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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Wednesday 8 June 2011

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House of Commons

Wednesday 8 June 2011

The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BUSINESS BEFORE QUESTIONS

NEW WRIT

Ordered,

That the Speaker do issue his Warrant to the Clerk of the Crown to make out a new Writ for the electing of a Member to serve in this present Parliament for the County constituency of Inverclyde in the room of David Cairns, deceased.—(*Ms Winterton.*)

Oral Answers to Questions

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Secretary of State was asked—

Fraudulent Use of Aid

1. **John Cryer** (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab): By what means he plans to assess levels of fraudulent use of aid in fragile and conflict-affected states. [57736]

The Secretary of State for International Development (Mr Andrew Mitchell): The Government are committed to spending 30% of UK aid on conflict-affected and fragile states where the millennium development goals are most off track. We have a zero-tolerance approach to fraud and other abuse and all our programmes include safeguards to ensure that taxpayers' money is spent properly.

John Cryer: A very high proportion of that taxpayers' money flows through the EU. Is the Secretary of State satisfied that that EU money is being properly used and accounted for?

Mr Mitchell: About a third of that money goes to the European development fund, which scored highly in the multilateral aid review, and that suits Britain's interests because around 40% of it goes to Commonwealth countries and we contribute only 17%. The money spent through the budget is £800 million, over which we have much less control, and we are seeking to ensure that it is better deployed.

Malcolm Bruce (Gordon) (LD): The Secretary of State will of course acknowledge that the Government have committed additional funding to post-conflict states because that is where the greatest poverty and the greatest risk of falling back into conflict lies. Nevertheless, does he accept that, although we must do everything we can to stamp out corruption, it is precisely in those difficult climates that risks must be taken if achievements in poverty reduction and conflict prevention are to be secured?

Mr Mitchell: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right that there are greater risks when operating in conflict states, but in such states the very poorest in the world lose out twice over, once because they are poor and again because they are living in frightening and conflicted circumstances.

Mr Peter Lilley (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend's commitment to a zero-tolerance attitude to fraud. Will he encourage the World Bank to continue to have its regular survey of 32,000 small businesses across different developing countries, which shows that although fraud is a problem, it by no means absorbs all the aid entering those countries, as bar-room gossip would have it, and that it is more prevalent in south Asia than in Africa?

Mr Mitchell: My right hon. Friend's analysis is absolutely right. He will have seen the world development report, produced by the World Bank, on working in conflict states, which focuses on security and development. It is a very good report, produced at Britain's request, which focuses specifically on the points he has made.

Bilateral and Multilateral Aid

2. **Jake Berry** (Rossendale and Darwen) (Con): What steps he is taking to improve the transparency of bilateral and multilateral aid. [57737]

The Minister of State, Department for International Development (Mr Alan Duncan): We have introduced the UK aid transparency guarantee, under which we have published greater and more detailed information on the Department for International Development's aid expenditure than ever before, and we have actively encouraged our multilateral and other partners to follow our lead. I welcome the launch today of the Make Aid Transparent website, which is supported by a coalition of more than 50 civil society groups from more than 20 countries.

Jake Berry: I thank the Minister for his answer. Just as the Prime Minister has called on others in the G8 to live up to their promises on their aid budgets, will the Minister assure me that the Government are calling on others to increase the transparency of their spending and will he update the House on the international aid transparency initiative?

Mr Duncan: My hon. Friend is absolutely right that the Prime Minister secured agreement in Deauville that the G8 should begin to lead rather than follow on aid transparency. DFID also leads the international aid transparency initiative, an alliance of 19 major donors. Under our leadership, a new aid transparency standard was agreed in February and is already being implemented by DFID, the World Bank and the Hewlett Foundation, with many more set to follow later this year.

Mr Tom Clarke (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (Lab): In view of the lobbying of the House tomorrow by international development enthusiasts, will the Minister encourage as many people as possible to turn up, including hon. Members, to make our contribution to international development awareness?

Mr Duncan: I fully share the right hon. Gentleman's enthusiasm for international development awareness, and when it comes to transparency there is already much praise for what the UK is doing. For instance, Publish What You Fund recently said:

"As well as focusing on its own breadth and quality of publication, its"—

DFID's—

"commitment to influencing others sets important precedents for aid transparency on a global level."

Mr Gary Streeter (South West Devon) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the better we can demonstrate the effectiveness of UK aid, and that it is not all siphoned off into Swiss bank accounts, the sooner we will get the people of this country behind our excellent and worthy notion of spending 0.7% of GDP on overseas aid?

Mr Duncan: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and that is exactly why we have set up the Independent Commission for Aid Impact, which can evaluate the impact and value for money of UK aid. Transparency sheds light on all that is done and reduces the sort of corruption that my hon. Friend describes.

Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): Does the Minister accept that the welcome continued emphasis on transparency in Government aid must also apply to businesses? Given the OECD estimate that poor countries lose \$120 billion each year to tax havens, three times more than the aid that they receive, what is he doing to require companies to publish what they pay to Governments in developing countries?

Mr Duncan: That is exactly why we support the likes of the extractive industry transparency initiative, which will ensure that companies contracting with countries fully reveal what exactly they make out of their contracts.

Official Development Assistance

3. **Catherine McKinnell** (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): When he plans to bring forward legislation enacting the commitment to spend at least 0.7% of gross national income on official development assistance. [57738]

The Secretary of State for International Development (Mr Andrew Mitchell): The coalition Government have set out how we will meet our commitment to spend 0.7% of national income as overseas aid from 2013. As the Prime Minister has made clear, we will enshrine that commitment in law as soon as the parliamentary timetable allows.

Catherine McKinnell: Tomorrow I will meet several of my constituents as part of the "Tea Time for Change" event to discuss their and my support for the 0.7% commitment. Has the Secretary of State had any recent discussions with the Defence Secretary on that important issue?

Mr Mitchell: I have discussions on those matters with all my colleagues, not least the business managers for the reasons that I set out in my original answer, but the hon. Lady is right to point out the importance of proceeding with the commitment, and that is why we have made it clear that we will.

Mr James Gray (North Wiltshire) (Con): The Secretary of State recently described Britain as an aid superstate. Can he tell us what an aid superstate is—and do we really want to be one?

Mr Mitchell: My hon. Friend refers to a comment that I made on Monday, when I said that just as America is a military superpower, so Britain is a development superpower. I was referring to the fact that throughout the world brilliant work is being done with Britain in the lead on development, and we do so because it is not only morally right but, as my hon. Friend will understand, absolutely in our national interest.

HIV/AIDS (Lesotho)

4. **Mark Tami** (Alyn and Deeside) (Lab): What steps he plans to take to reduce levels of HIV/AIDS in Lesotho. [57740]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development (Mr Stephen O'Brien): The DFID Lesotho programme has helped to reduce the prevalence of HIV in garment factories from 37% to 27%, and we continue to assist 40,000 factory workers. We also provide support to HIV programmes in Lesotho through our contributions to the EU, the World Bank and the Global Fund.

Mark Tami: The Minister will be aware that almost 25% of the population of Lesotho has HIV, and one project that his Department funds is the Apparel Lesotho Alliance to Fight AIDS, which as he says targets almost 40,000 people. Will that funding carry on? If not, who will fund it?

Mr O'Brien: The hon. Gentleman is completely correct that one of the most successful programmes in Lesotho has been the ALAFA programme, which has enabled those 40,000 factory workers to obtain vital services to help with HIV/AIDS. We have just announced that we will continue that programme up to the point when we can secure long-term funding through either the EU or other donor agencies.

Simon Kirby (Brighton, Kemptown) (Con): Can the Minister confirm that the prevention of HIV is as essential as the treatment of it?

Mr O'Brien: My hon. Friend is entirely right to bring to the House's notice, and to emphasise, that prevention is as important as the treatment of HIV/AIDS. Indeed, that will be one of the major thrusts of what I say in New York tomorrow at the UN meeting on AIDS. In addition to prevention and treatment, however, we want to ensure that care and support, which has often been the neglected area of HIV campaigning, is addressed too.

Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC): Dolen Cymru has 26 years' experience of working from Wales into Lesotho, particularly in the field of health care. What consideration have the Government given to using such a non-governmental organisation to administer some of the aid budgets in Lesotho?

Mr O'Brien: I pay tribute to and congratulate Dolen Cymru on its tremendous ongoing work with Lesotho. It has not been a recipient of DFID funds; it has been self-supporting. On 30 June, I will be travelling to Wales on a ministerial visit, so I can discuss the most appropriate way, particularly now that Wales has the newer powers, to take forward the fact that development is a national responsibility while equally ensuring that we involve all parts of the United Kingdom in continuing good development work.

UN Women

5. **Sheila Gilmore** (Edinburgh East) (Lab): By what means he proposes to determine the level of funding his Department will allocate to UN Women. [57741]

The Secretary of State for International Development (Mr Andrew Mitchell): The Department for International Development recently reviewed the value for money of British taxpayers' funding to all multilateral agencies through the multilateral aid review. We will apply the same broad criteria to UN Women's strategic plan by assessing its organisational strengths and the relevance to UK aid objectives. This approach will help to determine the level of core funding for the agency.

Sheila Gilmore: One of the key priority areas for UN Women will be political empowerment of women. What plans does the Secretary of State's Department have for backing up this work in Governments and legislatures around the world?

Mr Mitchell: The hon. Lady is absolutely right. It is incredibly important to put girls and women at the centre of everything we do in development, which is what empowerment is. We are watching very carefully how the agency is developing. We have given nearly £660,000 as transitional funding to the agency and offered support staff on secondment. I am confident that once the plan is produced we will be able to fund it. I am sure that she will understand, however, that it is right to commit taxpayers' money only when we can see what it is being spent on.

Margot James (Stourbridge) (Con): Evidence is coming from Egypt that the position of women is not advancing as a result of the Arab spring; indeed, there are concerns that it is going backwards. Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that he is using all the influence that comes with the additional money that we investing in that part of the world to ensure that women get their fair share of that resource?

Mr Mitchell: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There is a feeling that the role of women in the Arab spring in Egypt was very significant, and it is extremely important that their role should now be advanced. We will try to do that in a number of ways, not least through know-how funds and the Arab Partnership money that we are deploying.

Ms Harriet Harman (Camberwell and Peckham) (Lab): To follow up the point so ably made by the hon. Member for Stourbridge (Margot James), while there is no doubt that the Arab spring offers huge possibilities for democracy and human rights in Egypt, it will not be progress if women's rights are set back. Will the Secretary of State ensure that out of the generous funding that we

are providing, funds will go to the Alliance for Arab Women in Cairo to make a reality of the demands set out in the Egyptian national women's statement of 4 June?

Mr Mitchell: I am considering the right hon. Lady's suggestion. We have exchanged correspondence on this, and I will look very carefully at the proposition that she puts. During my visit to Benghazi at the weekend, I had the opportunity to meet representatives of Arab women's organisations, who made a similar point. I am sure that we will be able to assist.

HIV/AIDS

6. **Mark Pawsey** (Rugby) (Con): What his policy is on tackling HIV/AIDS in developing countries. [57742]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development (Mr Stephen O'Brien): The Government's policy on HIV in developing countries is set out in "Towards zero infections: The UK's position paper on HIV in the developing world", published on 31 May. I have placed a copy of this in the House today.

Mark Pawsey: I thank the Minister for his answer. Following the recent good news about a decline in the number of infections, does he recognise the contribution that has been made by UK-based non-governmental organisations, with young volunteers, often in their gap years, working overseas with young people in their communities to get across the message of how a change in their behaviour can reduce their exposure to the risk of AIDS?

Mr O'Brien: My hon. Friend makes a very good observation. Tremendous, and often brilliant, work is done by NGOs in ensuring that work on the ground is delivering results. While this can be a tremendous, life-changing opportunity for gap year students and other young people, they also need to ensure that they observe a duty of care in ensuring that those experiences are benign and deliver results.

Emma Reynolds (Wolverhampton North East) (Lab): The Minister will be aware that HIV/AIDS disproportionately affects women in developing countries. Why, therefore, have the Government dropped from their new strategy the specific commitment to measure the impact of AIDS programmes on women and girls?

Mr O'Brien: The hon. Lady is right that in sub-Saharan Africa, HIV/AIDS is primarily a disease that affects women; they are now in the majority compared with men. It is right that in putting women and girls at the heart of all our policies, we measure all the impacts on women, in particular those on the poorest women in the poorest countries. In tomorrow's meetings at the UN, there will be a keen focus on women, and we hope that something will come of that.

Climate Change

8. **Luciana Berger** (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op): By what means he plans to assess value for money in his Department's funding for climate change prevention in developing countries. [57744]

The Minister of State, Department for International Development (Mr Alan Duncan): We rigorously assess costs against benefits in all our programmes. To measure the value for money of our climate programmes, we will look at metrics including the number of poor people protected from extreme weather events, the number of hectares of forest protected, and the number of people with access to energy.

Luciana Berger: The Minister will be aware of the decision at the last climate change summit to establish a green climate fund, and that the UK has a representative on the transnational committee that is designing the fund. Will he update the House on the progress made to date by the transnational committee and on what concrete outcomes the UK Government hope to see by the next summit in Durban later this year?

Mr Duncan: The hon. Lady is absolutely right that the fund is not yet up and running. We are on the design committee for the fund and are playing our full part in it. We want to ensure that the fund delivers results for poor people in the best possible way.

Martin Horwood (Cheltenham) (LD): The clearest message from the poorest countries at the world climate change talks in Cancun was that they face immediate impacts from climate change. Will the British Government commit to set an example to other countries by putting a high proportion of our climate finance into adaptation, as well as into climate change mitigation?

Mr Duncan: Climate change will hit the poor hardest and first. DFID will support poor people to protect their lives and possessions from the impacts of climate change, for example by raising homes on to plinths to protect poor people from flooding in Bangladesh, supporting drought-resistant crops in Malawi, and preventing coastal erosion in Vietnam. We aim to spend 50% of our climate change finance on adaptation. That will be kept under full review.

Mark Lazarowicz (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab/Co-op): The Minister will know that if we are to meet the commitments we made at the Copenhagen climate change conference, the UK will have to allocate by next year a further £1 billion in fast-start finance to help developing countries tackle climate change. Will he confirm that the Government still intend to allocate that funding by next year?

Mr Duncan: The Government are keeping their commitment to spend 0.7% of gross national income on official development assistance from 2013. Climate finance is being met out of that rising ODA budget.

Official Development Assistance

9. **Julie Hilling (Bolton West) (Lab):** What estimate he has made of the proportion of gross national income to be spent on official development assistance in (a) 2011-12 and (b) 2012-13. [57745]

The Secretary of State for International Development (Mr Andrew Mitchell): British official development assistance as a proportion of gross national income will be 0.56% in 2011 and 2012. The Government are fully

committed to delivering 0.7% of GNI as ODA from 2013 and will enshrine that commitment in law, in line with the coalition agreement.

Julie Hilling: The Government have frozen aid for two years and propose to spend money through multinational institutions, which have more expensive bureaucracy. Is it not nonsensical for DFID to cut its admin costs only to spend money through institutions with higher costs?

Mr Mitchell: The hon. Lady is not correct. The way in which we judge multilateral institutions was set out clearly in the multilateral aid review. The whole point of the two big reviews that the coalition Government commissioned on coming to power was to ensure that we deliver best value for money. It is our aim to ensure that for every pound of hard-earned taxpayers' money that we spend, we get 100p of development results on the ground.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): The brave men and women of our armed forces put their lives at risk every day to protect civilians and rebuild societies in far-off lands. That is real overseas aid. Does the Secretary of State agree that it is surprising that his budget is increasing by £4 billion when the defence budget is being cut by billions and billions of pounds?

Mr Mitchell: Having served in the armed forces, I yield to no one in my respect for them. However, I point out to my hon. Friend, who I know takes a close interest in these matters, that Britain's security is maintained not only by tanks and guns, but by training police in Afghanistan, getting kids into school in the horn of Africa, and building up governance structures in the middle east.

Topical Questions

T1. [57751] **Jake Berry (Rossendale and Darwen) (Con):** If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for International Development (Mr Andrew Mitchell): Last weekend I visited Benghazi with the Foreign Secretary to meet the national transitional council and discuss its plans for the future of Libya. I also announced new British support for the clearance of mines in Misrata, Benghazi and other affected areas, to help ensure the safety of 200,000 people.

On Monday, Britain will host the replenishment of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation, to secure global pledges to vaccinate a quarter of a billion children and prevent the deaths of millions of children in some of the poorest countries in the world over the next five years.

Jake Berry: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. On behalf of the whole House, may I express a great welcome to those coming to London for the GAVI pledge drive next week? What is the Secretary of State doing to encourage people who are coming to make generous pledges for the vaccination of children in the developing world?

Mr Mitchell: My hon. Friend is quite right that we are bending every sinew to ensure that we have the biggest possible replenishment. Our ambition is to be able to vaccinate 250 million children and save 4 million lives, and replenishment progress is going well. We are not there yet, but I am reasonably confident that we will get there by Monday. [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. There are far too many private conversations taking place in the Chamber. I want to hear Ministers' answers, and I want now to hear Catherine McKinnell.

T4. [57754] **Catherine McKinnell** (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): I have been contacted by several constituents who believe that the World Bank should be leading the way towards a green economy and a greener future for the world's poor. Will the Minister outline what discussions he and his colleagues in government have had with the World Bank to ensure that there is investment in clean energy projects in developing countries?

The Minister of State, Department for International Development (Mr Alan Duncan): The crux of this issue is whether the building of coal-fired power stations should be supported. We believe that such power stations should be a last resort, and that every possible action should be taken to explore the scientific and commercial availability of carbon capture and storage.

T2. [57752] **Chris Skidmore** (Kingswood) (Con): During the Secretary of State's visit to Benghazi this weekend, what discussions did he have with the national transitional council regarding its plans for the immediate and longer-term future?

Mr Andrew Mitchell: The stabilisation response team is working flat out, together with our international allies in Benghazi, to work out what action should be taken when the conflict is over and early recovery is taking place. That work is going well, and I hope that we will have a plan within the next 10 days. It will of course be owned by the Libyan people under the umbrella of the United Nations, and it will involve all the relevant organisations in helping the Libyans to implement it.

T8. [57760] **Lilian Greenwood** (Nottingham South) (Lab): More than 1,000 supporters of international development charities, including some of my constituents, are coming to Westminster tomorrow to show their support for protection of the aid budget and for further action to tackle global poverty. Given that poor countries lose more money to tax-dodging each year than they receive in aid, what action is the Secretary of State taking to address that issue?

Mr Mitchell: I am very glad that the hon. Lady's constituents are coming tomorrow, and Members of all parties will want to support that important lobby. The issue that she raises, which was discussed in earlier questions, is very important, and I expect that we will make progress on it in the coming years, not least because of the emphasis that has been put on it in the G8 and the European Council.

T3. [57753] **Simon Kirby** (Brighton, Kemptown) (Con): Can the Minister assure us that the UK Government will maintain their global leadership role in the response to HIV and AIDS, in both policy and funding?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development (Mr Stephen O'Brien): I am pleased to confirm that the commitment of the UK Government, who are the second largest contributor globally to the effort against HIV and AIDS, is set to continue. The matter will be central to the discussions that I have in New York tomorrow at the United Nations meeting.

Pamela Nash (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab): As the Minister has just alluded to, the UN General Assembly's high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS is taking place this week. Can he assure the House that the UK will raise the issue of homosexuals being prevented from accessing information and health care in relation to HIV/AIDS in countries where homophobia is still prevalent?

Mr O'Brien: The hon. Lady is quite right that if we are to make prevention equal to treatment, it is vital that we tackle what leads to the problem, whether it is men having sex with men or injecting drug users. Both those matters often lead to some difficult discussions and policy take-up in countries that do not wish either to discuss or to accept them—

Mr Speaker: Order. We are grateful to the Minister.

T5. [57755] **David Rutley** (Macclesfield) (Con): Can my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State tell the House what progress is being made on encouraging other Arab nations to provide much-needed humanitarian aid in Libya?

Mr Andrew Mitchell: In the last two weeks, the humanitarian position in Libya has eased, particularly on the border, which some 950,000 migrant workers have left. Today, under 6,000 people are stuck on the border, so a humanitarian crisis has been avoided.

In general, we encourage all countries to play their roles in providing humanitarian support and to put their taxpayers' money into those funds. Progress on that is good.

Mark Durkan (Foyle) (SDLP): Given the sensitive time line for change in Sudan, what commitments can the Secretary of State give to people there, and particularly to those in Abyei?

Mr Mitchell: I visited South Sudan and north Sudan recently with troika Ministers from Norway and the US. The position in Abyei is extremely tense at the moment, and we call on all parties to desist from taking aggressive action and to approach the negotiations in a spirit of good will and compromise. That is the way to reach the birth of the new state on 9 July and the full completion of the comprehensive peace agreement.

PRIME MINISTER

The Prime Minister was asked—

Engagements

Q1. [57761] **Jackie Doyle-Price** (Thurrock) (Con): If he will list his official engagements for Wednesday 8 June.

