attributable to weather conditions are not collected centrally.

The NHS Information Centre for health and social care publishes Hospital Episode Statistics, which includes hospital admissions in England.

### Mental Health Services: Prisons

**John McDonnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he plans to review the management of mentally ill offenders within the prison system. [313060]

**Phil Hope:** The Government published ‘Improving Health, Supporting Justice: the national delivery plan of the Health and Criminal Justice Programme Board’ on 17 November 2009. A copy has already been placed in the Library. The plan responds to Lord Bradley’s review of people with mental health problems or learning disability in the criminal justice system and describes a wide range of policies and activities to improve the services available for offenders with mental health problems including the delivery of health services for them while in prison.

#### Mentally Ill

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made on the proportion of people who have a mental health disorder; and on what evidence his estimate is based. [313182]

**Phil Hope:** One in six adults has a common mental disorder at any one time. This estimate is based on the 2007 Survey of Psychiatric Morbidity Among Adults living in private households in England.
The National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse: Manpower

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff the National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse has employed in each year since its inception. [312904]

**Gillian Merron:** The National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse (NTA) Annual Accounts from 2001-02 to 2008-09 record the number of staff employed by the NTA as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The activities of the NTA have increased significantly since its inception in 2001-02.

The NTA's role and responsibilities now include the Integrated Drug Treatment System (IDTS), Drug Intervention Programme (DIP), National Drug Treatment Monitoring System (NDTMS), National Alcohol Treatment Monitoring System (NATMS), and it has increased its capacity to support local delivery, including providing guidance and support to Drug Action Teams, ensuring they are able to provide drug misusers with a full range of services, as well as monitoring performance.

NHS: ICT

**Mrs. Curtis-Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much the NHS spent on information technology in the last three financial years; how much of this money was spent on (a) software development and testing, (b) software applications, (c) staff training in information technology and (d) the cost of new hardware and software. [313692]

Mr. Mike O’Brien: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

NHS: Manpower

**Norman Lamb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the answer of 5 January 2010, Official Report, column 273W, on NHS: manpower, how many full-time equivalent (a) managers and (b) senior managers were in post in each (i) primary care trust and (ii) strategic health authority in each of the last five years. [313561]

Ann Keen: A table outlining the full-time equivalent number of managers and senior managers from 2004 to 2008 has been placed in the Library. The 2009 Workforce Census numbers are due to be released at the end of March.

NHS: Pay

**Mr. Hepburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the average starting salary of an NHS doctor was in (a) Jarrow constituency, (b) South Tyneside, (c) the North East and (d) England in each year since 1997. [313379]

Ann Keen: Doctors are on national pay scales. For medical graduates entering their first post as a national health service doctor, the average starting in each year since 1997 is shown in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average starting salary of a newly qualified doctor (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>15,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>15,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>16,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>17,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>17,935</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>18,585</td>
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<td>2003-04</td>
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<td>2004-05</td>
<td>19,703</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>20,295</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>21,052</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>21,862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>22,190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The starting salary quoted is for a new qualified doctor. Until 2006-07, this was known as a pre-registration house officer. This grade has since been replaced by a foundation house officer year 1.

**Mr. Hepburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the average starting salary of an NHS nurse was in (a) Jarrow constituency, (b) South Tyneside, (c) the North East and (d) England in each year since 1997. [313380]

Ann Keen: The average starting salary of an NHS nurse since 1997 is shown in the following table. As nurses pay is set nationally this figure would have been the same in Jarrow constituency, South Tyneside, the North East and England.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average starting salary (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>12,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>12,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>14,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>14,890</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>15,445</td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>16,005</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>16,525</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>17,060</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>18,698</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>19,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>19,454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>20,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>20,710</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 As at 1 April each year.
2 The average starting salary of a NHS nurse is normally the minimum of the grade applicable to basic grade qualified nurses.
3 All the areas requested are covered by national pay schemes.

**Mr. Hepburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the average starting salary of an NHS dentist was in (a) Jarrow constituency, (b) South Tyneside, (c) the North East and (d) England in each year since 1997. [313381]
Ann Keen: Information on average starting salaries for national health service dentists is not collected centrally.

Whilst there are opportunities for dentists to work as salaried employees of NHS trusts in both primary and secondary care roles, the majority of dentists provide primary dental care services within independent dental practices which contract with a primary care trust to provide NHS services. The remuneration arrangements for dentists working within the practice, either as the main contract holder or as partners, associates or employees of the practice owner, are an internal matter for the practice.

Prosthetics

Mr. Gray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many prosthetic shoes have been built by the NHS for patients following leg operations in 2009-10; how many companies manufacture such shoes under contract with the NHS; with which such companies the NHS is in dispute over the contract; and if he will make a statement. [313038]

Phil Hope: Information on the number of prosthetic shoes is not collected centrally. There are four main prosthetic suppliers that provide clinical services and prosthetic components to the national health service within the United Kingdom and two others that supply prosthetic components only.

NHS contracts are agreed and managed locally, allowing organisations the ability to order direct or enter into contract with individual manufacturers and suppliers. Any contractual disputes will be resolved locally and central information about such issues are not collected.

Slough

Fiona Mactaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will set out, with statistical information related as directly as possible to the Slough constituency, the effects on Slough of his Department’s policies and actions since 2000. [311984]

Phil Hope: The Government have put in place a programme of national health service investment and reform since 1997 to improve service delivery in all parts of the United Kingdom. 93 per cent. of people nationally now rate the NHS as good or excellent. The “NHS Constitution” contains 25 rights and 14 pledges for patients and the public including new rights to be treated within 18 weeks, or be seen by a cancer specialist within two weeks and a NHS Health Check every five years for those aged 40-74 years.

There is significant evidence that these policies have yielded considerable benefits for the Slough constituency. For example:

Figures for October 2009 show that in Berkshire East Primary Care Trust (PCT):
- 92 per cent. of patients whose treatment involved admission to hospital started their treatment within 18 weeks.
- 97 per cent. of patients whose treatment did not involve admission to hospital started their treatment within 18 weeks.

In September 2009, at Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, 98.6 per cent. of patients spent less than four hours in accident and emergency from arrival to admission, transfer or discharge.

Between September 1997 and September 2008, the number of consultants at Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust has increased from 76 to 120. Between September 1997 and September 2008 the estimated number of nurses has increased from 1,154 to 1,386.

Between September 2001 and September 2008, the number of general practitioners per 100,000 within Berkshire East PCT has increased from 54.9 to 62.3.

96.8 per cent. of urgent GP referrals to Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust with suspected cancer are seen by a specialist within two weeks of the referral.

Berkshire East PCT opened its GP-led health centre on 15 December 2009 at Upton Hospital in Slough. The Slough Walk-in Centre offers longer opening hours, meaning that any member of the public will be able to see a GP or nurse between 8 am and 8 pm, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

There are two private finance initiative (PFI) schemes in the area that serve this constituency: a £19 million PFI scheme from Berkshire West PCT that opened in March 2004 and a £30 million PFI scheme from Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust that opened in April 2003.

Although statistical information is not available at a local level, Slough will have also benefited from national policies in other areas. For example:

Since 1997, gross current expenditure on personal social services has increased by around 70 per cent. in real terms, with around 105,000 households now receiving intensive home care and 3,076 new extra care housing units—exceeding the original target of 1,500 new extra care units.

Other strategies currently being implemented are:

Subject to parliamentary approval, the “Personal Care at Home Bill” will guarantee free personal care for 280,000 people with the highest needs and help around 130,000 people who need home care for the first time to regain their independence.

“Shaping the Future of Care Together” Green Paper, published in July 2009, sets out a vision of a National Care Service for all adults in England that is fair, simple and affordable. The Department has consulted widely on this reform and is currently analysing the responses, which will feed into a White Paper later this year.


The first National Dementia Strategy was published in February 2009.

“Valuing People Now”—a three year strategy for people with learning disabilities—was published in January 2009.

“New Horizons: A Shared Vision for Mental Health” was launched in December 2009 to maintain improvements in mental health services, combined with a new cross-Government approach to promoting public mental health.