The Prime Minister (Mr David Cameron): I am sure the whole House will wish to join me in paying tribute to the following brave servicemen who have died in Afghanistan since we last met: Colour Serjeant Kevin Fortuna and Rifleman Martin Lamb from 1st Battalion The Rifles; Lieutenant Oliver Augustin, Marine Samuel Alexander and Lance Corporal Martin Gill from 42 Commando, Royal Marines; and Corporal Mike Pike from 4th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland. All of them were dedicated professionals serving our country. Their deaths are a reminder of the very high price that we are paying to stop Afghanistan being a haven for terrorists. We honour their memory and we will support their families, and we will not forget their service and their sacrifice.

This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, and in addition to my duties in this House, I shall have further such meetings later today.

Jackie Doyle-Price: May I associate myself with the Prime Minister's tribute to our fallen soldiers? We do indeed owe them a great debt.

We are reminded on a daily basis that not everyone in the world is as fortunate as we are in respect of the freedoms that we enjoy in this country. In particular, I should like to highlight the absolute horror of the images of the 13-year-old boy who was tortured by Syrian Government forces in recent weeks. Will the Prime Minister give me his assurance that he will use every influence he has to ensure that the international community condemns the activities of the Syrian Government and demands that their reign of terror ends?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend speaks for the whole House in what she says about those dreadful pictures of that poor boy. There are credible reports of 1,000 dead and as many as 10,000 detained. The violence being meted out to peaceful protestors and demonstrators is completely unacceptable. Of course, we must not stand silent in the face of those outrages, and we will not. The EU has already frozen the assets of, and banned travel by, members of the regime, and we have now added President Assad to that list. However, I believe that we need to go further, and today in New York, Britain and France will table a resolution at the Security Council condemning the repression and demanding accountability and humanitarian access. If anyone votes against that resolution or tries to veto it, that should be on their conscience.

Edward Miliband (Doncaster North) (Lab): May I join the Prime Minister in paying tribute to Colour Serjeant Kevin Fortuna and Rifleman Martin Lamb from 1st Battalion The Rifles; Lieutenant Oliver Augustin, Marine Samuel Alexander MC and Lance Corporal Martin Gill from 42 Commando, Royal Marines; and Corporal Michael Pike from 4th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland. They all showed enormous bravery and courage, and our thoughts are with their families and friends. As the Prime Minister said, that number of deaths once again demonstrates the bravery of all our forces in Afghanistan and elsewhere around the world.

We read in the newspapers today that the Prime Minister has torn up the Justice Secretary's policy on sentencing. Has he?

The Prime Minister: What we want is tough sentences for serious offenders. This Government produced a consultation paper—there was wide consultation and widespread support for many of the proposals that it made—and in the coming weeks, we will publish our legislation.

Edward Miliband (Doncaster North) (Lab): But we read in the newspapers today that the Prime Minister has torn up the Justice Secretary's proposals because he felt that he had to step in and—and frankly I can see why. There is widespread public concern about the proposal to cut by 50% sentences for those who plead guilty. The consultation ended in March. The Justice Secretary was advocating the policy two weeks ago. Has the Prime Minister torn it up, yes or no?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman should do something more useful than just read the newspapers. One response to the consultation paper came from the shadow Justice Secretary, the man sitting next to him, who said that it is

“a perfectly sensible vision for a sentencing policy, entirely in keeping with the emphasis on punishment and reform that Labour followed in government”.

Why the sudden U-turn?

Edward Miliband: The Prime Minister knows, and the whole country knows, that he is in a total mess on his sentencing policy, just like on all of his other crime policies. I now want to ask about another area where he is in a complete mess. Why has he made such a mess of his health plans?

The Prime Minister: I am not surprised that the right hon. Gentleman wants to move on because on the first subject he was found guilty. On the issue of discounts, it was the last Government who introduced a 33% discount—a third—on sentences. So there is more than a whiff of jumping on a bandwagon.

Bandwagon No. 1 hit the buffers, so let us turn to bandwagon No. 2. Yes, we are having a review of the plans that we announced on health: we want to get them right. I have to say again that there has been widespread support for the review of our health plans, not least from the man sitting four down from the right hon. Gentleman, the shadow Health Secretary—I know I often quote him—who said that

“looking at the evidence of what works, listening hard to those who know the NHS and learning from the views they get...is not rocket science. It's simply good government”.

What the right hon. Gentleman calls a shambles, his shadow Health Secretary calls good government. The right hon. Gentleman is not really in command of the ship.

Edward Miliband: I asked the Prime Minister why he had made such a mess of his health proposals. The first reason he made such a mess of his health proposals is the promises he made before the election. We all remember the Prime Minister touring round the country promising no more top-down reorganisations. A year before the election, he told the Royal College of Nursing:

“There will be no more of those pointless top-down reorganisations that aim for change and instead bring chaos”.

Why did he say that?

The Prime Minister: What the Royal College of Nursing said yesterday was a welcome for the speech that I made. The reason that we are able to improve the NHS is not only that we are committed to reform, but that we are also committed to more funding. The Labour party is in favour of cutting funding to the NHS. If the right hon. Gentleman wants to look at what is happening in the NHS, Wales is now only one part of the country that is controlled by Labour and there waiting lists are massively up and health spending is being cut. That is what Labour would do to the NHS.

Edward Miliband: I will tell the Prime Minister why he made promises that he then broke—because he is completely shameless and he will say anything. The second reason he has made a mess of the health service is because he did not think the policy through. Last June, he ordered the NHS to stop enforcing Labour's 18-week waiting time target. As a result, the number of patients waiting more than 18 weeks has gone up by 69%. Why did he scrap the instruction to enforce the waiting time target?

The Prime Minister: The best that can be said about this performance is that—quite rightly—the right hon. Gentleman was not thinking about politics on his honeymoon. On waiting times, what actually matters is the time people wait and median waiting times are down. That is what has happened in the NHS, and that is something that he misled the House of Commons about a fortnight ago—

Mr Speaker: Order. I know that the Prime Minister will be a follower of parliamentary protocol, and he will not suggest that the Leader of the Opposition misled the House of Commons. I am sure that he will withdraw that remark.

The Prime Minister: What I meant was that the right hon. Gentleman gave an interesting use of facts on waiting times, which are down in the NHS. What we are seeing today is simply empty opposition and weak leadership. That is what we get from Labour.

Edward Miliband: The whole House will note that the Prime Minister did not withdraw his remark. He is obviously rattled over the health service. It is no wonder he is rattled, because he is making a complete mess of it, and everybody up and down the country knows it. What is the most important reason he is making a mess of the health service? However much he says he loves the NHS, and however many times he says it, the truth is that he has the wrong values. He wanted to put a free market free-for-all at the centre of our health service, and any changes he makes now are not because he wants to make them, but because he has been found out. We know all we need to know about this Prime Minister from what he has done on the NHS: he breaks his promises; he does not think things through; he is reckless; and he has got the wrong values. I will hand it to him though. After one year, he has proved the oldest truth in politics: you can't trust the Tories on the NHS.

The Prime Minister: This side of the House will not take lectures from a party that, when in government, gave £250 million to private sector companies for doing nothing. That is what happened. What we have heard

today is just a series of bandwagons, and anyone who is watching this knows that it is this Government who are boldly making reforms in the public sector; who are dealing with the deficit; and who are reforming welfare, and what do we get from the Labour party? Where is the right hon. Gentleman's plan for the NHS? There is not one. Where is his plan for reforming welfare? Nothing. Where is his plan for higher education? Nothing. All we get is empty opposition and weak leadership, and the country can see it.

Q2. [57762] **Mr Robin Walker (Worcester) (Con):** Following the welcome introduction of the pupil premium, some head teachers in Worcester tell me that owing to long-term underfunding from the previous Government's flawed formula, the money is needed to make ends meet and cannot be spent on the deprived pupils it was meant for. Can the Prime Minister assure schools in both Worcester and Witney that the Government will not just consult on that formula, but reform it and correct a problem that has been too wrong for too long?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes a good point about a serious problem in our country. He is right to welcome the pupil premium, which will put more money in all our schools, particularly those that have many children from free-school-meals backgrounds. However, the current problem with the discrepancy of funding means that at present there can be a difference of £1,800 per pupil between the best-funded school and the worst-funded school. We want to reform the school funding system, and we want to do it in a fairer and more logical way. I am determined that we will make progress on this.

Mr Chuka Umunna (Streatham) (Lab): I have come here from meeting the family of my 18-year-old constituent, Nana Darko-Frempong, who was fatally shot outside his block of flats on Monday. I am sure that the whole House will want to send its condolences to his family. I raised a similar case with the Prime Minister this time last year. This senseless loss of life is completely and utterly unacceptable, yet it continues, and rightly or wrongly there is a perception that, on all sides of the House, we are not getting to grips with the root causes of this problem, which is blighting our inner-city streets. What reassurance can he give my constituents and the country that the Government are doing all they can to stop this senseless loss of life.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to bring this case to the House of Commons, and I join him in sending condolences to his constituent's family on their appalling loss. He is absolutely right that the level of gun crime and knife crime in our country, particularly in inner-city areas, is unacceptable. I do not think there is one single answer. Of course, we have to ensure that the police do everything they can to search for guns and knives and have a zero-tolerance policy, but we also have to look at where these problems are coming from, including the growth of gangs in our cities and the fact that in too many cases people are looking to gang, rather than to family and community. It is incumbent on us all to try and work out how we can strengthen the fabric of our communities, starting with our families.

Q3. [57763] **Richard Harrington** (Watford) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister advise me on whom to listen to on the UK's economic policy? Should it be the experts in the International Monetary Fund or the letters page of *The Guardian*? [Interruption.]

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend was being shouted down because the Labour party does not want to hear what the International Monetary Fund said about the British economy. It said:

“Strong fiscal consolidation is underway and remains essential to achieve a more sustainable budgetary position”—

[Interruption.] Members ask me to read the rest, and I will read the rest. The IMF put the question specifically:

“This raises the question whether it is time to adjust macroeconomic policies”—

the question put by the Labour party—and it said this: “The answer is no”. The IMF could not be more clear in backing the policies that we are pursuing to get this country back on track.

Q4. [57764] **Lindsay Roy** (Glenrothes) (Lab): What message does the Prime Minister have for the hundreds of women in my constituency in their mid-50s who feel that they have been unjustly thwarted by the extension of their retirement age, contrary to the coalition agreement?

The Prime Minister: What I would say is that the first decision was taken in 1995, when there was all-party agreement that we should equalise men's and women's pension ages, and that was done over a long period of time. The second point is that it is right to lift the pension age for men and women to a higher level more rapidly than the last Government decided. However, the key fact is that 85% of the women affected are going to lose one year or less in terms of their pension. The last point that I would make is this. Because we have linked the pension to earnings, people who retire today will be £15,000 better off than they were under the policies of the last Government.

Q5. [57765] **Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): Why do magistrates have to retire at the age of 70, when the Lord Chancellor, who appoints them, is 71 this year?

The Prime Minister: The point that I would make to my hon. Friend—I speak as someone whose mother served as a magistrate for over three decades—is that it is important to get turnover in the magistracy so that new people come in. To be fair to my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor, he has been in his job for only a year. He is doing a superb job, and I can tell the House that there is plenty more fuel in his tank.

Q6. [57766] **Mr Michael McCann** (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (Lab): The Prime Minister has an aspiration of making his Government the greenest ever. Meantime, Proven Energy, a small wind turbine company in my constituency, is making 10% of its staff redundant, not because it does not have a great product, but because planning applications for its product are stuck in town halls and bureaucracy all over the United Kingdom. Will the Prime Minister meet me and members of the Proven Energy team to discuss how we can find a solution?

The Prime Minister: I am very happy to ensure that someone from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills—or, indeed, the Department of Energy and Climate Change—speaks with the company in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. We are reforming the planning system to try to speed up these processes. We want to ensure that local people benefit when turbines are built, so that they have a share in the success of a scheme. Also, the Government are taking action to attract manufacturers of wind turbines to the UK—for instance, by putting £60 million into our ports infrastructure—and I am talking personally to those manufacturers to try to bring them to Britain.

Q7. [57767] **Annette Brooke** (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (LD): Notwithstanding the Prime Minister's previous answer, I would, as a woman not affected by the current pension proposals, like to ask him personally to review this particular proposal, because of the injustice and discrimination against women. The group of women affected, who were born between 1953 and 1954, will be asked to work up to two extra years over and above what they had planned for, whereas men will be asked to work only an extra year. It is the discrimination that concerns me.

The Prime Minister: I do understand the point that the hon. Lady makes, but let me make this point. First, in general, the reason for raising pension ages is twofold: one is that we are seeing a huge increase in life expectancy, but the second point is that we want to ensure that we can fund really good pension provision for the future, and if we do not do this, we will not be able to. Let me repeat the statistic: four fifths of the women affected by the proposals will have their state pension age increase by a year or less. The reason, as she says, that there is this difficulty is that those two things—the equalisation of the pension age and the raising of the pension age—are coming together, but that is enabling us to link the pension with earnings, thus meaning that people will be £15,000 better off than they were under Labour's plans.

Q8. [57768] **Nic Dakin** (Scunthorpe) (Lab): Given 1,200 job losses at Tata in Scunthorpe and further job losses in the private and public sectors in north Lincolnshire, will the Prime Minister meet with the taskforce chair and local MPs, so that he can understand how his Government can help the local economy face these demands positively and respond positively to future challenges?

The Prime Minister: I shall be happy to do that, because I am extremely disappointed—as I know the hon. Gentleman and others are—by the job losses in Scunthorpe. I spoke personally to Ratan Tata about the decision.

Tata Steel is still hugely committed to the United Kingdom. It is still investing hundreds of millions of pounds in our country, which I think is wholly welcome. Obviously, however, what has happened in Scunthorpe is not welcome, and we must do all that we can to bring the taskforce together—I know that my right hon. Friend the Business Secretary is doing that—to ensure that we do everything we can to mitigate the impact on local jobs and local communities.

Q9. [57769] **James Wharton** (Stockton South) (Con): I am sure the Prime Minister agrees that there should be no place for corruption in football. Given that the re-election of Sepp Blatter has brought FIFA even further into disrepute, will he take this opportunity to voice his support for those who are calling for the reforms that we need in order finally to show Mr Blatter the red card?

The Prime Minister: I have personally seen football governance at an international level, and I was not that impressed by what I saw.

FIFA's reputation is now at an all-time low, and obviously the election involving just one candidate was something of a farce. FIFA must become more transparent and more accountable. It must prove that it is capable of doing the job that it is meant to do. Ultimately, however, change must come from within football, and I am sure that the Football Association will want to play a major role in helping to bring that about.

Q10. [57770] **Mr Virendra Sharma** (Ealing, Southall) (Lab): I love the NHS and I love my local hospital, Ealing hospital. I was delighted to learn that the Prime Minister also thinks highly of Ealing hospital, and that he chose it as the place in which to deliver his speech on the Government's NHS reforms. Given his personal experience of the high quality of services that Ealing hospital provides, will he assure the House that, faced with budget pressures and merger proposals, it will not close or lose its accident and emergency and other key services?

The Prime Minister: I enjoyed my visit to Ealing hospital, and was impressed by what I saw. There are no plans to close the hospital. Indeed, a new urgent care centre is due to open in July, and the maternity unit has a phased redevelopment programme in process.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, any proposals relating to any hospital must go through a proper process involving public and patient engagement, sound clinical evidence, support by the GP commissioners, and support for patient choice. That is the process that must be followed. As I have said, however, there are no plans to close the hospital.

Q11. [57771] **Gareth Johnson** (Dartford) (Con): The Prime Minister will be aware that one in seven couples in the United Kingdom suffer from infertility problems, but, notwithstanding that fact, three quarters of primary care trusts do not provide the recommended three cycles of IVF treatment. Will the Prime Minister join me in calling on all PCTs to follow the NICE guidelines and provide sufficient treatment for infertile couples?

The Prime Minister: I will certainly do that. My hon. Friend is right to raise an issue that affects a huge number of people in our country. We have all encountered constituency cases in which people are frustrated by local guidelines. The deputy chief executive of the NHS is writing to all primary care trusts reminding them of the NICE guidance and its recommendations, and I think that that is very important. Of course some PCTs have worse deficits than others and have a more difficult process to follow, but we want to ensure that everyone has access to this treatment.

Q12. [57772] **John Woodcock** (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op): After four years, 15-year-old Alice Pyne, who lives in my constituency, is losing her battle against cancer. She has posted online her "bucket list", a simple wish list of things that she wants to do before it is too late. She wants to meet Take That, to own a purple iPod and to enter her dog in a Labrador show, but at the top of the list is a call for everyone to sign up to be a bone marrow donor. Will the Prime Minister work with the Leader of the Opposition and me to find out why too few people are currently on that life-saving register?

The Prime Minister: I will certainly do that. I am very sorry to hear about the situation facing Alice and what she is going through. Our thoughts go out to her and to her parents. She sounds like a very brave and very admirable person.

We want to get as many people as possible on to the bone marrow register. This year we are investing some £4 million of new money to improve donation processing and services for NHS patients. However, this is partly to do with a cultural and population change that we must help to drive, and I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition and I can discuss that.

Simon Hart (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire) (Con): The Prime Minister will be aware of the terrible explosion at the Chevron refinery in Pembroke last week, as a result of which four people died and one was seriously injured. Will he join me in extending condolences to the families and colleagues of those concerned, and also in commending the safety record of Chevron and its new owner, Valero, in what is a pretty difficult industry?

The Prime Minister: I will certainly do that. This was a tragic incident, and, on behalf of the whole House, may I join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to his constituents and expressing our deepest sympathies to the families of those who have been affected? I am sure there will be lessons to learn, but as my hon. Friend said, the company has had a good safety record, and in an industry in which there are inherent risks. I will be happy to discuss the issue with him.

Q13. [57774] **Mr Russell Brown** (Dumfries and Galloway) (Lab): What does it say about our society when a BBC documentary on child poverty ends with a child saying: "And I don't want to grow up"?

The Prime Minister: It says that, frankly, we need to do far more to tackle child poverty, not just here in the UK, but around the world. That is one of the reasons why, despite difficult spending decisions, we have maintained the pledge of increasing our aid budget to 0.7% of gross national income by 2013. That is a difficult pledge to make, but I think that, even at times of difficulty, we should not break our promises to the poorest people in the world.

In terms of child poverty here in Britain, the biggest challenge today is not just benefit levels, but mobility: how do we help people get out of poverty and stay out of poverty? That is why this Government are putting so much emphasis on measures such as the pupil premium, which will actually help people build themselves a better future.

Q14. [57775] Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con): I have the honour of representing the only town to have given its name to an international sport: rugby football. Under the union code of the game, the home nations are preparing for the world cup later this year. Will the Prime Minister join me in expressing gratitude to the New Zealand authorities for proceeding despite the recent earthquake, and will he also join me in hoping that at the end of the tournament the Webb Ellis trophy will be making its way back home?

The Prime Minister: I certainly endorse what my hon. Friend says, and I will do everything I can to support our rugby team. I very much hope the trophy will be coming home—*[Interruption.]* Calm down. I very much hope the trophy will be coming home to one of the nations of the United Kingdom. When I met the Prime Minister of New Zealand, he kindly gave me an All Blacks shirt, but his advice was, “Whatever you do, don’t be seen wearing this”, and I think I will take that advice.

Mr Tom Watson (West Bromwich East) (Lab): As the Prime Minister has previously said, the hacking inquiry should go where the evidence takes it. The Metropolitan police are in possession of paperwork detailing the dealings of criminal private investigator Jonathan Rees. It strongly suggests that, on behalf of News International, he was illegally targeting members of the royal family, senior politicians and high-level terrorist informers, yet the head of Operation Weeting has recently written to me to explain that this evidence may be outside the inquiry’s terms of reference. Prime Minister, I believe powerful forces are involved in a cover-up; please tell me what you intend to do to make sure that that does not happen.

The Prime Minister: I know the hon. Gentleman takes a close interest in this subject, and the point I would make to him is that there is a police inquiry, and a police inquiry does not need terms of reference. The police are free to investigate the evidence and take that wherever it leads them, and then mount a prosecution with the Crown Prosecution Service if the evidence supports that. In the case of phone hacking, which is illegal and wrong, there have been prosecutions and imprisonments, and if that is where the evidence takes them, that is what will happen in the future. There are no terms of reference as far as I am concerned; the police are able to look at any evidence and all evidence they can find.

Mr Marcus Jones (Nuneaton) (Con): The Prime Minister will recall visiting Nuneaton town centre on several occasions, and he will be glad to hear that it is surviving well, with a comparatively low level of vacant premises, but our town centres are facing a vital and difficult challenge from the out-of-town stores and the internet. Given those challenges, will my right hon. Friend assure the House that this Government will be a keen supporter of our town centres?

The Prime Minister: I can, and my hon. Friend speaks powerfully not just for Nuneaton, but for all town centres and all Members who represent constituencies with vibrant town centres. We want to keep them, rather than see everything go out of town. There are two steps

we need to take. One is to make sure local people have a real say in the planning process, so they can decide where future development goes. Secondly, we should continue the steps that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has been pioneering in terms of rate relief, to help local shops in our high streets so we do not end up with identikit high streets, but instead have thriving town centres such as Nuneaton, which I so enjoyed visiting with my hon. Friend on a number of occasions.