Since 1998, there are now 2.4 million fewer smokers in England as a result of the Government’s comprehensive tobacco control strategy, which has a measurable impact on reducing smoking prevalence.

Child obesity levels are reducing due to the efforts of families across England, supported by the Government’s obesity strategy. In 2008, 13.9 per cent. of children (aged two to 10) in England were classified as obese, compared with 17.3 per cent. in 2005.

Overall, life expectancy at birth for men has increased from 74.5 years (1995-97 data) to 77.7 years (2006-08 data) while for women, life expectancy at birth has increased from 79.6 years (1995-97 data) to 81.9 years (2006-08 data).

Surgery: Technology

Mark Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment his Department has made of the use of robotic radiosurgery systems in the national health service. [313049]
Ann Keen: Robotic radiosurgery is not currently available as a standard treatment within the national health service and so no such assessment has been made. The National Radiotherapy Implementation Group has set up a working group to look into the uses and different methods of delivery of stereotactic body radiotherapy.

Swine Flu: Vaccination

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people in each primary care trust (a) are eligible for and (b) have been administered swine influenza vaccine to date. [312749]

Gillian Merron: At this stage, data on the number of people eligible to receive swine influenza vaccine by primary care trust (PCT) need to be validated by PCTs and the Health Protection Agency. This is ongoing and will be completed once the survey is completed. Therefore, we are not in a position to report the number eligible at present.

Provisional data (the latest that are available) by PCT for the number of patients that have received swine influenza vaccine from general practitioners and for the number of frontline healthcare workers vaccinated are given in the following table. These provisional figures are for the number people that have received at least one dose of vaccine. Most people need only one dose of swine influenza vaccine but some require two doses given at least three weeks apart (data on the number of people that have completed their vaccination course are not yet available).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PCT</th>
<th>Provisional figures for the number of people administered swine flu vaccine by general practitioners (up to 31 December 2009)</th>
<th>Provisional figures for the number of healthcare workers that have received swine influenza vaccine (up to 17 January 2010)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashton, Leigh and Wigan PCT</td>
<td>12,029</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barking and Dagenham PCT</td>
<td>5,109</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnet PCT</td>
<td>11,092</td>
<td>652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnsley PCT</td>
<td>13,211</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassetlaw PCT</td>
<td>5,345</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bath and North East Somerset PCT</td>
<td>10,603</td>
<td>665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedfordshire PCT</td>
<td>15,771</td>
<td>621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkshire East PCT</td>
<td>16,265</td>
<td>721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkshire West PCT</td>
<td>18,909</td>
<td>641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bexley Care Trust (PCT based)</td>
<td>3,659</td>
<td>543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham East and North PCT</td>
<td>14,019</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackburn with Darwen PCT</td>
<td>8,044</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackpool PCT</td>
<td>2,018</td>
<td>471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolton PCT</td>
<td>11,674</td>
<td>632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bournemouth and Poole PCT</td>
<td>26,376</td>
<td>794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradford and Airedale PCT</td>
<td>31,279</td>
<td>666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brent Teaching PCT</td>
<td>10,876</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brighton and Hove City PCT</td>
<td>12,841</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bristol PCT</td>
<td>25,843</td>
<td>773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bromley PCT</td>
<td>12,931</td>
<td>546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckinghamshire PCT</td>
<td>16,822</td>
<td>897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bury PCT</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calderdale PCT</td>
<td>6,202</td>
<td>504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridgeshire PCT</td>
<td>31,240</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden PCT</td>
<td>8,405</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central and Eastern Cheshire PCT</td>
<td>30,823</td>
<td>859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Lancashire PCT</td>
<td>17,590</td>
<td>854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City and Hackney Teaching PCT</td>
<td>5,464</td>
<td>446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornwall and Isles of Scilly PCT</td>
<td>33,546</td>
<td>1,205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Durham PCT</td>
<td>30,630</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coventry Teaching PCT</td>
<td>14,450</td>
<td>828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croydon PCT</td>
<td>13,520</td>
<td>453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumbria PCT</td>
<td>27,370</td>
<td>1,544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darlington PCT</td>
<td>4,634</td>
<td>539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derby City PCT</td>
<td>13,986</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derbyshire County PCT</td>
<td>35,445</td>
<td>894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devon PCT</td>
<td>37,999</td>
<td>1,707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doncaster PCT</td>
<td>18,869</td>
<td>914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorset PCT</td>
<td>27,335</td>
<td>1,553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dudley PCT</td>
<td>12,514</td>
<td>570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ealing PCT</td>
<td>11,380</td>
<td>526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East and North Hertfordshire PCT</td>
<td>23,447</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Lancashire PCT</td>
<td>12,548</td>
<td>672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Riding of Yorkshire PCT</td>
<td>16,059</td>
<td>524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Sussex Downs and Weald PCT</td>
<td>12,031</td>
<td>709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern and Coastal Kent PCT</td>
<td>22,274</td>
<td>1,742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enfield PCT</td>
<td>8,041</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateshead PCT</td>
<td>13,009</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
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CABINET OFFICE

Green ICT Delivery Group

3. Derek Wyatt: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change on the contribution of her Department’s Green ICT delivery group to the Government’s presentation to the Copenhagen climate change conference.

Tessa Jowell: I have regular meetings and discussions with ministerial colleagues on all areas of my Department’s work.

This includes ensuring that the Government’s Green ICT strategy supports delivery of the wider sustainability policy across the public sector.

Good progress is already being made, with over £6.8 million and 12,000 tonnes of carbon savings as reported in our One Year On Report.

NHS Charities

11. Mr. Carswell: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what discussions she has had with the Charity Commission and the Secretary of State for Health on proposed changes to the accounting treatment of NHS charities.

Angela E. Smith: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Bone).
Charities: Schools

Mr. Maude: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the policy of the Charity Commission is on undertaking investigations of whether schools with charitable status are promoting the public benefit; and what statutory provisions govern such Charity Commission investigations.

Angela E. Smith: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the Charity Commission. I have asked the Commission to reply.

Letter from Andrew Hind, dated 20 January 2010:

As Chief Executive of the Charity Commission, I have been asked to respond to your question on what the policy of the Charity Commission is on undertaking investigations of whether schools with charitable status are promoting the public benefit; and what statutory provisions govern such Charity Commission investigations (312287).

In July last year, the Charity Commission published public benefit assessments of twelve charities, which included five charitable fee-charging schools. We conducted these assessments on a co-operative basis with the charities concerned. In the case of the schools, we worked with two that had volunteered to be assessed and with three that agreed to be assessed after we had approached them.

In terms of our policy and the context in which this is set, we carried out these assessments following the Charities Act 2006 which:

- changed the definition of charity by removing the presumption that certain categories of charity, including those which advance education, are for the public benefit. The revised definition means that all charities have to show that they have purposes which are for the public benefit; and
- gave the Charity Commission, as the independent regulator of charities, a statutory objective to promote awareness and understanding of the operation of the public benefit requirement.

These public benefit assessments are part of our work in furtherance of this statutory objective. We explain our policy on carrying out these assessments in section H of Charities and Public Benefit which, following extensive consultation, we published in January 2008. It is guidance to which all charities must have regard and which sets out the approach and factors we take in all those cases where we are looking at the public benefit of an organisation. In summary, we said that:

- in order to provide clear information about how the public benefit requirement is met by different groups of charities, we will issue guidance about what public benefit means for different types of charity and that such guidance would include pilot assessments of the public benefit of individual charities in different sub-sectors; and
- we were likely to carry out detailed public benefit assessments of charities most affected by the removal of the presumption of public benefit and about which public benefit concerns were raised during the debate on the Charities Bill, such as fee-charging charities.