Ms Gisela Stuart (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab): The chairman of the Georgian Parliament is in London this week, and, indeed, is following our proceedings. Some Members of this House went to Georgia during the recess. When the Prime Minister goes to Moscow later this year, will he remind Russia of the commitment it gave in 2008 to withdraw its troops and stop the occupation in Georgia?

The Prime Minister: I will certainly do that. I well remember myself going to Tbilisi when the Georgians were under so much pressure from the Russians, and standing up with them, recognising that Georgia is a country that wants to be a democracy; it wants to be an economic success story; it wants to join NATO; it wants to be able to look west, as well as east; and it wants to have good relations with its neighbour. I am delighted that the hon. Lady is meeting representatives from the Georgian Parliament. I myself have met Georgia’s President Saakashvili on several occasions, and I will certainly make my views clear on the issue of Georgia, if I visit, and when I visit, Russia later this year.

Mr Stephen Dorrell (Charnwood) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the key challenge facing the national health service is how to convert this Government’s welcome commitment to year-on-year growth of real resources into improving productivity and improving quality of care for patients? Did the key to delivering that not lie in my right hon. Friend’s speech yesterday: in his advocacy of more integrated and less fragmented care? Will he continue to—

Mr Speaker: Order. We are grateful to the right hon. Gentleman—I think we have got the thrust of it.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend’s support for the reforms is hugely welcome, and I know that he follows these issues very closely. It was not just he who welcomed the speech that I set out yesterday: also, I had express support from the Royal College of Nursing, the Royal College of Physicians, the NHS Confederation, Macmillan Cancer Support and Breakthrough Breast Cancer. I think we are seeing a coming together of people who care about the health service, who use the health service, of professional bodies in the health service, who can see that this Government are listening, getting their changes right and will add the money that is required—and that only we are committed to—with the reforms that are necessary to make sure the NHS can go on and thrive in future.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): The Prime Minister will be aware of the dastardly murders of senior police officers Breen and Buchanan, and the subsequent public inquiry, established in consultation between this nation’s Government and the Irish Republic’s Government. Will

he make sure that nothing is allowed to impede Anglo-Irish relations by making personal representations to the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic, such that they cannot restrict the time, the effort and the money put into that inquiry, so that we can get to the truth and find out how those two brave police officers were murdered in so dastardly a way?

The Prime Minister: I will certainly look very carefully at the issue the hon. Gentleman raises. There is still, on all sides in Northern Ireland, and indeed in the Republic, huge concern about things that happened in past. Often, people ask for an inquiry, a public inquiry or a process. I think in most cases, what people really want is the truth. I found with the issue of the Saville inquiry that

what really mattered, actually, was not the £120 million, the five years and all the rest of it. What people wanted was the unvarnished truth, so then they can come to terms with what happened in the past. I have said that I do not want to see further open-ended inquiries; but I do think there is still more that we can do to uncover and be frank about the truth, and that goes for us on all sides of this debate.

Mr Speaker: I appeal to hon. Members leaving the Chamber to do so quickly and quietly, affording the same courtesy to the hon. Member for Portsmouth North (Penny Mordaunt), who is about to introduce her ten-minute rule Bill, that they would want to be extended to them in such circumstances.

Education (Special Educational Needs)

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

12.33 pm

Penny Mordaunt (Portsmouth North) (Con): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require the Secretary of State to increase parental involvement in provision of education for children with special educational needs; and for connected purposes.

I am aware that the business following my ten-minute rule Bill is of great interest to the House, and so, knowing that you are ever the friend of innovation, Mr Speaker, I shall endeavour to make this a five-minute Bill.

The Department for Education's current guidance is clear about what parents of a child with special educational needs should expect from their local education authority once a statement has been drawn up: to have their choice of school respected, provided it is a suitable use of LEA resources. In practice, this guarantee is often not worth the paper it is written on. I have met the evidence, so to speak: parents of children with dyslexia or a language disorder, struggling in the aftermath of short-sighted LEA decisions which undermine the principle of an education for all.

In these cases, perhaps the LEA has accepted that a child's needs should be assessed, but refuses to make an assessment or maybe the parents have pinned their hopes on an appeal against the LEA at the first-tier tribunal only to find that the tribunal panel is the LEA. Alternatively, the child might actually have a statement but the school does not have the right provision, and no one is prepared to provide the enforcement. Alternatively, the child might have a statement but no school place, because the LEA has refused the only suitable provision as it is in the independent sector, even though it would be cheaper than the total cost of state provision. In what is perhaps the cruellest of ironies, some parents, for want of a school place, try to home educate their child, not through choice, but through necessity, only to find that they are cut adrift by the LEA without any support or guidance, and their child's name is also removed from all waiting lists. As far as the LEA is concerned, that is one fewer problem to deal with.

These parents, some of whom have learning disabilities themselves, have no cards to play, no stick to wield and no hope of redress to ensure that their child has access to an education. In Portsmouth, Martin is due to take his GCSE options next year, yet he has never been to a secondary school. His disability is undiagnosed, and the remedial action required is unrecognised. Iris's dyslexia was discovered by good teachers and demonstrated by an independent assessment, but the private school that would meet her needs was refused, even though it would involve the same cost as placing her in an LEA school without any dedicated special educational needs support. Joanne's disabilities mean that she is unable to use public transport and so she has been awarded a travel grant to get her to school, but she must make her own way home. James, who is also without a school place, has been required to demonstrate his level of need by

failing at school after school, to the extent that failure is now his state of mind. It is little wonder that when he was asked to describe himself by his last teacher, he said he was "unliked" and "alone".

Change is needed to strengthen the hands of parents and teachers fighting for these children's rights and entitlements. Five principal areas must be addressed and although the recent SEN Green Paper has made progress on them, improvements could be made. First, in the manner of the NHS constitution, the rights and entitlements of children must be established in law. We must have a document towards which parents can point stubborn local authorities. It is not acceptable for a child to fall through the cracks, and a clear assertion of children's rights would help to hold authorities to account.

Secondly, there must be means other than a statement by which a child's needs can be demonstrated and verified. Statementing needs reform, but it can be the only ammunition that parents have. The Green Paper outlined plans for a single assessment process as a replacement for the statement, but to really strengthen parents' hands other forms of proof should be accepted as evidence of need, even if this simply guarantees that the child undergoes the new assessment. We must remove an LEA's power to deny that a child has a special educational need despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. The third aspect of necessary change is closely associated with the second; the link between the assessor and the financer must be broken. Currently, local authorities sit in judgment on SEN cases with only one eye on the child's future—the other is glued to its own bottom line—and that is not a tenable situation.

Fourthly, all providers of appropriate schooling, including independent schools, must be listed by the LEA, as is supposed to happen already. The last area to address is funding. I applaud the Green Paper's commitment to personalised funding, but for this to work properly funding must truly follow the pupil, as with the pupil premium. But unlike the pupil premium, it must include the per-pupil funding derived from the LEA. I urge the Government to consider, as part of their review, how school funding can become genuinely per pupil, whether on a total or top-up basis.

On hearing about my speech today, Iris, whom I mentioned earlier and who is now being funded to attend an independent mainstream school with a specialist dyslexia unit thanks to the generosity of Portsmouth residents and a livery company, suggested that I should tell hon. Members what she told me, and I can think of no better way to conclude. She said:

"At my old school I felt silly and sad because I didn't understand. I really love school now. I feel so much happier and I understand everything a lot more. I get lots of help and they make it easy to understand. I have great teachers and lovely friends. Now I want to go to school."

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That Penny Mordaunt, Mr David Blunkett, Mr Robert Buckland, Charlie Elphicke, Charlotte Leslie, Dr Julian Lewis, Jacob Rees-Mogg present the Bill.

Penny Mordaunt accordingly presented the Bill.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 2 December and to be printed (Bill 199).

Ninetieth Birthday of His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh

12.40 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr David Cameron): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty on the ninetieth birthday of His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, to assure Her Majesty of the great pleasure felt by this House on so joyful an occasion.

That the said Address be presented to Her Majesty by such Members of the House as are of Her Majesty's most Honourable Privy Council or of Her Majesty's Household.

That a Message be sent to His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, to offer His Royal Highness the warmest good wishes of the House upon the occasion of his ninetieth birthday, expressing the gratitude of the nation for his lifetime of service to the country and the Commonwealth and praying that His Royal Highness may long continue in health and happiness.

That Mr Speaker, the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, Sir George Young and Edward Miliband do wait upon His Royal Highness with the said Message.

This week we celebrate the 90th birthday of a remarkable man who has given years of service to our country. Someone who has defended his nation in time of war. A man who has stood alongside Her Majesty the Queen for more than six decades. A man who has given his time, effort and passion to many great causes up and down the country, across the Commonwealth and indeed around the world. I refer, of course, to His Royal Highness Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh.

Since the time of William the Conqueror there has never been a consort who has served for so long at the side of a monarch and, as such, Prince Philip has seen extraordinary events in life from the end of rationing to man landing on the moon, and from the end of the cold war to the beginning of peace in Northern Ireland. Of course, along the way he has had to put up with listening to the views of no fewer than 12 Prime Ministers. Through it all he has been there for Her Majesty the Queen as a constant companion and source of rock solid strength. Throughout it all he has served us, the British people, with an unshakeable sense of duty. He has conducted more than 300 public engagements a year and delivered more than 5,000 speeches.

Over those years, he has also made more than 600 visits to more than 140 countries. In most of those, he is heralded and much respected as the consort of a monarch, but, of course, there is one—Tanna, part of Vanuatu—where he is treated slightly differently. In fact, no public event in that far off part of the Pacific Islands is complete without the islanders holding aloft pictures of Prince Philip, who they worship as a god.

Of course, His Royal Highness served this country long before his royal duties began. The Duke of Edinburgh spent 14 years on active service in the Royal Navy. During the Second World War he served with the Mediterranean and Pacific fleets. He was awarded the Greek war cross of valour and was mentioned in dispatches when he manned the searchlights during HMS Valiant's triumph at the battle of Cape Matapan. In a fitting tribute to his outstanding abilities, the late Lord Lewin, the First Sea Lord, said he would most certainly have gone right to the top of the Navy.

Today the Duke of Edinburgh is a patron of more than 800 organisations. Looking through that long list, one passion shines through: supporting young people

by giving them the confidence to stand on their own two feet. It was this passion that led him to initiate the Duke of Edinburgh awards, recognised around the world as the gold standard in leadership for young people. Since 1956, about 6 million young people in 120 countries have won awards by building skills for work and life and proving that they can take responsibility for themselves and their communities. To all of us in this Chamber who believe in the value of helping to change people's lives for the better, that is an inspiration. His is a huge achievement for which this country and many others owe the Duke a deserved debt of gratitude.

He also has an extraordinary passion for wildlife, nature and the environment. As president of the World Wildlife Fund, he helped to save many of the world's most beautiful creatures from extinction, including the snow leopard and the black rhino.

The Duke is also a passionate family man and I know that all of us would like to congratulate him on becoming a great-grandfather for the first time with the birth of Savannah Phillips at the end of last year.

He has done all these things in his own inimitable way, with a down-to-earth, no-nonsense approach that I believe the British people find endearing. Of course, many of us who give public speeches would be honoured to have a book published of our most famous sayings. There have been several published of his. My own favourite was when, after a long flight, the umpteenth eager-to-please official asked him, "How was your flight?" He replied, "Have you been on a plane? Well, you know how it goes up in the air and then comes back down again? Well, it was just like that."

I would like to go on for a great deal longer but I am reminded of His Royal Highness's remark about sermons that overrun. It is not just sage advice for clergy in the pulpit but, I think, probably for us in this place, too. As the Duke put it, "The mind cannot absorb what the backside cannot endure." With that in mind, let me give the final say to the person who knows him best of all, Her Majesty the Queen. She said in a speech to mark their golden wedding anniversary that he had been her "strength and stay all these years"

and that she and

"his whole family, and this and many other countries, owe him a debt greater than he would ever claim, or we shall ever know."

I am sure the whole House will want to join me in wishing His Royal Highness health, happiness and above all a very special 90th birthday.

12.45 pm

Edward Miliband (Doncaster North) (Lab): May I second the motion in the name of the Prime Minister and associate myself and my party entirely with the sentiments that he has just expressed? As the Duke of Edinburgh approaches his 90th birthday, he is, as the Prime Minister said, the longest-serving consort and the oldest serving spouse of any British monarch. The Duke and Her Majesty have been married for 64 years. As a relatively new spouse, I have particular admiration for that achievement and I realise that it will take me 63 years, 11 months and 20 days to catch up.

The Duke of Edinburgh has been a constant companion to Her Majesty throughout her reign and he has shown a moving love, support and devotion to Her Majesty that has been unflinching. He has also made an enormous

[*Edward Miliband*]

contribution to public life here in Britain and right across the Commonwealth in his own right. He is the patron of hundreds of organisations that focus on the environment, industry, sport and education but he is perhaps best known, as the Prime Minister said, for the Duke of Edinburgh's award, which he established 55 years ago to give young people a sense of responsibility to themselves and their communities. I am sure that every Member of the House will have had the experience of visiting a local school in their constituency and seeing the eyes of young people light up as they talk about the excitement, passion and sense of achievement they have got from doing the Duke of Edinburgh's award. For that, we owe the Duke of Edinburgh a huge debt of gratitude.

The Duke is a reminder to us all of the unique spirit of public service that the monarchy discharges to the British people at home and abroad. That affection was evident at the wedding last month of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. The Duke of Edinburgh has been a prince among consorts, but is, if I might put it this way, a king among characters. His unique turn of phrase has become a much-loved feature of modern British life. There are two repeatable examples that I want to share with the House. To the matron of a hospital he visited in the Caribbean, he commented:

"You have mosquitoes. I have the Press."

That is a sentiment that many of us should share at various times in politics. Legend also has it that following the coronation in 1953, he turned to Her Majesty and said:

"Where did you get that hat?"

Humour is a great part of British life and we thank the Duke for his unique contribution.

We owe the Duke a great debt for the personal and professional sacrifices he has made to serve our country. He was, as the Prime Minister said, a distinguished naval officer who, at just 21, became one of the youngest first lieutenants in the Royal Navy, but he put his professional ambitions aside to be the loyal consort to the Queen. When asked in a recent interview if he had been disappointed to give up his naval career, he said that he had been a little disappointed but that, more importantly, it seemed to him that his duty was to serve the Queen

"in the best way I could."

The Duke embodies qualities of duty, loyalty, public service and good humour—great British qualities. He came from a generation who were prepared to sacrifice everything they had for this country and their values. As he approaches his 90th birthday, I once again pay great and humble tribute to the Duke of Edinburgh for all he has done for Queen and country.

12.49 pm

Nicholas Soames (Mid Sussex) (Con): May I, with the indulgence of the House, add a few personal words in support of the excellent speeches of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition? I have had the great good fortune and the inestimable honour to have known His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh for 50 years. I first met him when I was, as the psalmist said, yet "in the slippery paths of youth".

I want to take this brief moment, therefore, to add my own salute to Prince Philip. He is, in my view, one of the most exceptional men of his generation. No one can fail to be struck by the great breadth of his interests, the profound depth of his knowledge of them, and his distinguished and energetic contribution to our national life through the many organisations with which he is closely associated and over which he takes so much time and trouble.

As both my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition made clear, all of us in our constituency duties will have come across the beaming faces of the young who have taken part at one level or another in the Duke of Edinburgh's award schemes, an organisation in which millions of young people in more than 60 countries have taken part. That in itself is a remarkable achievement and one of which I hope Prince Philip is properly proud. In his work as the first president of the World Wildlife Fund—in which, incidentally, he was well ahead of his time—and through his profound interest in nature and wildlife conservation, as well as in environmental questions more generally, he has played an important, innovative and highly influential role for many years, both at home and abroad.

On a day like today one cannot hope to do full justice to Prince Philip's inspirational work in the promotion of science, design and industry, or his work with the armed forces, but I conclude by saying that we in the House feel gratitude, respect and pride for Prince Philip's exceptional service to his country, and recall that he is part of that remarkable generation that served with distinction during the war, did their duty and just got on with it, and then got on with the rebuilding of Britain afterwards.

Prince Philip certainly is a formidable man and, refreshingly, does not suffer fools gladly, as I know to my cost. He is, above all, to himself true, and a most especially devoted and loving husband, father and grandfather. His many qualities should shine brightly for us today since they march with great good humour, a complete lack of any side or pomposity, and a clear, thoughtful and generous understanding of the world in which we all live. I join my parliamentary colleagues in sending to His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh my warmest congratulations and most profound respects on his 90th birthday.

12.53 pm

Paul Flynn (Newport West) (Lab): The supreme achievement of the Duke of Edinburgh is that he is working at the age of 90. This is a magnificent example and one that has been followed by a constituent of mine, Mr Harry Polloway, who is working as a toastmaster at the age of 97. I last saw him in the Jewish cemetery in my constituency, where we were commemorating the death of May Mendleson, who died last year at the age of 108. Continuing work into that period of life is a wonderful example to set, and one that we can look at with some embarrassment and shame in the House, where I believe the oldest Member—a distinguished Member—is just 80 years of age, and we have only five Members over the age of 76.

This group of people are disgracefully under-represented in the House. If we are to have a proper reflection of senior citizens, we must look to have all-80-year-old

shortlists at the next general election. In the light of the heroic examples set by Prince Philip, Harry Polloway and May Mendleson, that fault needs to be corrected.

However, my purpose in speaking today is to make another point. As someone who is not a royalist and is happy to say that I am a republican and always have been, I want to ask why on earth, in this age, the address is to be “humble”. Are members of the royal family superior beings to the rest of us? Are we inferior beings to them? Is Prince Philip superior to Harry Polloway and May Mendleson? That was the feeling of the House seven centuries ago, when we accepted the rules under which we speak now.

We live in an egalitarian time when we recognise the universality of the human condition, in which royals and commoners share the same strengths and frailty. In the House, when we speak of the royals—not just the monarch, but all the family, without any limit—we are denied the chance of making any derogatory comment. That might extend to first cousins who are a long way distant from the monarch. There is no question but that the monarch—the Head of State—should remain above the political fray. We have been well served by this, particularly recently.

However, if these occasions are to be greatly valued, it should be possible for Members to utter the odd syllable that might be critical. I do not have anything to say in this case, but the sycophancy described by the Prime Minister when he referred to someone asking Prince Philip a fairly obvious question when he came off a plane must sicken the royal family. When they have an excess of praise of this kind, it is devalued.

Mr David Winnick (Walsall North) (Lab): No one would accuse me of being an ardent royalist, but will my hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that the most terrifying dictatorships—terrorist dictatorships—of the last century, including Germany, Russia and China, have been republics?

Paul Flynn: I was coming to the final sentence of my speech, but I would be happy to discuss that at some length. If my hon. Friend is asking whether the Queen has been a monarch of whom we should be proud, a monarch who has served this country in a way that is probably unparalleled, and whether she has maintained political neutrality throughout those years, I would say yes. We particularly appreciated her work in Ireland recently, where she has done much to restore the link. That is not the point of what I am saying today.

I am saying that the House has allowed itself to be infantilised by our own history into a position in which we are not allowed to make any criticism—not just of the person whom we are talking about today, but of other members of the royal family as well. It stretches to all of them. By accepting today that the address is a humble one, we demean the honour of our elected office. We were elected by the first-past-the-post system, but those with hereditary offices are in their place as a result of what Tony Benn once called the first-past-the-bedpost system. We should be free in this House to tell the whole truth as citizens, not gagged as subservient subjects.

12.58 pm

Simon Hughes (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (LD): I have no difficulty in supporting the motion proposed by the Prime Minister and seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, and on behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends, sending our very warmest wishes to Prince Philip for his birthday on Friday.

The Prime Minister referred to the fact that Prince Philip is already in the record books as the longest-serving consort. My limited research immediately revealed two other things. He is also in the record books for being the last surviving great-great-grandchild of Queen Victoria—and, even more extraordinarily, is apparently currently in the line of succession to 16 thrones. If ever we wanted an example of how interconnected our European continent is, he is probably the living embodiment of that.

Prince Philip was born in the same year as my late mother, so when we were growing up, my parents, my brothers and I often found him featuring in the conversation as a sort of point of comparison in youthfulness and activity on which we were asked to model ourselves.

In addition to his obvious loyal, steadfast and wonderful roles as husband, consort, father, grandfather and great-grandfather, I suggest that the Duke of Edinburgh also plays the role of the most active citizen. He is an active citizen in many countries of the Commonwealth, which he has supported throughout his time in public life. He is wonderfully active in his inspired award scheme, which has already been referred to. I am one of the lucky people who benefited from being a Duke of Edinburgh’s award winner. The prize was going to receive the award from him at Buckingham palace. The punishment—the preparation for the prize—was being nearly frozen to death in Snowdonia on an expedition the previous Easter; it was not an award achieved lightly.

The Duke of Edinburgh has always encouraged participation in sport, which is very important. Reference has rightly been made to his very early commitment to conservation world wide. When he became president of the World Wildlife Fund, he encouraged millions of people, particularly young people, to realise the importance of conservation, not only at home but on the other side of the world.

Lastly, we cannot avoid referring to the fact that the great thing about Prince Philip is his ability to comment, and to do so publicly from time to time, in a no-nonsense, down-to-earth and—thank God—humorous manner. At least two of his children have the same quality, for which we should be grateful. It is typical that he is working on his birthday this week. That should encourage everyone in the country who sees retirement looming to think that they may still have a long time to go. We wish him a very happy birthday on Friday, happy and enjoyable celebrations over the weekend and continuing robust health and much happiness in all his years ahead. We thank him for a lifetime of incomparable public service.

1.1 pm

Mr Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): On behalf of my hon. and right hon. Friends, and indeed the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland, I heartily endorse the sentiments that have been so eloquently expressed this afternoon on the occasion of His Royal Highness’s 90th birthday. We send him our warmest congratulations.

[Mr Nigel Dodds]

His Royal Highness bears many titles. When I looked at them the other day, I found that reading them all out would almost be a speech in itself. Some people today might dismiss such titles as anachronisms, but in my view they are not: they speak to us of the history of our Union, our nation and our Commonwealth. With nearly 60 years as royal consort, Prince Philip has been a living example of the steadfast values that created and sustain to this day our Union, our nation and our Commonwealth. Throughout his life he has exemplified the qualities of duty, sacrifice and service to country and Commonwealth, and all carried with great humanity and humour, as we have noted. In the course of that service, he has visited Northern Ireland on many occasions, and we look forward to further such visits, when he can again be assured of the warmest of welcomes.

Beyond his formal duties, the Duke of Edinburgh has worked with hundreds of different causes and organisations and maintains to this day a schedule that many younger people would baulk at. Of all this work, the crowning glories are undoubtedly the World Wildlife Fund and the award that bear his title, the Duke of Edinburgh's award. His work with WWF was literally decades ahead of its time, as has been said, and the Duke of Edinburgh's award will this year break the 2 million mark for the number of children and young people who have gained an award. Proudly, Northern Ireland boasts the highest participation levels in the award scheme in the United Kingdom. Few individuals on earth can boast that they have written the rulebook of a sport, but he can—for carriage driving, which he once described as a geriatric sport.

As we approach the diamond jubilee of Her Majesty's accession to the throne, we rightly reflect on the tremendous service that the monarch has given to this country, its people and the Commonwealth. When Her Majesty was crowned in Westminster Abbey, Prince Philip pledged to "become your liege man of life and limb, and of earthly worship; and faith and truth I will bear unto you, to live and die, against all manner of folks. So help me God."

Truly it can be said today that he has fulfilled that pledge in both word and spirit. For any man or woman, there are few better compliments that can be paid than to be recognised and respected for a lifetime of loyalty, steadfastness and truth to their word. For that and so much more, His Royal Highness Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, deserves our nation's deepest gratitude, our heartiest congratulations and our sincere prayers for God's blessing and continued health and happiness.

1.4 pm

Mary Macleod (Brentford and Isleworth) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to speak today to the motion for a humble address to be presented to Her Majesty on the 90th birthday of His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh. I was fortunate enough some time ago to be given a role in the royal household, working for Her Majesty and senior members of the royal family, advising on strategic changes to the monarchy and briefing on key areas of national life. What struck me most when working at the palace was the incredible work load not just of Her Majesty the Queen, but of His Royal Highness. I commend him highly on his commitment to service over the years.

The Duke of Edinburgh not only attends many engagements on his own, but accompanies the Queen on her Commonwealth tours, state visits overseas and visits to many parts of the United Kingdom. On average, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said earlier, he carries out more than 350 engagements a year. He is also patron or president of some 800 organisations, with special interests in scientific and technological research and development, the encouragement of sport, the welfare of young people and conservation and the environment.

In 1956 the Duke founded the Duke of Edinburgh's award in order to give young people "a sense of responsibility to themselves and their communities".

That has made a lasting contribution to our society and benefited many thousands of young people. A sense of responsibility to themselves and their communities is exactly what we are trying to create with the big society, so perhaps after all it was His Royal Highness who led the way and helped to inspire the policy.

In my constituency, many young people and schools are involved in the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. Chiswick community school is particularly grateful for the award scheme. In the words of Tony Ryan, the school's head teacher:

"We value the Duke of Edinburgh award more than I can say. The award helps build social and team building skills and independence. It takes kids out of their comfort zones—many kids have never been to the countryside before and often you see a completely different side to them. It really makes them think differently."

When I visited Gunnersbury Catholic school recently, people were also talking about the benefits of the award scheme. Kevin Burke, the school's head teacher, sent me pages of comments from students, a few of which I want to mention. James Phelan said:

"The Duke of Edinburgh award scheme opened my eyes to many new and challenging experiences, from which I learnt many life skills and values".

Tom Sylvester said:

"The Duke of Edinburgh award scheme was a fantastic experience which has allowed me to put myself through all of my paces. I have managed to learn new skills that would have been nigh-on impossible. What I liked the most about this epic journey was the choice that was available and that I could complete it with my friends. I believe this experience has changed my life forever and has adjusted my perspective on life."

Felix said:

"The Duke of Edinburgh bronze award brought many challenges and people could gain many valuable skills such as leadership."

Jack said:

"The award scheme was an amazing experience".

Jesse said:

"My Duke of Edinburgh experience was an experience of a lifetime".

I would like to conclude by thanking His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh for his contribution to our society, his patronage of more than 800 organisations, his unstinting commitment to public life as the longest-serving royal consort in British history and, in particular, for the truly remarkable legacy for young people today from the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme, and finally for the personal support he gives Her Majesty on a daily basis.

His Royal Highness is a real example and inspiration to us all. If more people were encouraging many others to support voluntary organisations and helping young people gain life skills and experience for their future, bringing out the best in them, this country would be a much better place. I support the motion, which is our way of thanking His Royal Highness for his lifetime of service to the country and the Commonwealth.

1.9 pm

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): I wholeheartedly support the motion in the name of the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition. I do not want to repeat all that has been said by other Members, but I will mention one further capacity that His Royal Highness has: the ability to put MPs in their place.

Parmjit Dhanda, when he was the Member for Gloucester, was invited in 2001, as I think was the current Prime Minister and others elected that year—it was our 10th anniversary yesterday—to Buckingham palace, and the Duke of Edinburgh went up to Parmjit and said, “So, what did you do before you got this job?” Parmjit said, “I worked in a trade union.” The Duke immediately replied, “Bugger all, then.” Parmjit, somewhat offended and thinking that he would retaliate with force, asked, “Well, what did you do before you got this job?”, to which the Duke replied, “Fought in the second world war.”

So, notwithstanding the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Newport West (Paul Flynn), I think that there are occasions when a little humility from this House towards His Royal Highness is entirely appropriate.

1.10 pm

Michael Ellis (Northampton North) (Con): The Duke of Edinburgh is clearly someone who does not take well to compliments, but he will just have to put up with them this week, because quite frankly he deserves those compliments, not just because it is his 90th birthday on Friday, but because for more than 60 years, since their marriage in 1947, he has been the bedrock of support for Her Majesty the Queen—the constant and loyal support and the dutiful and honourable consort, perpetually at her side over the 59 years of her reign so far and, please God, for years to come. He is the longest-living consort in 1,000 years of British history, surpassing, only a couple of years ago, Queen Charlotte, the consort of King George III—but I am reliably informed that that is the only thing he has in common with Queen Charlotte.

The Duke may be 90 years old, but he has something to teach the youngest generations, and that is the principle of duty and service, as we have heard from other hon. Members. Nowadays, many people are accustomed to doing something only if they want to do it and only if it suits them. Many have an expectation of what their rights are, but not of what their responsibilities may be.

Many of the prince’s generation, maturing in the 1940s, understood the importance of doing a thing because it was the right thing to do for someone else, or for the country—but of course that sense of duty is not entirely extinguished today; very far from it. I had the honour of spending two days at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, last week, and I met many young cadets in their 20s and even younger who are very much focused on serving others—a willingness to serve, and certainly not for financial reward. They want to give something back.

The British are a very generous people and give vast sums and amounts of time to charities, and that is reflected in Her Majesty’s Government’s international development policy, but the Duke has done a great deal for this country over generations, as well as supporting the Queen. Not the least of those is the welfare of young children, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said a few minutes ago. The Duke established the Duke of Edinburgh’s award scheme in 1956, and it has seen more than 7 million work to achieve an award. He meets the gold award winners personally.

The Duke is patron of some 800 organisations and has flown almost 6,000 hours in dozens of aircraft, but he was always what would now be called a type A personality—a leader. At Salem, as a pre-teenage boy in the early 1930s, the Nazis started to creep into school life, but Prince Philip used apparently to break into fits of laughter when he saw them and clearly even then considered them contemptible. Perhaps that is not surprising when one considers that his late mother is honoured in Yad Vashem in Israel as “Righteous Among the Nations”.

The Duke went on to be head boy, or guardian, at school in Gordonstoun. At the Royal Naval college he came top of the class and won the King’s dirk. He captained a warship at an extremely early age during world war two, and he served on battleships and destroyers throughout the second world war, even being mentioned in dispatches. He was involved in the allied invasion of Sicily, and was in Tokyo bay to witness the surrender of the imperial Japanese.

Still carrying out hundreds of public engagements a year at the age of 89, the Duke has given so many speeches that they apparently take up several volumes of shelf space, and he has never done anything that would affect his personal integrity or the integrity of the Crown. It is clear that his grandchildren love and respect him. He has borne the vicious cruelty, at times, of the press in this country with dignity and poise, and he has never once in public life done anything to embarrass Her Majesty the Queen or to weaken the dignity or integrity of the Crown—despite the odd controversial remark.

The Duke should be, and I believe is, a guiding light to others showing the correct way to behave with duty, honour, service and tradition.

Question put and agreed to, nemine contradicente.

Opposition Day

[17TH ALLOTTED DAY—FIRST PART]

Women (Government Policies)

1.15 pm

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House regrets that the Government's policies are hitting women and families hardest, including direct tax and benefit changes, cuts to childcare support and Sure Start which are making it harder for women to work, reductions in domestic and sexual violence specialist support, and their impact on the provision of social care; opposes plans that will make 300,000 women born between December 1953 and October 1954 wait an additional 18 months or longer to receive their state pension; calls on the Government to maintain the commitment given in the Coalition Agreement that the state pension age for women will not start to rise to 66 sooner than 2020; believes that promoting equality for women is vital to building a fairer society; and calls on the Government to commission independent, robust assessments of the impact of its policies on women and to prevent the implementation of policies that could widen inequality between women and men.

I got an e-mail from a woman called Michelle, who lives in my constituency. Michelle is a single mother with a toddler; she works part-time in a bank to support her family; and she studies part-time at the Open university, because she wants to get on and build a better future for herself and her child. Right now, she is very worried. Her train fares are going up and she is afraid that her course fees will go up, but the really big blow for her is that her child tax credit is being cut from 80% to 70%.

Michelle wrote:

"This is really devastating for me. My nursery fees are £530 a month, and my salary is £600 a month. This is an extra £50 each month out of my already very tight budget. This sadly is going to force me out of work and onto benefits, which I desperately don't want to do. It is so unfair and I am very angry. I want David Cameron, George Osborne and the rest of the coalition to acknowledge this is happening to myself and thousands of other single parents, but that will never happen."

It is because of Michelle and the stories that we have heard from so many women throughout the country that we have called this debate today. We are deeply worried about women who are struggling to work because of the changes that the Government have made; women who are finding it harder to make ends meet; women who are losing their own income and some of the independence that they value; women who are losing thousands of pounds of their pensions; and women such as Michelle who are finding it more difficult to work because of the sheer scale of the assault on families throughout the country—20% cuts to the Sure Start budget, cuts to child care tax credit and cuts to child tax credit.

The Government are taking more money from support for children than they are from the banks as part of their deficit reduction plan, and mothers throughout the country are taking the strain. Time and again, the Government hit women and families hardest, and I fear that for the first time in many generations equality and progress for women is being rolled back.

All Members know and will celebrate the major advances that we have seen in women's equality over the

past century. When we celebrated the centenary of international women's day, I met a woman called Hetty Bower, who is already more than 100 years old and has received her telegram from the Queen. When Hetty was born, however, women did not have the vote, and when she had her first child there was no maternity care on the NHS—indeed, there was no NHS. She worked, but she certainly did not get maternity pay, family allowance or child benefit. By the time her daughter started work, it was still legal to pay women less than men to do the same job, and even when her granddaughter started work there was still little child care and little help for women wanting to work part-time or to care for their elderly parents.

When the Secretary of State and I were elected to Parliament, maternity leave was just 14 weeks, compared with 52 weeks today, and there were child care places for only one in eight children, rather than the one in four today. Of course, here in Westminster itself we had no nursery, but we still had a shooting range.

All the progress that we have seen for women over those years has been hard-won, and we should not take it for granted. From the suffragettes to the Dagenham strikers, women have campaigned and worked hard for those changes.

We know that there is still a long way to go, and if we look at the facts we find that, even some 40 years after passing the Equal Pay Act 1970, the pay gap remains at 15%. Women still make up only 12.5% of the boards of the UK's top 100 companies. One in four women is a victim of domestic violence in their lifetime. Women here still represent only 22% of our Parliament. Some 30,000 women lose their jobs every year because of pregnancy. So yes, we have come a long way, but we have further to travel yet.

I think that the Minister for Women and Equalities and the Minister for Equalities support progress for women and agree that it should go further and faster. The trouble is that their Government are not delivering; instead, they are turning back the clock.

Claire Perry (Devizes) (Con): Would the right hon. Lady like to take this opportunity officially to dissociate herself from her previous Government's disastrous 10p tax policy, which did so much to hit the lowest paid, especially women across the country?

Yvette Cooper: I think that it was right to change the policy on the 10p tax rate, which did cause problems for a lot of women—the hon. Lady is right. However, often the very same women for whom we had to make changes to ensure that they got help because they were being affected by the 10p tax rate are now being affected by what her Government are doing to change the pension age and equalise pensions so quickly. The 10p tax rate did affect women, but not on the scale under this Government of hitting them with more than £10,000 of losses. Yes, she is right to point out the problems with the 10p rate, but she also needs to point out to her Government the serious damage that they are doing not only to women approaching pension age but to many other women across the board.

Mary Macleod (Brentford and Isleworth) (Con) *rose*—

Yvette Cooper: I will make progress and then take an intervention from the hon. Lady.

In area after area, whether it is income, employment, child care, public services or action on violence against women, we are seeing the clock turned back. Today we want to concentrate on the Government's reforms to the pension age and what is happening to women as a result. We understand the Government's concern about rising longevity; of course we are all living longer and that has consequences. However, the nature and timing of the changes they have chosen is hitting women much harder than men. Bringing equalisation down to 2016 from 2018, combined with increasing the age again straight after that, means that women currently in their late 50s are getting a very bad deal. No men will see their state pension age increase by more than a year, but half a million women will do so. Those women, who are already in their mid to late 50s, are suddenly seeing their retirement plans ripped up. A third of a million women will have to wait an extra 18 months, and 33,000 women will have to wait an extra two years.

Let us think about what that really means. These women are already around 57 years old. They have been expecting to get their retirement pension in about seven years' time. They will already have made financial plans; many will already have made retirement plans. These women are often the rock of their families. They are the ones who stopped work to look after their grandchildren so that their daughters could work, or they are working part-time and looking after elderly relatives. They have worked out how they can manage it, and how they can stretch their savings until the pension kicks in, and suddenly the Government are ripping all that up.

Dame Anne Begg (Aberdeen South) (Lab): The group of women who, when they started work, would have expected to retire at 60, had already accepted that because of the equalisation of the state pension age they would have to work until they were 64, but it is the two years on top of that which is very difficult for them to swallow.

Yvette Cooper: My hon. Friend is exactly right. Those women have already made changes to their retirement plans, but these further changes are very late in the day, when it is extremely difficult for them to rearrange their plans. The consequence is that the equivalent of about £5,000 is being taken from half a million women, £10,000 is being taken from thousands of women, and £15,000 is being taken from those who are hardest hit—and they have less than seven years to work out how to cope. For most of those women it is too late to make changes to their financial plans and their career plans.

Let us take the case of Christine. She was born in July 1954. She is still working as a self-employed bookkeeper, and works about 25 hours a week. Like a lot of women her age, Christine says that she put her career on hold to bring up her children, so she does not have much of a private pension. She does not have extra savings to help her to cope and to make good the gap. Women in their late 50s have average pension savings of £9,100 compared with an average of £52,000 for men of the same age. These are women who took time out to look after their families, who worked part-time, and who started work in the '70s when the pay gap was bigger. The pension system never properly recognised the contributions that

they made to their families and to society, and now, as a result of what the Government are doing, it is kicking them in the teeth again.

The Government cannot tell us that this is being done to cut the deficit, because in 2016, when these changes come in, their structural deficit is supposed to have been eliminated. The best that the coalition has been able to come up with in its defence is to say that some of the poorest male pensioners who get pension credit will be quite hard hit too. I do not think that people such as Christine will consider that much consolation. Today, the Prime Minister tried to claim, "Well, it's all right, it means that pensioners will be £15,000 better off because this is restoring the link with earnings," but the link with earnings had already been restored as part of the Turner review. Making such a change now does not provide any benefits for women for many years to come. Instead, in the next few years, it hits extremely hard women who have worked hard for their families and for society.

Women on the Government Front Bench and Back Benches ought to do something about this. They should stand up and be counted; otherwise they are letting down women in their constituencies.

Dame Anne Begg: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it was not good enough for the Minister responsible for pensions to say to my Select Committee that it is all right because these women can get jobseeker's allowance or employment and support allowance instead?

Yvette Cooper: My hon. Friend is exactly right. It is appalling to suggest that these women can get jobseeker's allowance, because many of them have claimed very little throughout their lives. They have believed in working hard, doing their bit, and making their contributions to their family and their society, and the state pension was what they had earned—what they had saved for and contributed towards. Saying to them that they should claim jobseeker's allowance, which is set at a much lower level, or that, having perhaps taken early retirement to look after the grandchildren only now to find that they cannot do so because they cannot make their savings stretch, they must suddenly try to find work after so long out of the labour market, misunderstands the reality of their lives and the pressures they are under. Something needs to change. The Government have done U-turns on issues such as forests; they have paused on the NHS; and they should make a massive change on this policy.

Jessica Morden (Newport East) (Lab): Does my right hon. Friend agree that not only is this change coming in very quickly but thousands of women out there are not aware of it, despite the excellent campaign, because the Government have provided very inadequate information?

Yvette Cooper: My hon. Friend is right. To the extent that women can plan for such change, they need to know what is going on. At the moment, a lot of women do not know what is happening and are worried. They are starting to hear about the change, but do not know what it is going to mean for them and for their personal circumstances.

Unfortunately, I heard one of the men on the Conservative Benches mutter "Deluded" in response to my call for the Government to U-turn. I have to say to him that he is deluded if he thinks that women across

[Yvette Cooper]

the country will not feel extremely angry. The more that they realise what the Government are doing, the more they will be knocking on the doors of their constituency MPs and asking why their MP is allowing them to lose up to £10,000 as a result of deeply unfair changes.

Mr James Gray (North Wiltshire) (Con) *rose*—

Yvette Cooper: I give way to the hon. Gentleman; I hope that he can defend the proposals.

Mr Gray: I am grateful to the right hon. Lady for giving way. As one of the two Conservative men who signed the early-day motion on this subject, the other being my hon. Friend the Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley), I very much sympathise with the point that she is making on behalf of women born in 1953 and 1954—like me; 1954 was a vintage year. Does she not regret that in the motion she has chosen to make a broad sideswipe at the Government that is much less well thought through than her point about that particular cohort of women? Had she focused her attention on that, she might well have found one or two of us joining her in the Lobby.

Yvette Cooper: I apologise for my slightly aggressive reaction to the hon. Gentleman when he stood up; I should have checked the EDM beforehand. I commend him for his defence of his vintage, of all sexes. He is right that this issue is of extreme concern, and I hope that we will have further opportunities to vote on it.

I will turn to the wider points in the motion that the hon. Gentleman criticised, but which I think are important. It is women rather than men who are taking the biggest burden in the Government's deficit reduction plans. The Government know of our deep concern that they are cutting too far and too fast, and that they are hitting growth and pushing up unemployment, which will cost us more. However, even those who support the scale and pace of the Government's plans should be worried about the way in which they are carrying them out.

The House of Commons Library has produced detailed analysis of the direct tax and benefit changes in the Government's emergency Budget and the spending review. A net total of £16 billion is being raised. That takes account of the increase in tax allowances and the cuts to tax credits. It looks at the extra money as well as the cuts. The conclusion is that £5 billion is coming from men and £11 billion is coming from women. Women are paying more than twice as much as men to get the deficit down, yet women still earn less and own less than men. How can that be fair?

Harriett Baldwin (West Worcestershire) (Con): Will the right hon. Lady confirm that the numbers she is citing include the £3.75 billion from the child benefit cuts for higher rate taxpayers such as me, who obviously are predominantly women?