These first assessments have provided practical examples on the application of the public benefit principles and guidance which should help other school charities to meet the requirement themselves. We think that, at this stage, these are sufficient for schools and we have not included schools in the second round of public benefit assessments which we started in December. Public benefit will, however, continue to be an essential element of our separate, reactive casework with charities (including schools) which we would not routinely publicise. In these cases we will explore public benefit in more detail only where:

- it is necessary to do so (because, for example, we must be satisfied that the revised aims of a charity will continue to be charitable before agreeing to a change of purpose), and
- there is a high risk that public benefit will be difficult to demonstrate—examples of high risk factors include private benefits, novel or controversial purposes, narrowly defined beneficiary classes and high fees.

In terms of the statutory provisions governing these assessments, the Commission has power, both at common law and under the Charities Act 1993, to do anything which may fairly be regarded as necessary, conducive or incidental to carrying out its statutory objectives and functions. Section 1D of the Charities Act 1993 (as inserted by the Charities Act 2006) requires us (so far as is necessary) to have regard to the principles of best regulatory practice in the performance of our functions. I should also mention, for the sake of completeness only, that we have formal inquiry and protection powers under section 8 and 18 of the Charities Act 1993: we have not used these powers in relation to charitable schools and public benefit and would only do so where serious misconduct or mismanagement is involved or where it is necessary to protect charity assets.

We published a short briefing for MPs about these assessments last July, and I will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

I hope this is helpful.

Civil Servants: Location

Mr. Maude: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office whether her Department has issued recent guidance to non-departmental bodies and executive agencies on the outsourcing of civil service jobs abroad.

Angela E. Smith: The Department has not issued guidance to non-departmental bodies and executive agencies on the outsourcing of civil service jobs abroad.

Civil Servants: Recruitment

Mr. Maude: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the (a) job title, (b) salary range and (c) sponsoring public body was of each job vacancy posted on the Civil Service Recruitment Gateway that was only advertised on the private part of the website in the last three months.

Angela E. Smith: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Secretary for the Cabinet Office (Mr. Watson) on 2 June 2009, Official Report, column 422W.

Deaths: Infectious Diseases

Anne Milton: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office in how many cases (a) staphylococcus aureus, (b) meticillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus and (c) Clostridium difficile have been mentioned on death certificates in each region in each year since 1997.

Angela E. Smith: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Stephen Penneck, dated 27 January 2010:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your recent question asking in how many cases (a) staphylococcus aureus, (b) meticillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus and (c) Clostridium difficile have been mentioned on death certificates in each region in each year since 1997.

The tables attached provide the number of deaths where (a) Staphylococcus aureus (S. aureus) (Table 1), (b) meticillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) (Table 2) and (c) Clostridium difficile (C difficile) (Table 3) was mentioned anywhere on the death certificate, either as the underlying cause or as a contributory
factor, in each government office region in England, for the years 1997 to 2008 (the latest year available). Figures for 1997, 1998 and 2000 are not available for Table 3.

Although Staphylococcus aureus, meticillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus and Clostridium difficile are defined by the Health Protection Agency as healthcare associated infections, it is not possible to state whether the deceased was a patient at the time of death, or where the infection was acquired.

### Table 1: Number of deaths where Staphylococcus aureus (S. aureus) was mentioned on the death certificate, government office regions in England, 1997 to 2008

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2. Based on boundaries as of 2009.
3. Figures are for deaths registered in each calendar year.

### Table 2: Number of deaths where meticillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) was mentioned on the death certificate, government office regions in England, 1997 to 2008

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<td>135</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Based on boundaries as of 2009.
3. Figures are for deaths registered in each calendar year.

### Table 3: Number of deaths where Clostridium difficile (C. difficile) was mentioned on the death certificate, government office regions in England, 1999, 2001-08

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>1010</td>
<td>980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire and The Humber</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>917</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>1115</td>
<td>1255</td>
<td>771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East of England</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>1035</td>
<td>465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>757</td>
<td>1001</td>
<td>534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>1016</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>762</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. All deaths in England and Wales are coded by the Office for National Statistics according to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD). The Tenth Revision (ICD-10) has been used since 2001. In the Ninth Revision of the ICD (ICD-9) there are no specific codes that would allow deaths mentioning Clostridium difficile to be easily identified. Figures for 1998 and 2000 are therefore not available as ICD-9 was used in these years. Deaths registered in 1999 were coded to both ICD-9 and ICD-10 as part of a special study to compare the two ICD revisions, and have therefore been used to give an additional year of data on deaths involving Clostridium difficile.
3. Based on boundaries as of 2009.
4. Figures are for deaths registered in each calendar year.

### Departmental Consultants

**Julia Goldsworthy:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how much consultants employed by her Department and its agencies have been paid (a) in total and (b) in reimbursable expenses in each of the last 10 years.

**Angela E. Smith:** The information requested for the Cabinet Office is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.
**Government Departments: Internet**

**Mr. Maude:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many of the 1,499 Government websites identified for closure in the Varney review have (a) been closed and (b) not been closed.

**Angela E. Smith:** I have asked the chief executive of the Central Office of Information to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from Mark Lund, dated 27 January 2010:*

As Chief Executive of the Central Office of Information (COI), I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question [312184] regarding Government Websites.

The purpose of closing websites is to package the content appropriately for the intended audience and put into a place easy to find and useful for them. The Varney review requested Departments undertake Website Reviews because the number was not at that time known. We have now got a robust process for identifying and recording government websites. Of the 1,700 websites identified by Departments by 31 December 2009, 907 were closed with a further 479 committed to be closed that are not yet closed.

**Mr. Maude:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office which websites were identified for closure by the Department Website Review; which of these have been closed; and what Department or other body sponsors or sponsored each website.

**Angela E. Smith:** I have asked the chief executive of the Central Office of Information to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from Mark Lund, dated 27 January 2010:*

As Chief Executive of the Central Office of Information (COI), I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question [312302] regarding Government Websites.

Each Department is responsible for its own Website Review, with guidance and advice from the Cabinet Office and Central Office of Information. The list of websites that Departments have reported as closed and those which they have committed to close was placed in Parliament’s Library. The list is the latest prepared and was up to date end of June 2009.

**Government: Internet**

**Mr. Maude:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many websites are being operated by (a) Government departments, (b) executive agencies and (c) non-departmental public bodies.

**Angela E. Smith:** I have asked the chief executive of the Central Office of Information to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from Mark Lund, dated 27 January 2010:*

As Chief Executive of the Central Office of Information (COI), I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question [312281] regarding Government Websites.

As of 31 December 2009, Departments have reported through their Website Reviews that they are operating 1,700 websites minus the 907 they have closed, i.e., 793. Of these, 182 are run by Departments and 611 by Executive Agencies and NDPBs. No central record is held that distinguishes between Executive Agencies and NDPBs.

**Life Expectancy**

**Mrs. May:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the average life expectancy was for (a) males and (b) females in each (i) local authority area, (ii) parliamentary constituency, (iii) middle layer super output area and (iv) lower layer super output area in each of the last five years.

**Angela E. Smith:** The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

*Letter from Stephen Penneck, dated 26 January 2010:*

The Director General for the Office for National Statistics has been asked to reply to your recent question asking what the average life expectancy was for (a) males and (b) females in each (i) local authority area, (ii) parliamentary constituency, (iii) middle layer super output area and (iv) lower layer super output area in each of the last five years. I am replying in his absence. (313164)

Life expectancy figures are calculated as three-year rolling averages, and are published annually by ONS1. A local government reorganisation took place on 1st April 2009, in which a number of former local authorities were merged to form new unitary authorities.

Life expectancy figures on the latest boundaries are only available for 2006-08. Life expectancy figures based on the old boundaries are available for all five years (2002-04 to 2006-08). For completeness, both sets of figures have been provided in this Answer.

Table 1 provides the period life expectancy at birth for (a) males and (b) females in each (i) local authority in England and Wales, for 2002-04 to 2006-08 using pre-April 2009 boundaries.

Table 2 provides the period life expectancy at birth for (a) males and (b) females in each (i) local authority in England and Wales, for 2006-08 using post-April 2009 boundaries (the latest figures available). A copy of each table has been placed in the House of Commons library.