Yvette Cooper: The figures include everything, so they do include the child benefit changes, as well as the change in tax allowances, the cuts to housing benefit, the cuts to public sector pensions and a series of other things. The point is that the cumulative impact will hit

women much harder than men. Women who are on higher incomes will be hit much harder than men who are on higher incomes. Women who are on lower incomes in households where the man is on a higher income will also be hard hit, even though they may only be on part-time or low earnings. The hon. Lady is right that the analysis does not separate women on the basis of different levels of earnings, but it does show that at every level of earnings, in every sector of the economy and in every sector of society, women are being hit harder than men.

Harriett Baldwin *rose*—

Claire Perry *rose*—

Mary Macleod *rose*—

Yvette Cooper: I give way to the hon. Member for West Worcestershire (Harriett Baldwin) first.

Harriett Baldwin: Is the right hon. Lady saying that she would like my child benefit of £81.20 every four weeks to be reinstated, despite the fact that I make more than £65,000 a year as an MP?

Yvette Cooper: We have said that we think there is a serious advantage in some universal benefits. I do not think that the hon. Lady should be paid child tax credit, and she is not, because it is right that some things depend on people's incomes. However, it is important that some things are universal. That is why we have said that there are serious problems with what the Government are doing on child benefit. She needs to take seriously the point that at every level of income and in every sector of society, women rather than men are the hardest hit.

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): As someone who has staunchly defended universal child benefit precisely because of the reach that it secures for the poorest families—better than the means-tested benefits that are designed to reach them—I am pleased to tell the hon. Member for West Worcestershire (Harriett Baldwin) that I will certainly campaign for the reinstatement of child benefit for all parents. Does my right hon. Friend agree that one reason why it is so important to have benefits that are predominantly directed at women is that even in the best-off households, the way in which income is divided between a couple often favours the man? It is important to give women some independent income to protect their financial independence within the household.

Yvette Cooper: My hon. Friend is right, because who gets the income in the household matters for a lot of women. Child benefit was about giving women an independent income, and it has given women a greater ability to make choices about their own lives.

The Government have dismissed the figures about the impact on women and men. They say that those figures cannot be calculated, but they have calculated no figures of their own. They claim that it cannot be done. That is rubbish, because the House of Commons Library did it, and pretty quickly. They also claim that it is not possible for the Government to come up with such figures, but the Treasury has done it before. When

the Minister for Women and Equalities and I were new Back Benchers, I asked Treasury Ministers a written question on exactly the same thing. I asked what was the impact on women compared with men of the 1997, 1998 and 1999 Budgets. Treasury Ministers were able to calculate it then and they can calculate it now. The answer was that men benefited by £2.30 per week and that women benefited by £5.30 per week from the changes brought in by the Labour Government. This is the contrast: the Labour Government's first Budget helped women twice as much as men; the Tory-led Government's first Budget hit women twice as hard as men.

The Government say that one cannot look at men and women separately, but that one must look at households. That is the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green) made. The Government's plans for universal credit have the same kind of flaw. They are talking about a single payment being paid to a single household member, with the risk that it will go predominantly to the man. What the Government say is just not true. Of course people choose to share their money in the household and in the family, but that is the point—they choose to share their money. Who gets the money in the first place matters. Beveridge understood that 60 years ago. That is why he introduced the family allowance, which led to child benefit. I do not understand why Government Members and the Government are so blind to this issue. Women on the Government Benches would be horrified if suddenly their salaries were paid to their husbands on the basis that it does not really matter because they are in the same household. That is the logical consequence of the Government's arguments about households and for not being able to do such analysis.

Mrs Louise Mensch (Corby) (Con): The right hon. Lady is pretending that child benefit is an income for women that is paid to women, but it is a benefit that is paid for the benefit of the child. It is not and never has been income for women.

Yvette Cooper: The hon. Lady does not seem to understand that most women do the spending for the children. That is why, originally, Beveridge wanted to ensure that women got some money. Right now—*[Interruption.]* Government Members obviously do not talk to women in their constituencies about the way in which child benefit money matters massively as part of their income. Of course a lot of that money is spent on children, but however women spend it, the fact that it is they who get the income gives them choices about how it is spent.

I suggest that the hon. Member for Corby (Mrs Mensch) listens to the recording of "Woman's Hour" from soon after the Government's announcement of their plan to take child benefit from those on the highest earnings. A lot of women called in to describe how they were on a low income, even though their husbands were on a higher income. They spoke about the difference that it made to have some money that came to them and over which they made the decisions, even if it was then spent on the children and their future.

Mrs Mensch: I am grateful to the right hon. Lady for being generous and giving way to me again. My constituency of Corby in east Northamptonshire has a large proportion of lower-income women. The women

who come to my surgeries are delighted that higher-income women and families will not be paid this benefit, because they regard it as fundamentally unfair that rich people receive benefits. They cannot understand why it is the Labour party that is protecting benefits that are paid to the rich.

Yvette Cooper: Are those constituents equally delighted by the cuts to child tax credit, the cuts to the baby tax credit that is paid in the first year, the cuts to the Sure Start allowance, the cuts to their Sure Start centres, and the huge cuts that are hitting low-income women across the country? I bet they are not. I bet the hon. Lady did not ask them about those things when they came in and she started talking to them just about child benefit for higher earners.

Nicky Morgan (Loughborough) (Con): Those same women—we are talking about these abstract women—are also extremely unhappy about the massive deficit left behind by the previous Government. Whether someone is a mother or a father, their children are facing an enormous debt. This Government are tackling the debt that the right hon. Lady's Government left behind.

Yvette Cooper: If we had not had the increase in the deficit during the global financial crisis, we would have seen recession turn into slump. We would have seen huge numbers of women lose their jobs and be stuck in long-term unemployment. We would have seen women and their families lose their homes and savings, so it was right to support the economy during the recession. As a result of our decisions, the economy grew and the deficit came down. Unfortunately, the Minister's Government have decided to put a political timetable for deficit reduction into place far ahead of the interests of the economy. They are hitting public services far faster than they needed to, but they are also hitting jobs and pushing far more women out of work and on to benefits and the dole, so that they cannot support their families.

Even if the Minister for Women and Equalities believes that the Government should cut the deficit this far and this fast, how can she possibly think it is fair for women to be paying £11 billion of the £16 billion reduction that is coming from tax and benefits, while men pay £5 billion? How can it be fair for women to pay twice as much as men, despite the fact that they still earn less and own less?

Sometimes I think that the Prime Minister has a blind spot about women, but most of the time I think the truth is probably far worse. This is an ideological problem for the Tories and Liberal Democrats. Despite the fact that there are many women in both parties who strongly want to see greater progress for women, the overall ideology of both parties at the moment is that the public sector should not worry about supporting families, about who gets the money within families or about what happens to families, because that is a private matter that the public sector should not engage in. They believe that such things as tax credits are bad, because they breed dependency. The truth is that for millions of women, pension payments or tax credits create not dependence but independence. They give women greater choice about how to balance work and family life, and about whether they can afford to stay at home while the kids are young or cover their child care payments so that they can go out to work.

[Yvette Cooper]

I know that this is not easy for the Minister, because she does not control what happens in other Departments. She did the right thing at the very beginning of the Government's time in office when she warned Ministers of their obligations to consider equality and the impact of policies on women. Unfortunately, few of those Ministers seem to have been listening. Several may indeed have told her to calm down.

Even if the right hon. Lady is not fully aware of what is happening across the Government, she does have responsibility in her own Department, the Home Office, and there are serious grounds for concern there. The committee on women in policing, for example, did not meet for more than a year. It would be helpful if she told the House whether it has yet met, and whether it is now doing any work to support more women to get into the police.

The right hon. Lady has followed the previous Government's example of announcing a cross-Government strategy to tackle violence against women, which we welcome. We also welcome her support for rape crisis centres, but she does not seem to be reflecting what is actually happening on the ground, with one in five domestic violence courts closing; specialist domestic violence officers in police forces up and down the country being cut as a result of her 20% cuts to the police; refuges having to close their doors; DNA not being held in rape cases in which charges are not brought; and sentences for rapists potentially being halved if they plead guilty. We have seen her refusal and reluctance to sign the trafficking directive until pressure mounted in the House, a U-turn on anonymity for rape defendants only after pressure from the House, and her resistance, still, of the Council of Europe's convention on violence against women.

Those matters have deep consequences in practice. The POPPY project has told me of the story of Lucy, who was heavily pregnant and being treated for a life-threatening disease, and who had been severely beaten by her father. Lucy's doctor was trying to find accommodation for her. Due to the squeeze on local government budgets, the homeless persons unit said that it could not treat Lucy as being in priority need, and social services wrongly said that they did not need to help her because the baby had not yet been born.

Lucy was getting ready to sleep on the street for the weekend. The doctor could find only one refuge space, but it was too far away. The worker explained to the doctor that Lucy needed a legal letter telling social services and the homeless persons unit that they had a duty of care to her. Experience showed that only that legal threat would make the services act. Unfortunately, as hon. Members know, legal aid cuts are now biting, and solicitors were scarce and none had the space to take Lucy's case. In the end, her doctor persuaded the hospital contract doctor to write a letter. It was not his responsibility, but he did so, and Lucy was given temporary accommodation. It came in the nick of time, because the refuge workers said that on that day, five other women fleeing domestic violence came in and asked for help, and were not as lucky as Lucy. They tell me that some ended up sleeping on the street. That is the reality of what is happening to vulnerable women at the sharp end of the cuts.

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): My right hon. Friend mentioned in passing the fact that 65% of public sector workers are women, so they will be hit disproportionately. In my constituency, some 40% of workers are in the public sector. Does she accept, given what she has just said, that further cuts will tend to generate more domestic violence because of the economic pressure put on family life? There is a disproportionate impact on women not just economically but through domestic violence and the lack of funding to support increasing demand for services at a time when there are also cuts to the police budget. That is terrible for communities such as the one I represent.

Yvette Cooper: My hon. Friend is right. There are increased pressures on services, as well as cuts to many resources. Women workers in public services are feeling the strain, too.

The Minister for Women and Equalities will doubtless tell us about the good work that she and the Minister for Equalities are doing to improve women's lives, which we welcome, but we believe that we need to go further and do more. We want to support them in their work, but we need them to do much more than they are doing now. We need them to start standing up for women in the Government. We will back them if they do, and we will support them even if their colleagues do not. However, they must act. They cannot just stand on the sidelines. They have a duty to stand up for women in this country, and to get in there and fight. They need to undertake some proper, independent research on the impact of the cuts and their reforms on women. They should use the work that has been done by women's organisations in Coventry with the university of Warwick, because if they do not, we will. We will work with local groups and institutions to monitor what is happening to women across the country.

The truth is that equality for women is not just about women, it is about everyone. A fairer society for women and an economy that uses women's talents is better not just for families but for everybody. I have always believed that every generation of women would do better than the last, have more opportunities and choices, break through more glass ceilings and challenge more conventions. However, I fear for our daughters and granddaughters as a result of what the Government are doing. We owe it to them to further the march for women's equality and not to be the generation of women who turn back the clock.

1.47 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister for Women and Equalities (Mrs Theresa May): Yet again, we have heard a speech from the Opposition Benches that included no recognition of the economic mess that the last Government left us, no constructive suggestions and no positive policy proposals for the future of this country. That is not constructive opposition, it is shameless opportunism.

Let me remind the Opposition once more why we are having to take action to restore sanity to our public finances. They left us with the largest budget deficit in our peacetime history, and they left us spending £120 million every single day just on paying the interest on the debt that they racked up. That is more than we spend each day on policing, schools or child benefit. They left us

with a deficit higher than that of Portugal or Greece, which have had to go cap in hand to the EU for a bail out. The experience of those countries shows that the risks of not dealing with Labour's deficit are not imaginary but very real.

Yvette Cooper: Does the right hon. Lady think that the Labour Government should have cut public spending in the middle of a recession, and not allowed additional support for those who were unemployed and for businesses? If so, does she think the economy would have been growing at the time of the election if that had been done?

Mrs May: The Labour party, and the right hon. Lady as a former Treasury Minister, knows full well the risks of failing to deal with the deficit today. That is shown not just by what we are doing, but by what the Labour party itself said it would do if it was in government. I am talking about the position that we are in today, which was left us by the Labour Government, and the actions that we are having to take to deal with it. She must recognise that if the Labour party were in government today, it would be cutting £7 for every £8 that the current Government are cutting.

Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): The Opposition understand that the deficit must be dealt with and we want to get growth moving, but does the right hon. Lady think that that will happen if women are forced out of their jobs because they cannot pay their child care costs?

Mrs May: I am afraid that the hon. Lady's claim that the Opposition understand dealing with the deficit rings false when we hear what they say the Government should do about the deficit. On the one hand, the Labour party tries to argue that what the Government are doing to address the deficit is wrong, and on the other hand Labour Members remain silent about the fact that a Labour Government would cut £7 of every £8 that this Government are cutting this year. We hear nothing from the Opposition about where those cuts would fall.

Kate Green: The issue for the Opposition is exactly where the cuts fall. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) said, not only is the bulk of the Government's deficit reduction programme hitting women, but women's unemployment is increasing disproportionately compared with men's unemployment.

Mrs May: In the last three months, the increase in employment for women was greater than the increase in employment for men. Opposition Members, including the hon. Lady and the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), have said today that what the Government are doing is wrong. We hear that in debate after debate. Opposition Members stand up and tell us that the cuts in virtually every area of public sector expenditure are wrong. If they were in government, they would be making cuts. In that case, the question for them is where they would make those cuts.

Geraint Davies: Does the right hon. Lady accept that the deficit was the price we paid to avoid depression? The choice for the Government is whether to make deep

and savage cuts that will stop growth, and to increase VAT, which will stoke inflation, or to focus on growth and make more balanced savings over time, and, obviously, to make the bankers pay their fair share. In the case of the police, the Opposition would cut 12% rather than 20%. That is a more balanced approach that would not undermine growth or increase the deficit in the process.

Mrs May: The premise on which the hon. Gentleman began his intervention was incorrect, because he failed to recognise that we are dealing with a structural deficit. This is not about the world recession, but about the structural deficit that was built up by the previous Labour Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): Order. We must remember that this is a debate about women. We do not want to go too far talking about the deficit. I know that the two tie in, but we are in danger of having a deficit debate rather than ensuring that the women's debate is heard.

Mrs May: Mr Deputy Speaker, I shall move off the —[*Interruption.*]

Geraint Davies *rose*—

Mrs May: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene again to give me an idea of where the Labour party would make cuts if it were in government, he is free to do so.

Geraint Davies: The Institute for Fiscal Studies has shown that something like a third of the deficit was excess investment—

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs May: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Answer came there none to my challenge to the hon. Gentleman.

The Government's action is taking Britain out of the danger zone, but we are also taking action to deal with Labour's record deficit in a way that protects the most vulnerable, whether they are men, women or children. We have therefore had to take some difficult decisions on public spending, but in a way that has allowed us to protect the public service on which women most rely—we are increasing spending on the NHS in real terms every year. The Opposition cannot say that they would do that, because they would cut spending on the NHS.

Yes, we have had to implement a public sector pay freeze, but that has allowed us to protect against more public sector job losses. Even as we implement the pay freeze, we are protecting the lowest-paid public sector workers, almost two thirds of whom are women. Again, the Opposition cannot say that they would do that.

Yes, the Government have had to make tax changes, but as we have done so we are lifting 880,000 of the lowest-paid workers out of income tax altogether, the majority of whom are women. That was opposed by the Labour party, which is surprising given that it claims to be committed to redistribution.

Helen Goodman: Will the Minister give way?

Mrs May: I shall make some progress.

[Mrs May]

Yes, the Government have taken the difficult decision to remove tax credits from higher earning families, but that has meant that we can increase child tax credits for the poorest families, protecting against increases in child poverty. In fact, that decision has meant that we can increase child tax credits by £180 and then £110 a year over and above the level promised by Labour. Those policies are not just about helping women, but about protecting the most vulnerable.

Yvette Cooper: The right hon. Lady said that the increase in tax allowances helps women. In fact, the figures produced by the House of Commons Library show that the increase in the tax allowance benefited 13,500 women and 16,800 men. Even what she did to benefit households benefited more men than women. In addition, her cuts—in child tax credits, child benefit and so on—all came from women. That is the point. She is taking far more from women, but when she gives some back, she gives more back to men.

Mrs May: It is absolutely clear that the majority of the lowest-paid workers are women, as are the majority of workers who were taken out of tax. The right hon. Lady refers again to the House of Commons Library figures—she keeps quoting them—but they were produced on a remit that she gave to the Library. Interestingly, she earlier spoke of the distribution and sharing of incomes within households. However, the assumptions on benefits made in the figures that she quotes go against what she was saying about what happens within families.

For the first time, people will have the information to judge for themselves whether they think the Government's decisions are fair. We have been making some difficult decisions, but for the first time the Government published an overview of the impact of the spending review on groups that are protected by equalities legislation, including women. The analysis demonstrated that our decisions mean that services used by women are protected. With our Budgets in 2010 and this year, and with the spending review, we published unprecedented distributional analysis of our proposals, as the IFS has acknowledged. Such analyses were never published by the previous Government. Perhaps if they had thought to publish such information, they would have avoided policies that hit some of the poorest the hardest, such as scrapping the 10p tax rate, which my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Claire Perry) mentioned.

I reject the Opposition notion that we can judge the value of a policy simply by looking at the number of men or women who are affected by it. We should not reduce the amount that we invest in tackling youth unemployment just because more young men than young women are unemployed, but that is exactly what the Opposition's analysis suggests we should do. They say that spending on tackling youth unemployment would be unfair on women.

We should not stop investment in policies that will return Britain to growth, such as cutting corporation tax, because more men run companies than women. However, again that is exactly what the Opposition's analysis suggests we should do. I reject that argument. We need to ensure that more women can start businesses

as we invest in getting Britain's economy going. In fact, one symptom of the inequality between men and women is that more women than men rely on state spending.

We need to continue to support all women who need it, which is why we have ensured that we have protected child benefit and tax credits for women on low incomes, and why we will increase the value of the state pension, and protect benefits such as the winter fuel allowance and free bus passes for older women. However, if the previous Government taught us one thing, it is that more state spending might help to deal with the symptoms of inequality, but it does not address the causes. This Government are determined to get to grips with the causes of inequality between men and women, from job opportunities to the number of women in top, senior positions, to tackling the shameful levels of violence against women, and working to reverse the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood.

Liz Kendall (Leicester West) (Lab): The Home Secretary will know that some of the key causes of inequality come into play during the very earliest years of a child's life. Can she explain why her Government are cutting £5 million from the early intervention grant in Leicester, which covers children's centres and Sure Start, which are crucial to giving all children the very best start in life?

Mrs May: We agree that early intervention is very important and, as the hon. Lady will know, the hon. Member for Nottingham North (Mr Allen) produced a very significant report for the Government on the whole issue of early intervention. The Government are ensuring that, within the early intervention budget, there is sufficient funding to provide for a network of Sure Start centres. We are also ensuring—as we are in other areas, as I have mentioned in terms of focusing what the Government spend on the most vulnerable and those most in need—that Sure Start is returned to the early focus it was intended to have by the last Labour Government, which was helping those who are most in need, those on the lowest incomes and those who most need access to the sort of provision that Sure Start and children's centres can provide.

I want the Government to take a new, more mature approach to engaging with women. I want to see women's voices in government strengthened. That is why we launched a consultation on how the Government listen to and engage with women, which has already received nearly 900 responses. In today's world, we need to make full use of communications technology, social media and other techniques to allow us to talk to women directly.

The Government are focused on giving opportunities to women. We need to move beyond just protection from discrimination and help women to get on in modern businesses and modern workplaces. Many women have benefited from the introduction of the right to request flexible working for parents and carers, but by restricting flexible working to certain groups, the idea was perpetuated that this is some sort of special treatment. We will therefore extend the right to request flexible working to all employees. This will not only shift attitudes, but will help to shift behaviour away from the traditional 9-to-5 model of work that can act as a barrier to many women and that also does not make sense for many modern businesses.

Another stereotype we need to shift is the idea that women should do the caring and men should earn the money when a couple decide to start a family. Our policy to introduce a new system of flexible parental leave will make a real difference to working women who want to have children. For the first time, it will allow both parents to choose what is right for them and what is right for their family. If fathers want to take more of a role, they can. If mothers want to return to work earlier, they can. If parents want some time at home together after the birth of their child, they can have it. What matters is that they will have a choice.

Helen Goodman: I agree with the Home Secretary that we want to maximise people's choices, but she must be aware that most non-resident parents are men and most parents with care are women, and that the latter have lower incomes. How can she justify putting a charge on those parents with care when the non-resident parent is not paying up on child maintenance?

Mrs May: As the hon. Lady knows, we have had a consultation on how we deal with the child maintenance issue. I hope that she would agree that despite the efforts of both Conservative and Labour persuasions over several years, we have not got the child maintenance system right in this country. There are too many people who do not see the absent parent paying child maintenance and we need to do everything we can to get a system that will work. As she will know, the Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Maria Miller), is looking at this issue and the alternatives available under the child maintenance proposals.

As well as giving all women better opportunities in the workplace, we need to do more to help those who aspire to the very top. Last year, only 12.5 % of all FTSE 100 board members were women. That is simply not good enough, and that is why the Government commissioned Lord Davies to look at how we can increase the number of women on company boards. We have made good progress in implementing Lord Davies' recommendations. In May, the Financial Reporting Council launched a consultation on changes to the UK corporate governance code in order to help to achieve more diverse and more effective boards. The head-hunting industry has agreed a voluntary code on diversity, and we are building a strong sense of ownership and action in FTSE 100 companies. We have agreed with them a plan for how company aspirational targets should be published by September.

The latest figures suggest there has already been an improvement in FTSE 100 companies, just by our shining a light on this area. Some 31% of new board members appointed since Lord Davies' report have been women, up from just 13% last year, and the number of male-only boards has dropped from 21 in October to 14.

We are also helping women to break through the glass ceiling by providing an all-age careers service. The new service will be fully operational by next April, and will provide high quality, professional careers guidance that will be open to all young people and adults. That will help women to make the right choices for themselves and for their careers. For the lowest paid, we will raise the minimum wage to £6.08—two thirds of those on the minimum wage are women.

In other areas we are also making the right decisions to help the most vulnerable. On pensions, again we have had to make some difficult decisions. Yes, we have proposed accelerating the rate at which the state pension age for women becomes the same as the state pension age for men. With life expectancy rising—and one in nine women pensioners is now expected to live to more than 100—and with the overwhelming need to reduce the deficit, this was a decision we could not duck. But it means that at the same time we have been able to commit to a triple guarantee, which will increase the basic state pension by earnings, prices or by 2.5 per cent, whichever is highest.

The right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford claimed that the earnings link had been restored by the Turner report. Of course the Turner review referred to the earnings link, but the last Government did not restore it. This Government have restored the earnings link and gone further with the triple guarantee.

Dame Anne Begg: Do I take it from what the Home Secretary says that the reason for the acceleration of the state pension age to 66 by 2020 is that the Government can pay for the triple lock on today's pensions? It cannot be about deficit reduction because it comes after the deficit is supposed to have been abolished.

Mrs May: In fact, by the end of the comprehensive spending review period we will still have a debt of £1.4 trillion, which is three times the debt in 2006-07, so we will still need to look carefully at our public sector finances. It is this Government who have introduced that triple lock on pensions that will benefit today's pensioners. For too long under the previous Government, older women had to rely on means-tested benefits, with many not claiming their entitlements at all. Our triple guarantee will help to improve the value of the state pension, giving real security and a decent income for all women pensioners. Although women will experience the rise in the state pension age more quickly than previously planned, they will still draw the state pension for an average of 23 years.

Dame Anne Begg: To be clear, is the Home Secretary agreeing that the triple lock will be paid for by the 500,000 women who will have to wait longer for their state pension in order to reduce Government debt? That returns us to the essence of this debate—why should women bear a higher proportion of reducing the deficit than men?

Mrs May: It is not the case that there is a simple link between the acceleration of women's pension age and the expenditure on the triple lock. What is happening with pensions is more complex. Two things are happening in relation to the state pension age. The first is the overall acceleration for men and women, raising the age of state pension entitlement. That will bring in significant sums of money and is a reflection not only of Government finance issues but of increased longevity. When the state pension was first introduced, people lived for a very short period, comparatively speaking—a matter of two to five years—beyond their retirement. Today, people live for a significant length of time beyond their retirement. The Government therefore need to raise the state pension age, as has been recognised by previous Governments—the initial decisions to accelerate the rise and raise the state

[Mrs May]

pension age were taken by previous Governments. We have had to take these difficult decisions. As I said, however, although women will experience the rise more quickly than previously planned, they will still draw the pension for an average of 23 years.

Claire Perry: I am sure that my right hon. Friend is aware of this point, but in the proposals for 2016 and thereafter will we not be addressing the long-standing problem of women who have taken career breaks being ineligible for a state pension, which is a travesty that we should have sorted out before? Under the proposals we will bring forward, there will be much more parity in that area.

Mrs May: My hon. Friend makes an important point that I was about to deal with. In the longer term, we want to take reforms even further. The state pension Green Paper proposed a single-tier state pension combining the state pension and the state second pension to provide an estimated £140 per week, which would be of particular benefit to women who have had to take time out of the labour market because of their caring responsibilities. The coalition Government are not just talking about this—we have actually made proposals to help women in this regard.

On health, we are pursuing policies that give real help to women. We have stuck to our promise to increase health spending in real terms; we are sticking to our coalition agreement commitment to increase the number of health visitors by 4,200 by 2015; and we are making available £400 million over the next four years to support breaks for all those hard-working carers, many of whom are women.

I have made it absolutely clear, as has my hon. Friend the Minister for Equalities, that tackling violence against women and girls is one of my top priorities, which is why in March we published an action plan to tackle the problem; it is why we have provided more than £28 million of stable Home Office funding until 2015 for local specialist services; it is why we have provided £900,000 until 2015 to support national helplines; and it is why for the first time we have put funding for rape crisis centres on a stable footing. We will provide more than £10 million over three years to support their work, and we will open new centres where there are gaps in provision. This should not be a party political issue. It is about helping the 1 million women who suffer domestic abuse each year; the 300,000 women who are sexually assaulted; and the 60,000 women who are raped. As the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford said, one in four women will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime, and that will often be accompanied by years of psychological abuse. That is why the Government take violence against women and girls so seriously.

We will only change damaging behaviour, however, after we have changed the underlying attitudes that cause that behaviour. Those attitudes are fundamentally affected by the culture and society in which children grow up. We share the concern of many parents that children are now being exposed to sexualised images and an increasingly sexualised culture from an early age, which is why we commissioned Reg Bailey, the chief executive of the Mothers' Union, to lead an independent review of the commercialisation and

sexualisation of childhood. He has listened to parents' concerns about explicit music videos, outdoor adverts and the increasing amount of sexual content in family programming on television.

Reg Bailey's recommendations call on businesses and broadcasters to play their part, and they include putting age restrictions on music videos, covering up explicit images on the front pages of magazines and newspapers and restricting outdoor adverts near schools, nurseries and playgrounds. He also recommends that retailers sign up to a code of practice that checks and challenges the design, display and marketing of clothes, products and services for children. There has been a great deal of goodwill from the broadcast, retail and advertising industries throughout this review. They know that family friendly practices make good business sense, and the Government will now look to work with business to implement the review's proposals.

As well as helping women in this country, we are doing more than ever before to help women overseas. We are putting women at the heart of our international development policies, because in development there are few better options than investing in women. In Ivory Coast, for example, an increase of just \$10 in women's income achieves the same nutritional and health outcomes for children as an increase of \$110 in men's income. On international women's day, the Department for International Development published its new strategic vision for girls and women. It sets out that, by 2015, our international development work will have saved the lives of at least 50,000 women in pregnancy and childbirth and 250,000 newborn babies; will have allowed at least 10 million women to access modern methods of family planning; will have supported more than 9 million children in primary education, of whom at least half will be girls, and 700,000 girls in secondary education; and will have helped 2.3 million women to access jobs and 18 million women to access financial services.

Graham Evans (Weaver Vale) (Con): The majority of part-time students studying for first degrees are women. Ten years ago I graduated as a mature part-time student—and I was pleased to note then that the majority of students were women. However, will my right hon. Friend confirm the Government's decision to extend loan support to part-time students, which will give women the opportunity to advance their careers through further education?

Mrs May: I commend my hon. Friend on his experience and how he got his qualification—I am choosing my words carefully, given what he said about the number of females on the course. However, it is important that we support part-time study, because it is an option that people are increasingly considering. The extra support that we have provided and the way we have dealt with the issue are important steps forward. As he said, such support will have a particularly significant impact on women, given that many part-time students are women.

Heidi Alexander (Lewisham East) (Lab): On students, women in my constituency often tell me about the need for good English language schools. The Home State will know that the co-financing proposals for speakers of other languages will affect women disproportionately—74% of those affected by the proposals will be women. What conversations has she had with the relevant Minister about that issue?

Mrs May: I have had a number of conversations over time with the relevant Minister on the issue of English language schools and colleges.

I wish to finish the point about tackling violence against women and girls overseas. My hon. Friend the Minister for Equalities has also been appointed as our overseas champion for tackling violence against women and girls. We have a moral duty to act to support women around the world.

The Opposition's record on women speaks for itself. They left government with 1 million women unemployed and 200,000 more women unemployed than when they came to power—and that is without even mentioning the deficit. We are sorting out their mess and protecting the most vulnerable, even as we deal with Labour's deficit, and we are giving women the opportunities they need to be successful: flexible parental leave; more women on boards; careers advice for all; flexible working extended; NHS spending protected; resources for violence against women defended; international development spending centred on women; low-paid people taken out of income tax; pay rises for low-paid public sector workers; child tax credits higher than under Labour; a triple guarantee on pensions; and the minimum wage up. Which of these policies do the Opposition disagree with? Where is their plan to deal with the deficit, to sort out the public finances, and to get Britain back up off its knees? They have no policies that would benefit women, no positive ideas, nothing to say to protect the most vulnerable, and therefore no credibility. All they offer is empty opposition, and that is why their motion deserves to fail.

2.18 pm

Emma Reynolds (Wolverhampton North East) (Lab): I am sure that Members on both sides of the House will agree that discrimination and prejudice have blighted women's lives for many decades and centuries, and we will all have stories of how our own families have been affected by it. In the 1950s, my grandmother, who was a midwife, was nearly forced out of work purely because she got married and started having children. In the 1970s, when my mother was pregnant with me, she was sacked because she was pregnant. She took the case to court, but was unsuccessful. Furthermore, it was only 20 years ago that marital rape was criminalised. It is incredible and horrific to think that until 1991 a man could rape his wife without her having any recourse to justice.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) said, much progress has been made in recent decades. However, it has been hard-fought, and I worry that it is fragile. Much more remains to be done. Girls do better at school and university than boys, but that is not filtering through into the labour market. Women earn less than men, and women own less than men. Men dominate the FTSE 100 companies, and one in four women at some point in their life will experience domestic violence. I also have to say that for every five men in this Parliament there is only one woman.

The case for gender equality is often expressed in the language of fairness and social justice, but there is also a powerful economic case for gender equality. It simply does not make sense to under-utilise the potential of half the population. A gender-equal society is not just

fairer; it will be stronger, too. My worry is that the Government are complacent about the progress that has been made and that their policies might set us back years, or perhaps decades. The devastating economic impact of the Government's policies on women is particularly distressing. Let us face it, the Government did not get off to a great start. This time last year, they failed to do an equalities impact assessment of their emergency Budget.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford set out, the deficit reduction measures are going to hit women much harder than men. Just as I am worried that the midlands and the north will be less able to cope with the economic gamble of this Government's deep cuts, with the private sector less likely to take up the slack in those areas than in the south, I am also deeply concerned that women's employment and pay will be disproportionately hit by the Government's policies. Of the 500,000 jobs estimated to be lost in the public sector, an estimated 65% to 80% will be women's jobs. It is not clear that the loss of jobs held by women in the public sector will be offset by an increase in the private sector. Therefore, the employment gap between men and women is likely to widen. Moreover, the gender pay gap is also likely to widen, as the private sector has a much higher pay gap than the public sector, with men earning over 20% more than women.

Dame Anne Begg: I have to give my hon. Friend the bad news that in some areas the gender pay gap is even wider. In my constituency the gender pay gap is 30%, partly because a lot of the men have high-paid jobs in the oil industry, whereas the women generally work in the service industry.

Emma Reynolds: The gender pay gap has been a problem for decades. Even though we legislated in this country in the 1970s, there has not been enough movement to narrow the pay gap.

Let me turn to the commitment in the coalition programme to

“promote equal pay and take a range of measures to end discrimination in the workplace.”

When the Minister winds up, I would like her to explain exactly how the actions that I have described will further that commitment. I fear that we will go backwards, not forwards.

The benefit cuts and changes also have a disproportionate effect on women. I support the eventual equalisation of the pension age for men and women, but again, we have seen the Government's total disregard for the 500,000 women aged between 56 and 57 who, at very short notice, will have to wait two years longer before receiving their pensions. Also, cuts to child benefits and the working family tax credit, which involve help for child care costs, will make it harder for women to combine parenthood and work. For women with children, those benefits do not create dependence, but give them independence and a real choice of whether to stay at home or work part time or full time. Now that choice will only get harder.

Nicky Morgan: My constituents have told me that one of the problems with the current system of tax credits—and the reason why the universal credit is needed—is that a number of women in receipt of tax

[Nicky Morgan]

credits found that if they worked even one or two hours extra, they immediately started to lose more benefits than they were gaining. The point is that we want to encourage women's independence, as the hon. Lady says, which means the ability to be flexible and take on more work if it is available, yet the current tax credits system seems somehow to stop that.

Emma Reynolds: I share the hon. Lady's sentiments, but I do not agree with her conclusions. The child care element of the working tax credit is particularly important, especially for parents on middle incomes, yet it is being cut quite substantially. Those cuts in particular will reduce parents' opportunities to work if they want to. I want both parents to have the choice of working, if they so desire, as well as balancing family commitments. Indeed, a civilised society should provide that framework, so that both parents can, if they want to, combine work with parenthood. Again, this is not just about fairness; it also makes economic sense.

However, this Government are guilty not just of attacking women's economic empowerment, but in their work on tackling violence against women. We have seen many ill-thought-through policies that seem to be targeted at women. For example, this time last year, when considering anonymity for defendants, the Government chose to introduce it for rape cases. I know that they have dropped the idea since, but why choose rape, a crime predominantly committed against women? We also had an interesting debate about whether the Government should increase the plea bargaining discount, and again, the crime chosen to illustrate this was rape. Again, why choose a crime that affects more women than men?

I also have deep concerns about the Government's reluctance to do anything concrete about the modern slave trade. Although I am pleased that they have finally seen the light and signed up to the EU human trafficking directive, I fear that it took them so long that they are now behind, rather than leading from the front, blinded by a degree of Euro-scepticism. I also want to know what the Government are preparing to do ahead of the Olympic games next year. Unfortunately, international sporting events are magnets for pimps and traffickers. I would like to know what specific measures the Government are putting in place to stem the probable increase in trafficking due to the Olympic games. There is also much evidence that the national referral mechanism used to identify victims of trafficking is not fit for purpose. The UK Border Agency is in control of the mechanism, often treating women as illegal immigrants instead of victims—that seems to be the assumption made even before the women involved are interviewed.

In opening, I talked about the discrimination that my grandmother and mother suffered, and the progress made since. I sincerely hope that this Government will start to take seriously the risk that their policies will make women's life chances worse, not better, for the next generation.

2.27 pm

Mrs Louise Mensch (Corby) (Con): I am very glad to be called to speak in this important debate. Let me start by saying how much I agreed with part of the concluding sentiments of the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), when she

said that this debate is not just about women, but about everybody. That, of course, is where all the Opposition's arguments fall down, because they fail to perceive—she said this was ideological; I agree with her: it is ideological—that by returning the country to prosperity, we will be returning women to prosperity. She fails to perceive or acknowledge what the former Prime Minister and Member for Sedgefield, Tony Blair, has acknowledged—along with James Purnell and her right hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr Field)—which is that her Government failed to reform the welfare system, and in doing so, failed so many of the women and children in this country, who suffered from being below the poverty line.

What a shocking indictment to hear from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that the right hon. Lady's Government left office with 1 million women unemployed. We heard a list in the right hon. Lady's opening arguments of all the ways in which women had fallen behind men in equality. I would say to her and other Opposition Members that Labour had 13 years in power to do something about the inequalities that women suffered, about the welfare system or about children below the poverty line, yet they signally failed to do so, just as they signally failed to tackle our structural deficit. Again and again, we heard her right hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath (Mr Brown) talk about taking tough decisions for the long term, yet he never took any of them. It has taken the two parties on the Government side of the House to fix the mess that the one party on the other side left behind.

How astonishing that the Labour party actually dared to call for an Opposition day debate on women's issues. When I look at my research brief from the Government I see measure after measure designed to protect children and families. I see a relentless focus on women, children and the most disadvantaged among the dispossessed. This Government must try to perform the incredibly difficult balancing act of fixing the deficit while protecting the most vulnerable, and we are coming up with creative and flexible solutions to a problem that was left to us entirely by the Labour party.

Labour Members talk of Sure Start provision. It is a fact that under Labour 50% of Sure Start centres were failing to reach out to the most disadvantaged children. It is a fact that Sure Start provision had moved away from its original purpose, and was failing to reach the most needy and the most vulnerable. Our proposals for Sure Start provision will include payment by results, and rewards for incredibly effective Sure Start centres such as the Pen Green centre in my town of Corby in east Northamptonshire, which has just received a massive amount of investment for research from the Department for Education. We will see extra health visitors, and we will see a relentless focus on children.

I find it amazing that, yet again, what we are hearing from Labour Members is naked opportunism. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Women and Equalities made a point that has been made many times on the Government Benches and has always gone unanswered: Labour's spending plans involved cuts of £7 in every £8. When asked for specifics, Labour Members always respond with platitudes. They get to their feet and say, "We agree that the deficit needs to be tackled", but when Government Members ask them precisely how they would tackle it, they reply, "We would not make your cuts."

The women of this country are not stupid. They know that a blank piece of paper is no answer, and they know that we are fighting at every level for women. They see that there are to be new rape crisis centres in Hereford, Devon, Trafford and Dorset. They see stable funding for rape crisis centres: £10 million a year for the next three years. The Government are dealing with the important issue of violence against women, and they are taking action against rape. We are seeing deeds rather than words from this Government.

Heidi Alexander: The hon. Lady talks about fighting for women. What assessment has she made of cuts in legal aid that will have a hugely disproportionate effect on women once family law cases become ineligible for funding? Does that constitute fighting for women?

Mrs Mensch: I believe that the proposal to reduce legal aid funding was in the hon. Lady's party's manifesto. She will know, or she should know, that the legal aid system is incredibly inefficient and incredibly costly. Once again, we hear from Labour Members objections to a particular cut; once again, it is a particular cut that Labour also proposed in its manifesto; and once again, Labour Members have no specific proposals whatsoever to offer the women of this country on how they would implement their policy.

As my right hon. Friend the Minister for Women and Equalities pointed out, universal credit is an attempt to tackle not the symptoms but the root causes of women's poverty. According to statistics from the Department for Work and Pensions, it will take an estimated 350,000 children and 1 million people out of poverty. That is genuine progress. We know that women and children suffer in workless households, and we are finally grasping the nettle and tackling the problems that Labour refused to tackle.

As I look through my statistics, I see programme after programme directed at women. We have talked about the massive investments in existing rape crisis centres and the new ones that are being built. We have talked about the increase in the minimum wage—and so many of the 890,000 people affected by the increase to £6.08 will be women. Under Labour, it was perfectly legal for Jobcentre Plus offices to display advertisements for sex workers. It is absolutely appalling that Labour allowed that to continue, but this Government have stopped it.

What about the extra investment in the national health service? Labour is very quiet about the fact that it would cut funding for a service on which women increasingly rely. How bizarre to sit here—

Helen Goodman: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs Mensch: I should be delighted.

Helen Goodman: Before the hon. Lady gets too high on her horse, may I point out to her that all the ground work and all the legal advice for changing the rules about which jobs could be advertised in jobcentres were produced under the last Government?

Mrs Mensch: May I please tell the hon. Lady that ground work is simply not good enough? For 13 years under a Labour Government, you allowed sex worker jobs to be advertised in Jobcentre Plus. The hon. Lady is embarrassed about that, and so she should be. It is an indictment of her Government that it was ever allowed.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): Order. I assure the hon. Lady that I was not responsible for sex workers. I should be very grateful if she would put that right.

Mrs Mensch: I apologise profusely for ever having suggested such a thing, Mr Deputy Speaker. I shall try to mind my language in future, as my mother taught me to.

It is this Government who are looking at ways of challenging inequalities in the workplace—

Fiona Mactaggart (Slough) (Lab): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs Mensch: I shall be happy to do so after I have made a little more progress.

Fiona Mactaggart: It is on this point.

Mrs Mensch: I have not made it yet. However, I will happily give way.

Fiona Mactaggart: First, at no point were what the hon. Lady describes as “sex worker jobs” advertised in jobcentres. Secondly, the advertisements were not displayed for the entire term of the last Government. There had been a court decision that jobs in the broader sex industry ought to be advertised in jobcentres, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) and I pressed for it to be changed. I think that the hon. Lady's claim that that was an achievement by the present Government is fundamentally dishonest, and that it was equally wrong for her to say that the advertisements continued for 13 years. [*Interruption.*] I am sure that it was done by accident.

Mrs Mensch: I thank the hon. Lady for her intervention, but I must tell her that I reject her assessment. In the Welfare Reform Bill, the Government have introduced legislation to close the loophole. If the Labour Government did not like the direction in which the courts were moving, it was always open to them to introduce legislation and to do so quickly. They would have been supported by my right hon. and hon. Friends, but they chose to sit on their hands.