Life expectancy figures for (ii) parliamentary constituencies, (iii) middle layer super output areas and (iv) lower layer super output areas are not available. Life expectancy cannot be reliably calculated for areas smaller than local authorities for similar time periods.


**Married People**

**Mr. Laws:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many married couples there are in the UK; and how many such couples there are where both persons are under the age of 65, have not remarried, are living together in the same residence have children under the age of 18, and are not both in employment; and if she will make a statement.

**Angela E. Smith:** The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

*Letter from Dennis Roberts, dated January 2010:*

The Director General for the Office for National Statistics has been asked to reply to your request asking how many married couples there are in the UK; and how many such couples there are where both persons are under the age of 65, have not remarried, are living together in the same residence have children under the age of 18, and are not both in employment; and if she will make a statement. I am replying in his absence. (312613)

The number and type of families in the UK can be estimated using Annual Population Survey (APS) household data. The table below shows 2008 estimates from the APS for the family types requested. It is not possible to estimate from this source whether couples have or have not remarried. In addition, figures are based on dependent children (children aged under 16 and those aged 16 to 18 who have never married and are in full time education) rather than all children under the age of 18.
For information, the estimate of married couples includes all married couples with and without children, and is the same as given in the letter from the Director General in Official Report 504, column 51.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of family</th>
<th>Number of couples in the UK (thousand)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married couples</td>
<td>12,170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married couples with all of the following characteristics: both persons are under the age of 65, the couple are living together in the same residence, the couple have dependent children, one or neither partners in the couple are in employment</td>
<td>1,388</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These estimates do not include civil partnered or same-sex cohabiting couples.

Source: APS household data, January to December 2008, not seasonally adjusted

Married People: Statistics

Mr. Stewart Jackson: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what changes have been made to the mechanisms by which information on marital status has been collected by the Office for National Statistics since 1997.

Angela E. Smith: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Stephen Penneck, dated 26 January 2010:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your request to the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what changes have been made to the mechanisms by which information on marital status has been collected by the Office for National Statistics since 1997. (313090)

Information on marital status can be broadly separated into information that provides estimates of the population by marital status at a given point in time (‘stocks’), and information on the movement of people between different marital status categories over a given period of time (‘flows’). Both types of information are collected by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) through a variety of sources, and both types of information are used to calculate population estimates and projections by marital status. For most statistics on marital status, ONS currently publishes statistics for England and Wales only.

With regard to both stocks and flows, the main change since 1997 in the collection of information on marital status has been the introduction of civil partnerships. The Civil Partnership Act 2004 came into force on 5 December 2005 in the UK. The Act enables same-sex couples aged 16 and over to obtain legal recognition of their relationship. Other than this change, the collection of information on marital status has remained largely unchanged since 1997.

The main mechanisms for the collection of data on stock estimates by marital status are social surveys and censuses. Following the introduction of the Civil Partnership Act, questions in ONS social surveys (such as the Annual Population Survey) have been changed to allow the collection of information on the currently and previously civil partnered population. Information on revised survey questions is available in the following document:

“Harmonised Concepts and Questions for Social Data Sources: Primary Standards—Demographic information, household composition and relationships”


The main mechanism for the collection of data on changes in marital status (flows) is the registration of vital events. Data on birth, death, marriage and civil partnership registrations are collected by the General Register Office (GRO), which supplies data to ONS for statistical purposes. Similarly, data on divorces and civil partnership dissolutions are supplied to ONS by the HM Court Service.

The main change in marital status vital event registration since 1997 has been the collection of data on the formation and legal dissolution of civil partnerships. In addition, changes have been made to the registration of deaths (to identify deaths of the currently and previously civil partnered population) and the registration of births by parents’ marital status (related to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act). Information on civil partnerships is available at the link below.

www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nugget.asp?ID=1685

Public Sector: Public Appointments

Mr. Drew: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) whether she plans to encourage Select Committees to hold pre-appointment hearings in respect of public sector appointments; [311449]

(2) whether she has plans to provide Select Committees information on candidates short-listed for an appointment in respect of which they hold pre-appointment hearings. [311450]

Tessa Jowell: The Government have introduced pre-appointment hearings as part of a wider programme of work to strengthen the role of Parliament. Policy on pre-appointment hearings is set out in the White Paper “The Governance of Britain—Constitutional Renewal”. Copies are available from the Libraries of the House and online at:

www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm73/7342/7342_i.asp

Public Sector: Termination of Employment

Mr. Maude: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office whether her Department has issued guidance to Government departments on the termination of employment of public sector workers on grounds of inefficiency. [312293]

Angela E. Smith: The Cabinet Office has not issued any guidance to Government Departments on the termination of employment of public sector workers.

In relation the terms and conditions of service of staff, the Cabinet Office’s remit covers the civil service.

Skin Cancer

Mr. Lansley: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many cases of melanoma in (a) adults and (b) children have been reported in each primary care trust area since 1997. [313973]

Angela E. Smith: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Stephen Penneck, dated January 2010:

As Director General for Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your recent question asking how many cases of melanoma in (a) adults and (b) children have been reported in each primary care trust area since 1997. [313973]

The latest available figures for newly diagnosed cases of melanoma (incidence) are for the year 2007. Please note that these numbers may not be the same as the number of people diagnosed with cancer, because one person may be diagnosed with more than one cancer.
The tables attached provide the number of melanoma cases reported in (a) adults aged 16 years and over, for each primary care organisation in England, from 1997 to 2007 (Table 1), and (b) children aged under 16 years in England, from 1997 to 2007 (Table 2). A copy has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Figures have not been provided for children aged under 16 years for each primary care organisation, as these data are judged to be too detailed to preserve anonymity in cancer registration statistics.

Social Mobility Commission

Mr. Dai Davies: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what criteria will be used to appoint members of the Social Mobility Commission announced in Cm 7755, Unleashing Aspiration; what the Commission's budget will be in its first year; and whether this funding will be additional to funding announced in the pre-Budget report.

Angela E. Smith: In 'Unleashing Aspirations', published on 18 January 2010, the Government set out their response to the final report of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions, and agreed to establish a Social Mobility Commission. It will give expert advice to Government and report on progress towards a fairer, more mobile society.

A transition team has been set up within the Cabinet Office to make the necessary preparations for this Commission, which will follow shortly. The transition team will develop the detail of the Commission's governance, remit, funding and work programme. It will also advise on the appointment of members and the selection criteria for any appointments to the Commission.

The budget for the Social Mobility Commission has yet to be established, and will form part of the consideration of the transition team.

Business, Innovation and Skills

Apprentices: Torbay

Mr. Sanders: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what estimate he has made of the number of apprenticeships which will be taken up by people over 24 years old in Torbay constituency in the next five years.

Kevin Brennan: Information on projected apprenticeship volumes is not available by parliamentary constituency.

In 2008/09, there were 190 apprenticeship starts by learners aged 25 and over in Torbay parliamentary constituency.

Nationally, in our Skills Strategy (Skills for Growth, November 2009) we promised to boost advanced and higher apprenticeship opportunities for 19 to 30-year-olds.

Notes:
1. Figures for parliamentary constituency are rounded to the nearest 10.
2. This figure is based on age at start of programme and upon the home postcode of the learner.

Banks: Finance

Jim Cousins: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what estimate he has made of the monetary value of Government-guaranteed loans issued by UK banks (a) in total and (b) via the credit guarantee scheme in the last 12 months.

Ms Rosie Winterton: Under the Enterprise Finance Guarantee, the Government’s loan guarantee scheme launched on 14 January 2009, 6,330 businesses have drawn down loans with a value of over £630 million as of 20 January 2010.

Jim Cousins: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what estimate he has made of the monetary value of loans which remained outstanding in the Bank of England special liquidity scheme at the time the scheme closed.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: I have been asked to reply.

The drawdown period for the Special Liquidity Scheme (SLS) closed on 30 January 2009. The nominal value of Treasury bills drawn down as of 30 January 2009 was £185 billion.

Further details can be found at: http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/markets/marketnotice090203c.pdf

Business Link: Stroud

Mr. Drew: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how many businesses in Stroud constituency have received a health check from Business Link.