I commend the hon. Lady for having done some of the work, but I condemn her party's Government for not having done it quickly enough. Labour Members cannot escape the fact that it is this Government who have put right that shocking affront to women's dignity. It is also this Government who are introducing flexible parental leave between parents, and this Government who are working with businesses to bring about transparency in pay so that the massive gap between men's and women's wages—which was 16.4% under Labour—can be reduced.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton North East (Emma Reynolds) made an opportunistic reference to plea bargaining and shorter sentences for rape. It may be an idea that will not go very far, but the present Government are at least trying to introduce measures to tackle the appalling rates of rape conviction that we saw under the hon. Lady's party. We saw zero ideas from that Government, and zero action to tackle those conviction rates.

Emma Reynolds: Does the hon. Lady think that the policy that the present Government have just abandoned of increasing the discount from 33% to 50% would have had an effect on the number of defendants pleading guilty? The Sentencing Council did not.

Mrs Mensch: I believe that it might have had an effect, but I also believe that the root cause is the fact that sentences overall for violence against women, rape and sexual offences are far too low, and that if necessary the House should direct the Sentencing Council to increase those overall sentences. In that wider context, the proposal might have made more sense. Let me point out to the hon. Lady that the entire left-wing press, including *The Guardian*, roundly condemned her right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition for his naked opportunism over the issue of sentencing and rape. As with rape crisis centres, it is this Government who are trying to do something about it.

Since December the number of mixed-sex wards has fallen by some 77%, and many women are no longer having to suffer that indignity. There is more investment in the NHS. Sure Start centres are protected under law from arbitrary closure by local authorities, which now have great flexibility to spend their budgets as they wish. Extra intervention means that there will be new health workers to help mothers to breastfeed, and to help the most vulnerable families. Sure Start is being targeted at the women who need it most.

When we look at the overall reforms of the economy, universal credit, the lifting of women out of poverty and the creation of opportunities, we see a Government who are not anti-women but, in fact, relentlessly pro-women, and who are doing all the things that the Labour party failed to do during its 13 years in office. Let me say to Labour Members that if they are not satisfied with the position of women in our society today, they have only themselves to blame.

On the issue of women as on so many other issues, it is the two parties in the coalition Government who are taking action and making progress. When an Opposition Member gets to their feet and levels with the House and the country about where precisely they would make some cuts, they might begin to have some credibility.

Mr Tom Watson (West Bromwich East) (Lab): It is only a tiny little budget, but it appears to be the only one that has not been cut at all: the grant for the Prime Minister's second kitchen.

Mrs Mensch: I am very fond of the hon. Gentleman, as he knows, and we have great fun serving together on the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, so I will go easy on him by saying that I will take that intervention in the light-hearted spirit in which it was intended, because the country is in a very serious state, and the state women are in is very serious too. The fact that we have to make these cuts is a serious matter, and it does affect women, yet all we hear from Opposition Members is excuses and all we see is blank paper; there is no admission that they would cut too, and no notion of where they would cut.

In conclusion, how unutterably strange it was to hear a good portion of the opening speech of the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford and of the contribution of the hon. Member for Stretford

and Urmston (Kate Green)—who is no longer in her place—spent trying to defend the payment of child benefit to prosperous women such as me. If that is what they have got to say to the women of this country, it is frankly no wonder that they are sitting on the Opposition Benches rather than the Government Benches. It is this Government who are committed to women; it is this Government who are making progress for women; it is this Government who are committed to tackling the deficit and at the same time protecting women and the most vulnerable. The Opposition have nothing to say, and I am sure their motion will be defeated in the resounding manner that it deserves.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): Before I call the next speaker, who will be Jonathan Ashworth, may I remind Members that his will be a maiden speech?

2.42 pm

Jon Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is a tremendous privilege, and perhaps a little daunting, to have this opportunity to speak in the Chamber for the first time, not least because this is a debate on women and Government policy, and I do hope that I do not turn out to be the token male in the debate—although as a father of a two-week-old baby girl, and as someone who has just returned from paternity leave, I feel slightly more confident about speaking in it than I might have done a fortnight ago.

As is the custom, I start by paying tribute to my immediate predecessor, Sir Peter Soulsby, who stood down from Parliament to contest the election for Leicester's first directly elected mayor—which, indeed, he won. Sir Peter was much admired in the House for his independence and integrity, and although I make no criticism of those who remain in this House while seeking election to other bodies, it is testament to Peter's devotion and commitment to the city of Leicester that he resigned his seat before seeking election as Leicester's mayor, not after. I am sure that Members on both sides of the House will wish him well—and look on enviously at his 37,000 majority. I look forward to working closely with Sir Peter in the years ahead.

I also want to say a few words about Parmjit Gill and the late Jim Marshall. Parmjit Gill served briefly as Member of Parliament for Leicester South. He was also very briefly my opponent in the recent by-election. I and many others were sorry when he withdrew as a candidate, as he is respected across the constituency, but I know he has a young family and I wish him well for the future. I never knew Jim Marshall, but throughout the by-election campaign I met many who did. Jim served Leicester South for nearly 25 years in total, with an unfortunate four-year break thanks to the will of the electorate. Many still speak warmly of Jim's compassion and commitment to social justice. He is hugely missed across Leicester South.

I am privileged to represent a constituency of huge diversity, vibrancy and tolerance, and while we must never be complacent, our communities generally live harmoniously together. We are part of a city renowned across the world for welcoming incomers. Families have come from across the globe to make their home in

Leicester South, such as our Asian communities from Gujarat, Punjab, Pakistan, east Africa and Bangladesh, as well as our Caribbean community, our communities from Somalia and, most recently, those from elsewhere in Africa, the middle east and eastern Europe. Our diversity enriches our cultural, social and civic life, and contributes immensely to our economy, too.

For many of my constituents, faith is important. A sightseer on a tour through Leicester South would no doubt visit our cathedral and beautiful churches, numerous mosques, gurdwaras, Hindu temples, synagogues, and the Jain temple. We are all proud that all our faith groups promote mutual understanding and solidarity, focusing on what unites us, not on what divides us. There can be no greater example of this than what happened when the English Defence League came to Leicester last October in an attempt to stir up hatred and division. The people of Leicester—all faiths, all cultures and all backgrounds—united in rejecting the EDL and what it stands for. Our community leaders, our city council leadership, the police and, most importantly, the people of Leicester should be commended for what we have achieved in Leicester. Although my right hon. Friend the Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) is not in his place, I also want to pay tribute to him for his outstanding contributions on these matters over many years. As the Member for Leicester South, I will play my part in celebrating our diversity and promoting mutual understanding in the years ahead as well.

Many people from across the world and the UK come to study at our two great universities—Leicester and De Montfort—both of which are situated in Leicester South. Our universities help to make Leicester the dynamic city it is today, while our student population is considered so significant that just over 12 months ago the Deputy Prime Minister visited the campus of De Montfort university to make a certain pledge on tuition fees, to much student acclaim. My by-election campaign was boosted by no less than three visits from the Deputy Prime Minister, but on each occasion he seemed somewhat reluctant to return to the campus he visited a year ago; I can't think why.

My constituents rightly take the NHS very seriously. Many of them hope that the Prime Minister will drop his proposed changes to the NHS, and are deeply worried about his “top-down reorganisation”. Although Glenfield hospital is in Leicester West, many of my constituents have told me how strongly they feel that the children's heart surgery unit at Glenfield should remain open, and I agree with them. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester West (Liz Kendall) has, along with the *Leicester Mercury*, been at the forefront of the campaign to keep the unit open, and today I want to make clear my support for that campaign and assure my constituents that, alongside my hon. Friend, I will do all I can, locally and nationally, to back efforts to maintain the children's heart surgery unit at Glenfield.

My constituency boasts much cultural and sporting heritage. The '60s playwright Joe Orton grew up on the Saffron Lane estate, and I believe that the singer Engelbert Humperdinck—the legend who made the song “Quando, quando, quando” so popular—grew up in Leicester South too. As a sports fan, I am lucky that my constituency contains the grounds of Leicester City football club, Leicestershire cricket club and Leicester Tigers rugby union club. I look forward to visiting them all regularly

in the future—on constituency business of course—although I hope Tigers fans will not hold it against me that I was brought up a Salford rugby league fan; I know you will approve of that, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Although there is much to celebrate and we are proud of our achievements, many families are, as I heard in the by-election campaign, uncertain about the future. My constituents—and women in particular—are feeling the brunt of the coalition's fiscal policies. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) so eloquently outlined in her opening remarks, many women are feeling the effects of the tax credit changes. In the by-election campaign I met a family living off Aylestone road who are feeling the squeeze thanks to a VAT increase, rising inflation and tax credit changes, and who are now worried about their jobs as well. They told me they were “doing just nicely” until this Conservative-Liberal Government came along.

We have many Sure Start centres in the constituency. Thankfully, because of our Labour council, they are being saved, but as my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester West outlined in an earlier contribution, the Government are cutting the early intervention grant. I heard many heart-breaking stories from younger people—many of them young women—from poorer backgrounds who are doing well at school but now think university is not for them. Many of my constituents hope that the Government will think again and introduce a fairer and more equitable way of funding higher education.

Our jobless rate is too high; it is the highest in Leicester. Traditionally, Leicester has had a good record in employing women, but with the public sector cuts set to hit us, many women in my constituency face a precarious future. Tackling our unemployment problem will require the Government to implement a strategy for growth, with investment in skills, training and work-readiness schemes. I especially hope the Government will reconsider the cuts in ESOL—English for speakers of other languages—which will have a detrimental effect on the ability of many of my constituents, particularly women, to move into work.

Pockets of my constituency too often show up in annual surveys of high deprivation. Poverty and lack of opportunity too often blight lives in St Matthew's and parts of Highfields, Spinney, Saffron Lane and Eyres Monsell. Many of those will be women. It is a matter of great shame that in Leicester we have one of the highest levels of child poverty in the UK. With the changes to the tax and benefits system that have already been discussed, I fear things will get worse. Pushing for measures to tackle child poverty in Leicester will be a priority of mine, as I know it is for my right hon. Friend the Member for Leicester East and my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester West, as well as our mayor, Peter Soulsby, and his able deputy Rory Palmer.

However, the people of Leicester South, whether living on those estates or living elsewhere—in Aylestone, Knighton, Stoneygate or Castle—are a proud people. We are at our strongest when we are united in supporting one another, and we are proud that we can boast of countless voluntary organisations that do just that—the Sharma women's centre, the Pakistan Youth and Community Association and the Bangladesh Youth & Cultural Shomiti, to name just a few—or when we celebrate together, whether at a religious festival or a

[Jon Ashworth]

community event such as the one held this past weekend, celebrating national family week, at Eyres Monsell's "picnic on the park".

I come to this House from a modest background. My mother and father, when they had work, were employed in low-income jobs—they might be described as the modern working class—but I was lucky in life. I did well at my comprehensive school and I am the only one in my family ever to have made it to university. Before I was elected to this House I worked within it for a previous Prime Minister and for the current Leader of the Opposition. I also worked briefly for my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman)—which perhaps explains why I chose to speak in this debate.

I am honoured to have been elected as the Member for Leicester South. I will dedicate myself to representing all my constituents, to fighting for those across Leicester South whose voices too often go unheard, and to playing my part in articulating the concerns and aspirations of those in my constituency, many of them women, who know that there can be and must be a better way.

2.52 pm

Claire Perry (Devizes) (Con): May I start by saying what a pleasure it is to follow the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Leicester South (Jon Ashworth)? He demonstrates, as in so many cases, that often there is a lot more that joins us than divides us in this House. He spoke about his constituency, and defended it, with great passion—and I have heard almost every Member of this House do the same thing in terms of their own constituencies. The hon. Gentleman might also be interested to know that we share more than that. My family hails from 19 Narborough road south, my nephew is studying at De Montfort university, and I remember many a trip to Leicester market to buy vegetables—from Gary Lineker's parents—and eat Eric's ice creams. I therefore suspect that the hon. Gentleman and I will have a lot to talk about in the Members bars over the years to come.

I was enjoying the hon. Gentleman's speech—until the point where it got rather political. We Government Members were sitting on our hands in order not to contravene the policy of not intervening on maiden speeches. But when I heard him say that his former employer was the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman), all became clear, and I understood why he could not help himself. However, it is an absolute pleasure to follow the hon. Gentleman.

I want to ask the question: why are we here today? It seems from what we have heard from Labour Members that we are here to listen to a bandwagon. All we have heard from them so far is a desperate and disparate series of criticisms of individual policies, in an attempt to create a fictional narrative about this Government targeting women and those who need help most in society. It is a fictional construct that I reject entirely, as I think every Government Member does.

There is also a flagrant disregard for the mistakes and missteps that the Labour Government made in 13 years. We heard a tiny apology from the shadow Home Secretary

for the 10p tax rate fiasco, which caused so many people on low incomes, particularly women, such incredible hardship.

Mr Edward Timpson (Crewe and Nantwich) (Con): It was a disaster.

Claire Perry: It was a disaster, and was recognised as such. However, we have not heard much about the hollowing out over the previous 13 years of the health visitor profession. The health visitor is often the only point of contact that a young mother, particularly one from a disadvantaged community, will have with the medical profession. Health visitors are the most trusted people involved with pregnant women's and young children's lives, yet that profession was hollowed out and almost entirely disregarded. Indeed, its professional status was completely downgraded by Labour.

We have not heard anything about the complex, byzantine welfare system that was built up over 13 years—a welfare system that now costs every family in this country £3,000 a year. Yet in my constituency, it appears to trap people on welfare—particularly single mothers who would love to get back into the work force—and trap them in poverty.

Sheila Gilmore (Edinburgh East) (Lab): Does the hon. Lady not accept that it was in fact Labour's policies that got 350,000 single parents back into employment? Yes, before that we had a very bad record compared with other European countries—I fully endorse that point—but it was Labour's policies that made inroads into that.

Claire Perry: I agree with the hon. Lady, who I know has campaigned on this issue for years, that some progress was made, but it was not enough. The welfare system is incredibly complicated and provides huge disincentives to work. Yes, women were helped back into the work force, and the hon. Lady and I both completely support that. However, we hear time and again about women who do not know if it is even worth their while to work—who cannot work out, given the complexities of part-time and voluntary working, whether they should even look for child care for their daughter or son in order to go to work. It is simply an expensive mess that has not helped the women and men across this country in the way that it should.

Helen Goodman: Will the hon. Lady temper her rhetoric just a tiny bit and recall that every person who goes to a jobcentre gets a "better off in work" calculation to inform them by how much they will be better off, and what their other entitlements are?

Claire Perry: I would be interested to know whether the hon. Lady has actually gone through a "better off" job calculation, as I have. It is one of the most complicated, ridiculous pieces of analysis I have ever seen. In many cases, the jobcentre advisers simply say, "We actually don't know." It can take 45 minutes to make a "better off" calculation, and if someone's circumstances change by one or two hours a week, they have to go back to the starting point. If the hon. Lady is suggesting that the "better off in work" calculation is something to be proud of after 13 years in government, may I suggest that she fundamentally misunderstands what we need to do to get men and women back into work? In fact, the work that the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions is doing will massively reform the system.

George Hollingbery (Meon Valley) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that the adoption of the universal credit and its 65% taper means that people can now be absolutely certain that they will be better off in taking on more work, particularly on the other side of the current 16-hour barrier, beyond which so many benefits drop away?

Claire Perry: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. As a mother of young children, I cannot emphasise enough how difficult it can often be for women to take those steps—to think about child care for their family if they are not sure that it makes sense financially. As he says, there will be far more certainty under the system that we are proposing.

We are here today, therefore, because of a mass outbreak of bandwagonism on the Labour Benches. We are also here because of a heavy dose of hypocrisy. As I think most Labour Members acknowledge, the Labour Government would have had to make £7 of spending cuts for every £8 of cuts that we are making this year. Are they telling us that they would somehow have ring-fenced those spending reductions, or made them in a different way?

Harriett Baldwin (West Worcestershire) (Con) *rose*—

Emma Reynolds *rose*—

Claire Perry: If they are, we are all ears. [*Interruption.*] Tell us! The only thing we have heard is that they would restore child benefit for families with a median income of £75,000 a year. I do not think that that is fair or progressive; nor do hard-pressed working women and women on benefits in my constituency. They think it is outrageous—and that is the only Opposition policy we have heard today that would deviate from what the present Government are doing.

I shall give way first to my hon. Friend the Member for West Worcestershire (Harriett Baldwin), and then to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton North East (Emma Reynolds).

Harriett Baldwin: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way. I was going to make exactly that point: we have heard today that for someone like me who is making £65,000 a year, it is Labour party policy to restore my child benefit after 2013.

Claire Perry: My hon. Friend is right. Moreover, despite the state of the public finances—for every £4 we spend, £1 is borrowed—Labour would like to borrow that money from other countries in order to restore my hon. Friend's child benefit, thereby putting that debt round the necks of all of our children and grandchildren. How can that be a rational policy? It is sheer, rank hypocrisy—and on that point I will happily give way to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton North East.

Emma Reynolds: I thank the hon. Lady for such a kind introduction. The Government plan to fund the deficit reduction through a proportion of 20% tax rises and 80% spending cuts, whereas our plans are for 60% to come from tax rises and 40% from spending cuts. Does she accept that because women earn less and own less, the spending cuts being introduced by her Government hit women much harder than ours would have done?

Claire Perry: It would be helpful if we understood a little more about what the hon. Lady's spending reductions would be. Only the shadow Chancellor and the shadow Chancellor's wife think that Labour's economic policies are correct. Everyone else, including the International Monetary Fund, the CBI and the OECD, thinks that what the Government are doing is the way to restore the health and credibility of the British economy.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Claire Perry: I wish to make a little more progress, and then I will be happy to give way.

We are hearing a lot of hypocrisy about spending cuts and about pension ages. Let us not forget that the Labour party commissioned the Turner review, which recommended a rise in the state pension age for men and women, and pointed out that the disproportionate longevity figures for men and women meant that the age for women had to rise more quickly. We must ask whether there is an alternative proposal. Does something need to happen about state pensions? We would love to hear Labour's plans, but we never do.

The Labour party also missed more than 50% of its own equality targets. We know that the Labour party loves targets, but we do not hear very much about the fact that it missed 50% of its targets in this important area. We have also not heard much from Labour Members about Sure Start. I love Sure Start, and I am incredibly proud of the three Sure Start centres in my constituency. They are doing incredibly good work, particularly in places such as Tidworth, an area to which dozens of soldiers and soldiers' wives come. The centre provides a real lifeline there. We have just opened the Sure Start centre in Pewsey, and thanks to the financial management skills of Wiltshire council it will remain open and funded.

Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): Can the hon. Lady, or any of her colleagues who wish to contribute, tell us why previous Conservative Governments never introduced anything like Sure Start? Sure Start is an amazing achievement of the Labour Government, and she should bear that in mind.

Claire Perry: One might just take the hon. Lady's intervention back a little. Sure Start was invented in the United States in the early 1990s, where it was targeted, as she knows, at the children who needed it most, and it was a great success. If I had been in Parliament when Sure Start was introduced I would have supported it in its early incarnation. It is a very sound idea, but of course it had to grow from something that was very useful when targeted to something that became a universal political point.

Let us hear what happened. In 2010 the National Audit Office found that

“there was no reduction in inequality between child development achieved in the 30% most disadvantaged communities and in the rest of England, against a target to reduce the gap by four percentage points”.

We must remind ourselves that Sure Start was introduced to intervene in the lives of the most vulnerable and needy children and families, and that that target was completely missed. Did any discussion take place about how to target Sure Start better? Was there any acknowledgement that one of the huge issues related to

[*Claire Perry*]

the lack of trust going out and reaching in to the most disadvantaged communities? We know that more than half of the Sure Start centres were failing to reach out to vulnerable families. What should people do in those circumstances? Should they think about how to change that, or should they keep spending and criticise a Government who want to target the money better? The 4,700 extra health visitors jobs—almost 5,000 of them, which will largely be filled by women—represent the way to get from the Sure Start centre out into the community and really help the most disadvantaged children, who absolutely need that intervention. That is what we are planning to do, but we hear no support for it. Again, that is because of the rank hypocrisy that we are hearing from Labour Members today.

The other thing we are hearing today is that the Government have no policies in the area of equality. This is a House of very intelligent people—I keep saying that so it has to be true. There are Members in all parts of the House who work on a cross-party basis on unbelievably important issues, be it child protection or trying to stop the pernicious influence of pornography on the lives of our families. We should be working together on how to make Sure Start centres more effective—on what we can actually do to make a difference—instead of getting involved in this bandwagonism. I find it incredibly demeaning for the House to be participating in that.

We are dealing here with unbelievable hypocrisy, given that it is coming from a party that maxed out on the nation's credit card. Its approach means that we are spending 39 times the annual operating budget of Sure Start on servicing Labour's debts. That is the legacy that we are having to deal with. Do we hear any innovative or sensible suggestions about how to deal with it? No, we do not.

We have a benefits system has been created to trap many women in the sorts of poverty from which we would all want them to get out. We know that the benefits system is costing everyone £3,000 a year, but do we get any positive recognition and support for our welfare reform policies and the universal credit that we are proposing? I do not think so. Let us put aside this bandwagonism and hypocrisy, and let us talk about what this coalition Government are actually doing.