Ms Rosie Winterton: Business Link does not break this data down by parliamentary constituency, but 257 businesses have received health checks in the Stroud District Council area, between October 2008 and 31 December 2009.

Business: Ashford Kent

Damian Green: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how many businesses in Ashford constituency have received a health check from Business Link.

Ms Rosie Winterton: 252 health checks have been conducted in Ashford between the launch of the service on 23 October 2008 and 18 December 2009, the latest date for which figures are available.

Business: Government Assistance

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how many (a) small, (b) medium-sized and (c) large businesses in Eastbourne have received assistance under the business loan scheme since the inception of that scheme.

Ms Rosie Winterton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 14 December 2009, Official Report, column 934W.
Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps his Department is taking to support small and medium-sized businesses during the recession; and if he will make a statement. [310834]

Ms Rosie Winterton: This Department has introduced a range of measures to help businesses through the global recession and is continuing to provide help to promote growth during the recovery. Small and medium-sized businesses can find information and support at www.businesslink.gov.uk/realhelp or by contacting the Business Link Helpline on 0845 6009006.

Measures include:

- The Enterprise Finance Guarantee (EFG) - encourages additional bank lending to viable businesses who have no or insufficient security and who would not otherwise secure a commercial loan. A £1.3 billion facility is in place to be accessed by the end of March 2010, and this was extended in the recent Pre-Budget Report for a further year to March 2011, with a £500 million budget for the financial year 2010-11. Over £0.9 billion of eligible EFG applications from over 9,700 firms have been granted, are being processed or assessed, and over 7,500 businesses have been offered loans totalling £763 million.

- The Capital for Enterprise Fund (CIEF) - a £75 million fund supporting viable business with equity or mezzanine investment aimed at releasing and sustaining growth and can invest between £200,000 and £2 million where the business has exhausted its borrowing capacity with lenders. Offers totalling over £76 million have been made to 50 businesses, of which thirty one offers with £47.7 million are live. 15 businesses have received investment so far totalling £19.9 million. Businesses who would like to explore whether the fund might benefit them can contact the fund managers assigned to their geographical location through www.capitalforenterprise.gov.uk/portfolio

- Health Checks through Business Link which provide a free review of a business with a professional business adviser for hands-on advice and help accessing the full range of government help. To date, nearly 104,000 businesses have benefited from Health checks. 79 per cent. of SMEs accessing Health Checks were satisfied with the information provided and of those who accessed additional support, 93 per cent. were satisfied with this further assistance. 86 per cent. of all assisted businesses would recommend Health Checks to other businesses1.

1 Early Assessment of Business Link Healthchecks - November 2009

- Encouraging prompt payment - Government Departments have committed to pay their bills within 10 days to help small businesses, and we have encouraged big companies to sign up to a Code of Practice to help their suppliers. Up to now, 758 organisations have signed up to the code, including 25 FTSE 100 companies. We are also helping business manage their finances (over 109,000 guides on ‘Help with managing your cashflow’ have already been downloaded from the BusinessLink.gov.uk website).

- Additional flexibilities for SMEs were introduced into Train to Gain from January 2009 to help employers continue to train their staff through the recession in preparation for the recovery. These flexibilities included access to funding for repeat qualifications, the introduction of units of learning in business critical areas such as marketing and IT, and extension of the access to the leadership and management advisory service for very small SMES (less than 10 employees). In 2008-09 academic year, over 559,800 SME employees have started courses through Train to Gain.

- In addition, the Solutions for Business (SfB) portfolio is the Government’s long term, simplified offer of support products for business. Government provide about £2 billion of support to business through the portfolio. Solutions for Business products offer help with common issues such as accessing finance, innovation, business and manufacturing advice, research and development, knowledge sharing, skills and training, exporting and overseas trade, and resource efficiency, including low carbon. Small and medium-sized businesses can find information and support at www.businesslink.gov.uk/solutions

Sandra Gidley: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what information his Department holds on the level of personal guarantees required by lenders in respect of the portion of each loan advanced under the Enterprise Finance Guarantee scheme that is not guaranteed by the Government. [313142]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Department holds no information the level of personal guarantees required by a lender. Lenders are required to record whether or not a personal guarantee has been taken with respect to each EFG facility guaranteed. The level of personal guarantee is a matter for the lender concerned and will vary according to the commercial lending practices of each lender.

Lenders are entitled to require a personal guarantee covering some or all the proposed EFG facility. That personal guarantee must be specific to the EFG facility and must not be solely or preferentially attributed to cover the lender’s 25 per cent. exposure which is not covered by the Government 75 per cent. guarantee.

Lenders are not permitted to take a direct charge over a principal private residence for a new EFG facility.

Cadbury Schweppes: Kraft Foods

Richard Burden: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what recent representations he has received on the proposed takeover of Cadbury by Kraft; and what discussions the Government has had with Kraft on that matter. [313084]

Ian Lucas: The Government have received numerous letters expressing concern about this matter. The Secretary of State has received written assurances from the chief executive of Kraft about Cadbury’s production, legacy and workforce. The Secretary of State is also seeking an early meeting with Kraft senior management to hear how the company will fulfil the commitments they have made to Cadbury, its workforce and long term future.

Conditions of Employment

Mr. Maude: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills with reference to the answer of 10 September 2007, Official Report, column 2011W, on conditions of employment, what provisions of the Government’s manifesto relating to the outcome of the National Policy Forum in July 2004 have (a) been implemented and (b) not been implemented. [312352]

I reiterate that the Government continue to remain committed, on the conditions of employment, to fulfilling its May 2005 Manifesto over the course of this Parliament.

**Departmental Fines**

**Mr. Garnier**: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what powers (a) his Department and (b) each of its agencies and non-departmental public bodies has to impose administrative penalties; what the statutory basis is for each such powers; and how much (i) his Department and its predecessors and (ii) each of its agencies and non-departmental public bodies has recovered in administrative penalties in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. McFadden: The information requested is not held centrally within the Department and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Letters from the executive agencies follow.

*Letter from Stephen Speed, dated 21 December 2009:*

The Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has asked me to reply to your question what powers (a) his Department and its predecessors and (b) each of its agencies and non-departmental public bodies has to impose administrative penalties; what the statutory basis is for each such powers; and how much (i) his Department and its predecessors and (ii) each of its agencies and non-departmental public bodies has recovered in administrative penalties in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

The Insolvency Service does not hold power to impose any administrative penalties.

*Letter from Sean Dennehey, dated 21 December 2009:*

I am responding in respect of the Intellectual Property Office to your Parliamentary Question tabled 16 December 2009, to the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

The Intellectual Property Office does not levy administrative financial penalties.

*Letter from Peter Mason, dated 15 January 2010:*

I am responding in respect of the National Measurement Office to your Parliamentary Question tabled 16 December 2009, to the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills concerning powers to impose administrative penalties.

The powers which this Agency exercises, relating to the regulation of legal weights and measures used in trade and the enforcement of various European Directives, do not currently extend to imposing administrative penalties.

*Letter from Gareth Jones, dated 25 January 2010:*

I am replying on behalf of Companies House to your Parliamentary Question tabled on 16 December 2009, UIN 309294, to the Minister of State for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Companies House has responsibility for two types of administrative penalties.

Section 27 of the Companies Act 2006 provides the Registrar with the power to impose a civil penalty on a company for failure to comply with a notice to file a copy of the company’s articles, or a document making or evidencing an alteration to the company’s articles. This new section came into force in October 2009 and no penalties have yet been recovered.

Section 453 of the Companies Act 2006 (formerly section 242A of the Companies Act 1985) imposes civil penalties on companies that file their annual accounts after the due date. The Registrar of Companies has a duty to collect the penalties that are imposed under this section of the Act. The amounts recovered in penalties for each of the last ten years are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount (£ million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999/00</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/01</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/02</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/03</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/04</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/05</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/06</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/07</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/08</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008/09</td>
<td>52.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The higher than usual increase in 2008/09 is as a result of an increase in penalty levels agreed by Parliament on 6 April 2008.

All receipts are remitted to the consolidated fund. They are not retained by Companies House or the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

**Departmental Pay**

**Grant Shapps**: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how much funding his Department has allocated for (a) year end and (b) in-year bonuses in 2009-10.

Mr. McFadden: BIS was formed through a MOG change that occurred in June 2009. The Department was created by merging The Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) and The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS). Due to the timing of the MOG change it was decided that both Departments would continue with separate remits for 2009-10 before producing a single BIS remit for 2010-11. The two former Departments have allocated the following amounts of money for performance awards in 2009-10:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>BERR</th>
<th>DIUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount of money allocated for “in year” performance awards (£)</td>
<td>427,578</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of pay bill allocated for “in year” performance awards</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of money allocated for annual performance awards (£)</td>
<td>931,300</td>
<td>280,756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of pay bill allocated for annual performance awards</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTEs</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>784</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. The data included cover all staff below the SCS.
2. The DIUS data for the “in year” performance award budget are currently unavailable as these are held locally at an individual group level. The “in year” performance bonuses that were awarded in 2008-09 totalled £13,855.

**Land Agreements Exclusion and Revocation Order 2004**

**Mr. Grogan**: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills when he plans to lay before Parliament the instrument to repeal the Land Agreements Exclusion and Revocation Order 2004.

Kevin Brennan: The instrument to repeal the Land Agreements Exclusion and Revocation Order 2004 was laid before Parliament on 21 January 2010.
Manufacturing Industries: Export Credit Guarantees

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of export credit guarantees in supporting the manufacturing industry; and if he will make a statement. [313006]

Ian Lucas: Since the start of 2009, the Government have introduced a number of initiatives which will provide real help to exporters, as well as other businesses, during the current economic downturn. These have included the Working Capital Scheme, and on 20 October 2009 it was announced that ECGD, the UK export credit agency, was launching a scheme to support the confirmation of Letter of Credit Guarantee Scheme.

The Government are considering what other measures might support manufacturing industry and has and will continue to work with banks and business organisations to identify what further measures may be appropriate. ECGD will continue to work with UkTI and regional development agencies to ensure British exporters get the real help they need to take advantage of all the opportunities open to them.

National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship

Mr. Prisk: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how much the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship has cost in each year since its establishment; and if he will make a statement. [313330]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship (NCGE) was set up as an independent company limited by guarantee in 2004 by British Chambers of Commerce and other stakeholders. NCGE is funded by BIS to promote enterprise and entrepreneurship in our universities, with the aim of increasing the numbers of students, and graduates thinking about and actually becoming self-employed or starting a business. NCGE has received the following funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Funding (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>189,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>700,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>910,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>901,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>725,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>955,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>1,410,868</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This year their programmes include Flying Start providing 8,000 students and graduates with the opportunity to attend workshop style events that encourage them to think seriously about becoming self-employed, and help them to develop a business idea.

New Businesses: Females

Tom Brake: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what new initiatives his Department has taken to help unemployed young women to set up small businesses in the last 12 months. [313525]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Department is continuing to work with the Department for Work and Pensions to raise the profile of enterprise among jobseekers, including young women, and help them access the advice and support they need. Building on the success of the self-employment support provided under the “Six Month Offer”, access to intensive business start-up support and advice through Business Link is due to be extended to those who have been unemployed for 13 weeks or more. In addition, eligible jobseekers will be able to receive the tax-free Self-Employment Credit of £50 a week for up to 16 weeks to help with the transition from benefits to work, including self-employment.

Female entrepreneurship is also being encouraged through the “Flying Start—Make It Happen” programme, where 5,000 more places have been made available to provide unemployed graduates with the help and support they need to become successful entrepreneurs and start their own business.

One North East

Jim Cousins: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what the estimated monetary value was of One North East’s share in the assets of the North East Property Partnership on 1 April in each year from 2004 to 2009; how much income was received by One North East from the partnership in 2008-09; and how much it is estimated will be received in 2009-10. [312815]

Ms Rosie Winterton [holding answer 25 January 2010]: The value of One North East’s share in the assets of the North East Property Partnership (NEPP), including the Loan Notes receivable by the Agency were, on 1 April in each year, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Value (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>154,361,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>135,753,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>139,241,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>126,437,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>108,143,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NEPP was created 1 April 2004. The first set of accounts was therefore for the year ending 31 March 2005.

ONE received £8.4 million income from the partnership in 2008-09.

The estimated income to be received in 2009-10 is £11 million.

Jim Cousins: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how many units were in the portfolio which One North East transferred to the North East Property partnership on 1 April 2004; what the average rent roll was of those units; and what the total area was of those units. [312816]

Ms Rosie Winterton [holding answer 25 January 2010]: The information requested is as follows:

The number of units in the portfolio was—883.

The average rent roll per unit is—£12,774.

The total area of the units is—384,110 m².
Small Businesses: Bexley

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how many small businesses in the London Borough of Bexley have applied for financial assistance under the (a) Enterprise Finance Guarantee and (b) Capital Enterprise Scheme since their inception; and how many such applications have been granted under each scheme. [311562]

Ms Rosie Winterton: Under the Enterprise Finance Guarantee, as of 13 January, 14 businesses in the London Borough of Bexley have been offered loans totalling £1.15 million. Businesses may apply for a loan from any one of the participating lenders who will assess which form of lending, including the Enterprise Finance Guarantee, is most appropriate. We do not hold figures for those businesses which are instead offered a normal commercial loan, or are rejected for failing to meet the lender’s commercial criteria.

With respect to the Capital for Enterprise Fund equity scheme, CfEF received 243 enquiries from businesses in London seeking investment to the value of £293 million. Thus far, four businesses have received investments totalling £4.8 million, two businesses have agreed terms on investments with a value of £3.2 million, three businesses has been offered investment totalling £5 million and 23 propositions are under active consideration with a value of £39.3 million. The remaining enquiries are either being considered subject to further information to be supplied by the applicant or have been rejected or withdrawn. I am unable to provide a breakdown by parliamentary constituency or local authority as this could make it possible to identify the individual companies that have received support.

Streatham

Keith Hill: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills if he will set out, with statistical evidence relating as closely as possible to Streatham constituency, the effects on that constituency of changes to his Department’s policies since 1997. [313403]

Mr. McFadden: The statistical information requested is only available in London at borough level. I refer the right hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey) on 25 January 2010, Official Report column 685W.

Unemployment: Young People

Steve Webb: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how many people aged between 18 and 24 years and not in employment, education or training (NEET) in each region in quarter 3 of 2009. These estimates are given in table 2. Please note that these figures are not comparable with those in table 1, as they are for a different age group and a different time period.

All of the estimates given are subject to sampling variability and should therefore be treated with caution and viewed in conjunction with their Confidence Intervals (CIs), which indicate how accurate an estimate is. For example, a CI of +/-4.2 percentage points (pp) means that the true value is between 4.2pp above the estimate and 4.2pp below the estimate.

In December 2009, the Government published Investing in Potential, our strategy to increase the proportion of 16 to 24-year-olds in education, employment or training and reduce the proportion of those who are NEET. This can be found here:


Table 1: People aged 18 to 24 not in education, employment or training in Q3 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number NEET</th>
<th>Percentage NEET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>67,000</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>160,000</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>103,000</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorks and Humber</td>
<td>76,000</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>109,000</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>78,000</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East of England</td>
<td>148,000</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>118,000</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>73,000</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>933,000</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 18 to 24-year-olds
Source: Q3 2009 Labour Force Survey

Table 2: People aged 16 to 24 not in education, employment or training in 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number NEET</th>
<th>Percentage NEET</th>
<th>95 per cent. Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>857,000</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>+/-0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barking and</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>+/-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagenham</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnet</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>+/-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnsley</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>+/-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bath and North East</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>+/-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerset</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedfordshire</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>+/-4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We are unable to produce NEET estimates for 18 to 24-year-olds by local authority as the sample sizes are too small, however we do have estimates for 16 to 24 year old NEET by local education authority taken from the 2008 Annual Population Survey. These estimates are given in table 2. Please note that these figures are not comparable with those in table 1, as they are for a different age group and a different time period.

1 Age used is respondents academic age, which is defined as their age at the preceding 31 August.

2 Those given are 95 per cent. confidence intervals.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>NEET</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bexley</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>+/-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>29,000</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackburn with Darwen</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darwen</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackpool</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolton</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bournemouth</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>+/-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bracknell Forest</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradford</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>+/-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brent</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>+/-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brighton and Hove</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bromley</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>+/-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckinghamshire</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bury</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calderdale</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>+/-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridgeshire</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheshire</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>+/-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornwall</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coventry</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croydon</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>+/-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumbria</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+/-4</td>
</tr>
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<td>1,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>+/-6</td>
</tr>
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<td>Derby</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derbyshire</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devon</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>+/-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doncaster</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>+/-6</td>
</tr>
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<td>Dorset</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
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<td>Dudley</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham</td>
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<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Riding of Yorkshire</td>
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<td>+/-6</td>
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<td>+/-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halton</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>+/-6</td>
</tr>
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<td>2,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>+/-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampshire</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>+/-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haringey</td>
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<td>+/-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrow</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>+/-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartlepool</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>+/-7</td>
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<td>+/-7</td>
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<td>+/-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kensington and Chelsea</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<tr>
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<td>+/-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingston upon Hull</td>
<td>8,000</td>
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<td>+/-6</td>
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<td>+/-7</td>
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<td>+/-4</td>
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<td>+/-4</td>
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<td>+/-8</td>
</tr>
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<td>Lincolnshire</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>+/-4</td>
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<td>10,000</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luton</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>+/-4</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>+/-6</td>
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<td>+/-9</td>
</tr>
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<td>5,000</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>+/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton Keynes</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>+/-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newham</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>+/-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norfolk</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>+/-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Lincolnshire</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>+/-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Somerset</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>+/-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Tyneside</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>+/-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Yorkshire</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northamptonshire</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nottingam</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>+/-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nottingahmshire</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oldham</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>+/-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxfordshire</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>+/-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peterborough</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>+/-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plymouth</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>+/-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poole</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>+/-5</td>
</tr>
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<td>Portsmouth</td>
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</table>
Table 2: People aged 16 to 24 not in education, employment or training in 2008

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<th>Area</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<th>Percentage</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

* = Data has been suppressed as the sample is too small.

Base: 16 to 24-year-olds

Source: 2008 Annual Population Survey
Ministerial Correction

Wednesday 27 January 2010

DEFENCE

Departmental Advertising

Grant Shapps: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department has spent on (a) print, (b) online, (c) television and (d) radio advertising in each of the last five years; how much has been spent on advertising in 2009-10 to date; and what percentage of advertising expenditure in each year was managed by the Central Office of Information.


Letter of correction from Mr. Kevan Jones:
A number of errors have been identified in the written answer given to the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Grant Shapps) on 13 January 2010. These errors arose as a result of mistakes in calculating the breakdown in armed forces recruitment advertising spend against the specified categories in the following areas—TV and Cinema in 2004-05; Print in 2006-07, 2007-08, and 2008-09; and Online and Interactive TV in 2007-08 and 2008-09. Additionally, the original answer included a second table which was incorrectly identified as relating to non-recruitment advertising spend, when in fact it was total spend including creative and production costs. This has been removed from the revised answer and the relevant data incorporated into a single table broken down by the specified categories to provide a clearer representation of the data requested.

The correct answer should have been:

Mr. Kevan Jones: The majority of advertising conducted by the Ministry of Defence is part of the drive to recruit the best personnel to the armed forces and civil service. In addition the Department may promote other initiatives such as Armed Forces Day.

Spend relating to advertising activities, which is available centrally against the specified categories is shown in the following table. The Central Office of Information manages all but a small percentage, less than 1 per cent. of this. Information for 2009-10 is not yet available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertising spend £ million</th>
<th>Print (press and poster)</th>
<th>Online and interactive TV</th>
<th>TV and cinema</th>
<th>Radio</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
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### ORAL ANSWERS

**Wednesday 27 January 2010**

**DUCHY OF LANCASTER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Col. No.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011 Census</td>
<td>791</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advice and Advocacy Services</td>
<td>795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charities (Regulatory Burden)</td>
<td>799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get Safe Online Campaign</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Information Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grassroots Grant Programme</td>
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<td>NHS Charities</td>
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**PRIME MINISTER**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Col. No.</th>
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<td>Youth Citizenship Commission</td>
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**COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Col. No.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working Group on Libel</td>
<td>58WS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Victims’ Service</td>
<td>54WS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry of Justice</td>
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**JUSTICE**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
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<td>National Equality Panel</td>
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### WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

**Wednesday 27 January 2010**

**COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Park Home Sales</td>
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<td>Planning and Development (Essex)</td>
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**TREASURY**

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<td>Oil Field Allowance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tax Information Exchange</td>
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<td>Terrorist Asset Freezing</td>
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**WOMEN AND EQUALITY**

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<tr>
<td>Equality Bill</td>
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### PETITIONS

**Wednesday 27 January 2010**

**PRESENTED PETITION**

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**CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES**

<table>
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<th>Topic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Badman Report (Beverley and Holderness)</td>
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### WRITTEN ANSWERS

**Wednesday 27 January 2010**

**BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS**

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<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Apprentices: Torbay</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banks: Finance</td>
<td>973W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business: Ashford Kent</td>
<td>974W</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business: Government Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business Link: Stroud</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cadbury Schweppes: Kraft Foods</td>
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<td>Conditions of Employment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Departmental Fines</td>
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<tr>
<td>Departmental Pay</td>
<td>978W</td>
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<tr>
<td>Land Agreements Exclusion and Revocation Order 2004</td>
<td>978W</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manufacturing Industries: Export Credit Guarantees</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>979W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Businesses: Females</td>
<td>979W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One North East</td>
<td>980W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Businesses: Bexley</td>
<td>981W</td>
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<tr>
<td>Streatham</td>
<td>981W</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployment: Young People</td>
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**CABINET OFFICE—continued**

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<td>Civil Servants: Location</td>
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<td>Deaths: Infectious Diseases</td>
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<td>Departmental Consultants</td>
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<td>Government Departments: Internet</td>
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<td>Green ICT Delivery Group</td>
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<td>Life Expectancy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married People</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married People: Statistics</td>
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<td>Unemployment: Young People</td>
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**CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES**

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<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Children: Day Care</td>
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<td>Extracurricular Activities: Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affordable Housing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Government: Empty Property</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repossession Orders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Rented Housing</td>
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<td>Social Rented Housing: Unemployed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainable Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT</td>
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<td>Departmental Mobile Phones</td>
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<td>Departmental Written Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Radio: Scotland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theatre: Young People</td>
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<td>DEFENCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Armed Forces: Housing</td>
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<td>Departmental Drinking Water</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
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<td>Trident Submarines</td>
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<td>Warships: Portsmouth</td>
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<td>Insulation: Houseboats</td>
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<td>Radioactive Waste; Waste Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tidal Power</td>
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<td>Uranium: Exports</td>
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<td>ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS</td>
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<td>Agriculture: Subsidies</td>
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<td>Chemicals: Animal Experiments</td>
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<td>Departmental Assets</td>
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<td>Departmental Carbon Emissions</td>
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<td>Fly Tipping: Kent</td>
<td>873W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garages and Petrol Stations: Contamination</td>
<td>874W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Payments Agency: Pay</td>
<td>874W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wind Power: Planning Permission</td>
<td>875W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE</td>
<td>895W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean: EU External Trade</td>
<td>895W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Carbon Emissions</td>
<td>896W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Disclosure of Information</td>
<td>896W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diplomatic Service</td>
<td>897W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members: Correspondence</td>
<td>897W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snow and Ice</td>
<td>897W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Sahara: Human Rights</td>
<td>897W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Sahara: Human Rights</td>
<td>897W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEALTH—continued</td>
<td>938W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse</td>
<td>938W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asthma: Drugs</td>
<td>939W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asthma: Health Services</td>
<td>940W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood: Donors</td>
<td>941W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Fatigue Syndrome</td>
<td>941W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CJD</td>
<td>942W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence: Finance</td>
<td>943W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Disclosure of Information</td>
<td>943W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Pay</td>
<td>944W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEALTH—continued</td>
<td>945W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyesight: Testing</td>
<td>945W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Services: Houghton-le-Spring</td>
<td>946W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Services: Reciprocal Arrangements</td>
<td>947W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Services: Salford</td>
<td>947W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital Wards</td>
<td>949W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitals: Admissions</td>
<td>954W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Services: Prisons</td>
<td>954W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentally Ill</td>
<td>954W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse: Manpower</td>
<td>955W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS: ICT</td>
<td>955W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS: Manpower</td>
<td>955W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS: Pay</td>
<td>956W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosthetics</td>
<td>957W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slough</td>
<td>957W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surgery: Technology</td>
<td>958W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swine Flu: Vaccination</td>
<td>959W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOME DEPARTMENT</td>
<td>898W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antisocial Behaviour</td>
<td>898W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borders: Personal Records</td>
<td>899W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Nationality</td>
<td>900W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Safety Accreditation Schemes</td>
<td>901W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counter-terrorism</td>
<td>902W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>902W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Internet</td>
<td>904W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Pay</td>
<td>905W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deportation</td>
<td>905W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs: Cannabis</td>
<td>906W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Trafficking</td>
<td>908W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Controls</td>
<td>908W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam4UK: Wootton Bassett</td>
<td>909W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passports: Fees and Charges</td>
<td>909W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passports: Forgery</td>
<td>910W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>910W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police: Manpower</td>
<td>911W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Patrolling</td>
<td>911W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shellfish: Testing</td>
<td>912W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>912W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism: Prosecutions</td>
<td>913W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vetting</td>
<td>913W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION</td>
<td>857W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bars</td>
<td>857W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Resources</td>
<td>857W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members: Allowances</td>
<td>858W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>891W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria: Overseas Aid</td>
<td>891W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Disclosure of Information</td>
<td>891W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Manpower</td>
<td>892W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Countries: Educational Visits</td>
<td>892W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti: Overseas Aid</td>
<td>893W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco: Overseas Aid</td>
<td>894W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas Aid</td>
<td>894W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan: Elections</td>
<td>894W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Africa: Overseas Aid</td>
<td>895W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUSTICE</td>
<td>888W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back Office: Central Government</td>
<td>889W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convictions: Knives</td>
<td>899W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving Offences</td>
<td>890W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Courts: Mass Media</td>
<td>891W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Advice and Assistance</td>
<td>892W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Offender Management Service</td>
<td>893W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Offender Management Service</td>
<td>894W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Offender Management Service: Probation</td>
<td>895W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Offender Management Service: Recruitment</td>
<td>896W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison Accommodation</td>
<td>897W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUSTICE—continued</td>
<td>Col. No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoner Escapes</td>
<td>863W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoners: Foreigners</td>
<td>865W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoners: Gender Identity Disorder</td>
<td>865W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoners Release</td>
<td>864W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoners Release: Reoffenders</td>
<td>864W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisons: Drugs</td>
<td>866W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisons: Mother and Baby Units</td>
<td>867W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation</td>
<td>867W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEADER OF THE HOUSE</td>
<td>891W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Internet</td>
<td>891W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLYMPICS</td>
<td>885W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Sick Leave</td>
<td>885W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olympic Games 2012: Contracts</td>
<td>885W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olympic Games 2012: Illegal Immigrants</td>
<td>886W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCOTLAND</td>
<td>883W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Official Engagements</td>
<td>883W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Publications</td>
<td>884W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel: Taxation</td>
<td>884W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLICITOR-GENERAL</td>
<td>884W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrest Warrants</td>
<td>884W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Family: Wills</td>
<td>885W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANSPORT</td>
<td>875W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aviation: Security</td>
<td>875W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car Sharing: Road Traffic</td>
<td>876W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Tribunals Service</td>
<td>876W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Capital Connect: Industrial Disputes</td>
<td>877W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heathrow Airport</td>
<td>877W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immobilisation of Vehicles</td>
<td>877W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immobilisation of Vehicles: South East</td>
<td>878W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London and South Eastern Railway: Snow and Ice</td>
<td>878W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties</td>
<td>879W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railways: Hunting</td>
<td>879W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railways: Kent</td>
<td>879W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railways: North West</td>
<td>879W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railways: Standards</td>
<td>880W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads: Royal Mail</td>
<td>882W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANSPORT—continued</td>
<td>Col. No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolling Stock: Construction</td>
<td>882W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southend Airport</td>
<td>883W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TREASURY</td>
<td>916W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banks: Finance</td>
<td>916W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banks: Iceland</td>
<td>916W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banks: Pay</td>
<td>917W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Correspondence</td>
<td>917W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Food</td>
<td>917W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Services: EU Action</td>
<td>918W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Departments: ICT</td>
<td>918W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Insurance Contributions: Local Government</td>
<td>918W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue and Customs</td>
<td>919W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streatham</td>
<td>919W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxation: Self-Assessment</td>
<td>919W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOMEN AND EQUALITY</td>
<td>919W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Pay</td>
<td>919W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORK AND PENSIONS</td>
<td>920W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance Allowance</td>
<td>920W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold Weather Payments</td>
<td>920W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Information Officers</td>
<td>921W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Pay</td>
<td>921W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Trade Unions</td>
<td>923W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Living Allowance: West Yorkshire</td>
<td>923W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment and Support Allowance</td>
<td>925W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment and Support Allowance: Mentally Ill</td>
<td>926W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Jobs Fund</td>
<td>926W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels</td>
<td>926W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobcentre Plus: Telephone Services</td>
<td>927W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternity and Paternity Pay</td>
<td>928W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members: Correspondence</td>
<td>928W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offenders</td>
<td>928W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olympic Games: Canada</td>
<td>930W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathways to Work: Autism</td>
<td>931W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensioners: Social Security Benefits</td>
<td>931W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security Benefits</td>
<td>931W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security Benefits: Eligibility</td>
<td>932W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations</td>
<td>932W</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Members who wish to have the Daily Report of the Debates forwarded to them should give notice at the Vote Office.

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CONTENTS

Wednesday 27 January 2010

Oral Answers to Questions [Col. 791] [see index inside back page]
   Minister for the Cabinet Office
   Prime Minister

School Admissions [Col. 811]
   Bill presented, and read the First time

Young People Leaving Care (Accommodation) [Col. 812]
   Motion for leave to introduce Bill—(Helen Southworth)—agreed to
   Bill presented, and read the First time

Opposition Day [3rd allocated day]

Dementia Services [Col. 815]
   Motion—(Mr. Stephen O’Brien)—on a Division, negatived
   Amendment—(Andy Burnham)—agreed to
   Motion, as amended, agreed to

Out-of-Hours Care [Col. 873]
   Motion—(Mark Simmonds)—on a Division, negatived
   Amendment—(Mr. Mike O’Brien)—agreed to
   Motion, as amended, agreed to

EU Enlargement Strategy [Col. 916]
   Motion—(Helen Jones); Division deferred till Wednesday 3 February

Primary and Secondary Education (Devon) [Col. 918]
   Debate on motion for Adjournment

Westminster Hall
   Dairy Farming [Col. 257WH]
   Kenya (Drought and Famine) [Col. 283WH]
   Colombia (Human Rights) [Col. 290WH]
   EU-Israel Trade Agreement [Col. 313WH]
   Water and Sewerage (South-west) [Col. 322WH]
   Debates on motion for Adjournment

Written Ministerial Statements [Col. 53WS]

Petitions [Col. 11P]
   Observations

Written Answers to Questions [Col. 857W] [see index inside back page]

Ministerial Correction [Col. 5MC]