First—this is obviously the elephant in the room—the Government are taking action to pay off the previous Government's crippling debts, which did not pop up overnight as a result of the credit crunch. The Labour Government spent more than they took in taxes every year from 2002, wishfully thinking that post-endogenous growth theory—I went to Nailsea comprehensive school and do not have a clue what that means—would somehow bring us out of the mess. Well, guess what: it does not. A Government have to live within their means if they are not to burden our children with debts, as the profligacy of the Labour Government did. This Government will live within their means. We are making the spending reductions that the Labour party left us with in a way that focuses the scarce resources on those who need them most.

We are facing a public sector pay freeze, and that is tough. Some 35% of the employment based in my constituency is in the public sector, so members should

not think that I do not get a lot of letters about that. However, I also hear from the women, many of whom work part time, who are grateful to be excluded from the pay freeze because they are low earners. They recognise that in these scarce times things have to change, but they think that it is important that the pay freeze excluded the lowest paid, and so do I. The Government have also taken 880,000 people out of taxation completely and definitively with a one-off move—it was not the fiasco of the 10p tax rate—and that benefits lower-income women and families in this country hugely.

We have heard a lot from Labour Members about child tax credits—I am confused, because I thought that the Government were raising child tax credits in absolute terms and ahead of indexation for the most disadvantaged families, who need them the most. I believe that that benefits 4 million of this country's poorest families. We are examining Sure Start centres, ring-fencing the funding and investing in 5,000 additional health visitors, who can stop Sure Start centres being a nice thing thrown on the wall and make them work.

Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab): Can the hon. Lady tell me which Sure Start centres have their finances ring-fenced?

Claire Perry: As the hon. Lady knows, it is for the local authority to decide what it does. I do not know what her local authority is doing, but in Wiltshire not one Sure Start centre is closing and funding is being maintained completely. I might submit that political machinations further down the system are leading to these changes, but the funding and the additional investment is certainly there. If her local Sure Start centres would like to operate better and have some additional health visitor investment, that money is also there.

We have also heard about a Government who are protecting NHS spending. We know that in general women consume more NHS resources, and that money is being protected. International development spending, which I particularly support and about which we heard so eloquently from those on both sides of the House during the international women's day debate, is also being ring-fenced. It is my belief that investing in schools for women in Pakistan is a sensible thing to do locally and it will increase overall economic security and prosperity. Having a women-focused aid policy, as we have, is the right thing to do.

We have heard about the universal credit, which will bring 1 million people, including 350,000 children, out of poverty. We have also heard about the sustainable funding for the rape crisis centres. I have been involved in some of the discussions that have taken place on rape, sentencing and tariffs and the policy person from the head of the UK rape crisis centres says, "This is the first time we have had sustainable funding for our centres for as long as we can remember, and we absolutely support this."

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con): Does my hon. Friend welcome the fact that over the next three years nearly £250,000 will be put into developing a rape crisis centre in Exeter, serving the women of Devon, who have been disgracefully under-resourced over the past 10 years?

Claire Perry: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. Of course, under the previous Government nine out of 10 local authorities did not have a rape crisis centre. At a time of significant fiscal constraint, we are managing to find new money to invest in that incredibly important area and I thank her for her intervention.

Finally, as regards an area on which many of us in this House have campaigned together, the Government are taking active steps to deal with the oncoming tide of sexualisation and the commercialisation of childhood, whether by getting retailers to act in a responsible way or by getting internet service companies to consider a system that allows us not to have pornography piped into our homes and makes getting it a choice. Work is happening under this Government that I applaud.

This is a bit of a depressing debate to be involved in. Many Members share many of the same aspirations and campaign on important issues, but all we have is the bandwagonism and hypocrisy of the Labour party. What I have enjoyed most in this debate has been listening to Ministers who have told how we are focusing scarce money on those who need it now while taking steps so that the profligacy of the previous Labour Government does not leave our children and our grandchildren with debts to pay off.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): Before I call the next speaker, let me tell hon. Members that we have six speakers to come and the wind-ups will start at 3.55 pm. Can Members bear that in mind?

3.11 pm

Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): I pay tribute to the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester South (Jon Ashworth). He was passionate about his constituency and warm in his praise of his predecessors and colleagues in the city. May I thank him for his support for Salford Reds? Among the many football and rugby clubs in his constituency that he could have talked about, he still remembered Salford Reds. I hope that he will enjoy visiting the clubs he mentioned in his own constituency and he will always be welcome in my constituency, where the new Salford Reds stadium is fast taking shape. Each week when I go back there is more of it. He is very welcome to come back to Salford.

On a more serious point, let me refer to a letter from a constituent affected by the pension age change. My constituent wrote:

“Recently I applied for a pension forecast and found that I will not receive any pension payment until I am 64. I am worried and appalled. I have worked full time since leaving school, progressed my nursing career so I could remain employable and reared 2 children. I do not drink or smoke and I have paid for our children’s university fees so that they could enter ‘the big society’ with something to offer, ensuring their employability. I have not been given any time to plan for receiving my pension at 64. Successive governments have encouraged people to save for their retirement which I have done with the view of retiring at 60. I cannot stress strongly enough how I feel let down by people who are supposedly managing our country. I will certainly join in a campaign opposing this”.

She also said:

“How can I stop this happening? It is unfair and penalises all those people who are loyal and hard working.”

Women such as my constituent are worried and appalled and it is time that Ministers listened to them.

Harriett Baldwin: Is the hon. Lady talking about a constituent whose retirement age is rising to 64? Is that not a policy that her Government brought in?

Barbara Keeley: I did not intend to touch on that, but wanted to take the opportunity to read out my constituent’s comments so that Ministers understand the worry and concern.

I want to focus more on women and jobs and social care. I share the concerns expressed by many organisations and individuals about the disproportionate and unfair impact of the Government’s policies on women. As we know, women make up 60% of the public sector work force. Nationally, 40% of women’s jobs are in the public sector compared with 15% of men’s jobs. In my constituency, women’s jobs in the public sector are in local government and the NHS—in the primary care trust and in local hospitals. Local councils are now having to manage the swingeing front-loaded budget cuts made by this Government and thousands of jobs are being lost. Salford council, my old council, will have to cut 500 jobs this year. Wigan council will lose more than 800 jobs and Manchester council 2,000. All the interventions made by Government Members have not made much mention of those swingeing front-loaded cuts to council budgets, but they are very important and they are affecting things.

George Hollingbery: Will the hon. Lady illuminate the House with how many of the job cuts to the various councils she identified are redundancies or post eliminations rather than straightforward compulsory redundancies? Can she tell us about the profile of those people? Are they at the top, middle or bottom level of the organisations?

Barbara Keeley: It hardly matters, I think. We are talking about three or four years of cuts and this year’s cuts will be followed by similar cuts next year and the year after. I am surprised that Government Members can look with such equanimity at something such as the 2,000 job cuts that are happening in Manchester.

The hon. Member for Devizes (Claire Perry) talked about protecting the NHS, but in reality hundreds of jobs are being lost in the NHS, as they are in local councils. Jobs are being lost through the abolition of our primary care trust in Salford and that change is also causing turmoil to local services and decision making. At Salford Royal hospital, 720 jobs are being cut, including those of 146 nurses. The Christie, our regional council hospital, is to reduce its staffing by 213—one in 10 of the current work force—including 40 nurse-grade jobs and 50 health care support or assistant jobs. I am sure that none of us would look with equanimity at that level of job loss.

Jane Ellison (Battersea) (Con): Does the hon. Lady not accept that her own party did not campaign on the basis of ring-fencing or protecting the health budget? Does she not accept that it is highly likely that the situation would be far worse had her party been elected?

Barbara Keeley: No, I do not accept that. The turmoil that has been caused by the unnecessary top-down reorganisation, as well as the £3 billion cost of that reorganisation, is not helping.

[Barbara Keeley]

Finally, and close to home in my constituency, Royal Bolton hospital is losing 60 posts, including 32 nurses, with 92 jobs going next year and 95 the year after. At Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh hospital, 533 jobs are going—a 13% reduction. These are the jobs and careers of my constituents, and women's jobs are disproportionately affected because all those organisations employ significantly more women than men.

In recent months, there has been quite a focus on women's jobs that are being lost, but the cuts also mean the loss of services that women use more than men. Women, as we know, are more likely to use libraries and health services and they need support from social care for family members and themselves as carers. Women will carry a disproportionate burden of the spending cuts that are affecting social care services as 58% of carers are women, and of those carers who combine caring with part-time work, 89% are women.

Next week is carers' week, which has great support across the House, and the theme will be the true face of carers. Carers are being asked to talk about the reality of their lives as carers—how hard they can find it to be a carer and what could really make a difference to their lives. A report by the Care and Support Alliance in March showed that levels of unmet need were increasing even before the cuts to local council budgets. That is a great cause for concern. In the alliance's survey of 1,000 people, nearly seven out of 10 respondents felt that they needed more support, more than two in 10 said that services had been cut back even though needs might have been increasing, and more than two in 10 said that the person cared for needed support but was not receiving any services.

That is not surprising, given that councils have been cutting their eligibility criteria for social care for some time, increasing charges for services and removing caps on charges. I am proud of the fact that, despite the swingeing 27% cuts to council budgets at Labour-run Salford city council, it has managed to retain eligibility criteria for social care at a level to help people with moderate needs as well as those with substantial or critical needs. Salford is now one of only 15% of councils that provide that level of care. That is in great contrast to councils such as coalition-run Birmingham city council, which recently tried to set its eligibility criteria to a new level of "personal critical". More than 10,000 people would have seen their care packages downgraded and more than 4,000 people would have had no care services or support whatever.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Jack Dromey) reported the distress of constituents who came to him for assistance: people who were extremely vulnerable themselves or caring for someone who was elderly, ill or disabled. Women carers were disproportionately included. The Care and Support Alliance survey revealed that changes to services that happened even before the cuts had led to

"a negative impact to the person with care and support needs."

The report quotes one female carer talking about the impact on her life. She said:

"I am unable to go out with my husband because one of us needs to remain at home with my mother. Unable to go out with my sister (also disabled) because if I go out she needs to stay

home to support my husband in caring for our mother. Unable to visit friends, have a weekend away or take a holiday. Feel abandoned by the state—Carer's Allowance withdrawn when I reached 60 last year, Carer's grant reduced by Local Authority from £400 pa to £100 pa this year, top-up fees now payable for the 3 hour respite per week, no extra help available."

Of course, such extra stresses also put further pressure on the health of many women who care. Another female carer is quoted in the Care and Support Alliance report as saying:

"I care for two and I am disabled myself. Although they have increased the care for my father, he still needs extra care from me. I get no help with my husband, who is also becoming more demanding and no help for myself. So my life gets harder and harder and my health is deteriorating as a consequence."

Women who are carers are also worried about the Government's plans to cut £1 billion from disability living allowance over five years by reducing the number of people who are eligible. Tightening the eligibility criteria for DLA will mean that many carers will not be eligible for carer's allowance, which will be available only for those who look after someone who is in receipt of the middle or higher level of DLA. As three quarters of the recipients of carer's allowance are women, that is yet another area in which women will bear the brunt of the cuts.

Carers UK has estimated that seven out of 10 women will be carers in their lifetime. We know that social care services for older people are underfunded and that the number of over-80s is increasing, so the pressure on family carers, who are mainly women, is bound to increase. Once again, women will be disproportionately affected.

Women are more reliant on the services that the public sector provides and therefore stand to lose more from cuts to services and from the loss of jobs that I have talked about. That affects my constituents and women who are carers. I have campaigned since I have been in the House to improve services and support for carers, six out of 10 of whom are women. More could always be done, but Labour gave primary care trusts extra budgets to fund respite care, introduced the carers grant and provided £770 million in new funding for disabled children.

Claire Perry: Let me pay tribute to the hon. Lady's work in this area, which many of us recognise. Surely she will welcome the £800 million commitment that the Government announced last year to provide really important respite care for parents with disabled children.

Barbara Keeley: Of course, every move to provide extra respite care to help carers is beneficial, and all those moves were started by the previous Government in support of the Every Disabled Child Matters campaign. As I said earlier, there has been very little mention of the fact that the swingeing cuts to council budgets cancel out everything else being done. Perhaps that is not the case in places such as Wiltshire, but it certainly is the case in the north of England.

Finally, let me mention some things that were going to happen but will not now happen.

Claire Perry: Will the hon. Lady give way on that point?

Barbara Keeley: I am just about to finish.

The Government have abolished the measures in the Personal Care at Home Act 2010, which would have helped 400,000 of the people in the greatest need, and they have cut the budgets to local councils, as I have mentioned, which will potentially have a great impact. Those changes come at a time when we know that more services are needed given the horrendous cases we have heard about in recent months. It is time to develop unanimity across the House. I know that many hon. Members on the Government side are concerned about social care, but the impact of the changes that I have mentioned will cause a loss of quality of life for carers, as I have outlined.

3.23 pm

Lorely Burt (Solihull) (LD): Let me begin by adding to those of others my congratulations to the hon. Member for Leicester South (Jon Ashworth). I can see that he is no token man, as I know that he has a two-week old baby and I can see the shadows under his eyes from here. I welcome his comments celebrating the cultural diversity of his constituency. Clearly, he is going to be a great advocate for Leicester South.

I think that the previous Labour Government and this coalition Government have a lot in common. We both want to redress the imbalances between men and women through public policy. It is fair to say that Labour did many things that benefited women, such as increasing the maximum age for children at which parents could apply for flexible working. That change followed a very similar private Member's Bill that I had introduced the year before, which would have extended the right of request to the parents of children up to the age of 18. My Bill was unceremoniously voted down by Labour, which then reintroduced the measures in a form that applied to the parents of children up to the age of 16. I do not mind the previous Government's doing that: they saw a good idea and grabbed it. Indeed, I think we should all work together more to pool our best ideas, particularly in the current, grave economic circumstances. That might be too radical a notion for this debate and this Parliament given the way things have been going so far but it is an aspiration of mine. I am very glad that this Government are consulting on extending the right to request for all employees. That will remove the stigma when some staff have a right that is denied to others. It will also acknowledge the fact that employees are more loyal and productive when there is an acknowledgement that they should be able to have a reasonable work-life balance.

Another thing that Labour did that particularly benefited women was allowing any years they spent caring for others to count towards pension entitlements in future. Why the Labour Government never restored the earnings link during their 13 years is beyond me. Why would they not have done that if they believed that the economy was strong, not knowing that the so-called growth was based on a house of cards and unsustainable debt? How much more difficult has it been for us, while we are trying to deal with the biggest deficit in peacetime history, to redress some of those injustices at the same time? We put our actions where our mouth was and immediately committed to restoring the earnings link with the triple guarantee. A much fairer and better pensions system that will raise the level of a single person's pension to £140 in today's money will be introduced

by the Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions, my hon. Friend the Member for Thornbury and Yate (Steve Webb), who has responsibility for pensions. That system will help the poorest pensioners more than anything that was introduced by the previous Government. Of course, the poorest pensioners are mostly women. Two thirds of people on pension credit are women and the average woman receives £40 less per week in her state pension compared with men. Even with the changes brought in by Labour, it would have been 2050 before pensions were equalised between the sexes.

Something else that will greatly help is the move to the universal credit system of benefits, which has been mentioned by several hon. Members, rather than the complex system that we currently use. That change will mean that work always pays and will encourage people to return to work rather than stay at home on benefits because that is more financially beneficial.

Sheila Gilmore: But surely even in the Government's projections and the impact assessments of the Welfare Reform Bill, it would be an exaggeration to say that work will always pay, particularly for those people who have child care costs.

Lorely Burt: The Government are investing more than £3 billion in this, but every single factor cannot be taken into account in determining whether the outcome will be better or not. The Government are looking into what we can do about child care costs. The hon. Lady raises an important issue, which I know is being taken very seriously by my hon. Friends on the Front Bench.

Under the proposed system, 31% of women who are entitled to benefits will be better off than they are at the moment. In addition, women returning to work after having children will be able to build up their hours gradually without being unfairly penalised by the system. It will also help take-up. In 2008-09 only 80% of people took up child tax credits. There has been much discussion about that today. I hope that changing to a simpler system will ensure that those who need the money get it.

However, I agree with the sentiments expressed in the motion about the disproportionate effect of the planned increase in the pension age on women born between December 1953 and October 1954. I am delighted to see that the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Thornbury and Yate, has come into the Chamber. I declare an interest: I am one of those women. Although I expect still to be going like a train at the age of 70, I entirely understand where those women are coming from and the unfairness of imposing change too late for many to do anything about it. I therefore ask my hon. Friend the Pensions Minister to do all he can to ensure that the proposal is reconsidered and a measure introduced that will be a little fairer to that tranche of women.

Mark Lazarowicz (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab/Co-op): I am glad the hon. Lady has made that plea to her party colleague, the Pensions Minister. I am sure that many other colleagues will make the same point. Does she agree that women who are upset and worried about the change need a decision soon? It is causing many of them great anxiety and stress, and they cannot be expected to go on for months wondering whether there is to be a change or whether they will have to put up with the unfair increase in their pension age.

Lorely Burt: I agree, and I am sure my hon. Friend the Pensions Minister listened to every word that the hon. Gentleman and I have said.

Let me move on to Sure Start centres. I am amazed that the Opposition have the temerity to accuse us of closing centres, when the centres that have been closed were predominantly in Labour-run council areas. The Government are not cutting Sure Start centres and have made sure that there is enough funding in the early intervention grant to retain a network of Sure Start centres. Not a single Liberal Democrat council has closed a Sure Start centre, and in my own patch, in Solihull, we have extended their remit from the narrow strictures prescribed by Labour.

Barbara Keeley: Does the hon. Lady think there might be a connection with the fact that many Labour councils, particularly in the north, had seen cuts of something like £100 million in their budgets? It is hard to protect any services in that situation, and no services can be left out.

Lorely Burt: Perhaps it is a matter of priorities. Economic inequalities still abound in this country. Despite the good old Equal Opportunities Act now reaching its fifth decade, women working full time still earn, on average, 15.5% less than men. That is not good enough. Raising the tax threshold has helped women, who made up 60% of the 900,000 people lifted out of tax altogether. In the spending review we ensured that the lowest paid public sector workers, 65.5% of whom were women, were protected from the public sector pay freeze, as the hon. Member for Devizes (Claire Perry) mentioned.

The world of work is therefore one area of public policy that we can use to try and level the playing field between men and women, but let us also consider self-employment and women-owned companies. We know that a third more women-owned start-ups fail in the UK than in the US; we know that 20 years ago the US took affirmative action on procurement; and we know that today there are proportionately twice as many women-owned businesses in the US as in the UK. One area where the Government have taken action is in the field of procurement, with reference to small businesses. We aspire to achieve 25% of goods and services procurement for Government Departments from small businesses.

But women-owned businesses are not even on the Government's radar. If we are spending taxpayers' money, should we not know who we are procuring from? If we are measuring how many small businesses we are procuring from, how much more difficult would it be to measure how many women-owned businesses we are procuring from? It makes good business sense to procure from companies run by people who look like those being supplied to. It makes good business sense for boards of directors to have a critical mass of people who think with the left side of their brains, as well as those who think with the right side—I caricature.

We have had the Davies report on women on boards, and I wait with bated breath to see whether companies will respond. The Home Secretary said that the early indicators are positive, but companies had better shape up, otherwise I will be pressing the Government to get tough with boards that think that certain people have a monopoly on innovation, creativity and plain old common sense.

I have already mentioned flexible working. I want to commend the Government for their work on flexible parental leave, for facilitating better solutions for parents and companies in how that leave is taken and for modifications to the working time directive affecting the interaction of annual leave, sick leave and family-friendly leave. It is good news that the latest figures from the Office for National Statistics show that 100,000 more women started work, compared with 18,000 men, so it is not all doom and gloom.

There is probably no single aspect of Government policy that does not affect women in some way. We are short of time so I will refer to only one more point: the suggestion in the media today that we are to rethink the proposal to reduce sentences by half for those who plead guilty to rape charges. I worry about that policy. Of course it is good to have a confession that avoids the added trauma for rape victims of having to testify and be cross-examined, but halving a rapist's sentence just for confessing sticks in my craw. We must consider why only 6% of rape reports result in a conviction. There is no glory for any Government in this respect. We must do better and there has to be some kind of cultural change.

We all want the same thing: a more even playing field for women. The Government are striving to maintain and increase fairness in the most difficult and trying circumstances. I certainly do not think that we have everything right, but with a little good will on all sides we can work together to do this. I will be lobbying my hon. Friends to do the right thing.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): The winding-up speeches will begin at five minutes to 4 and four Members wish to speak, so they each have a shade under five minutes in which to do so.

3.37 pm

Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester South (Jon Ashworth), who is no longer in his place, for making his maiden speech. I will keep my remarks short and so will not take interventions.

Some people may wonder why we are having this debate and considering the impact of the Government's policies on the needs and issues facing women, rather than any other group, and they have a point. When we develop policies, we should consider the differential distribution of their effects on a range of different population groups, not just women, but obviously including them. Importantly, we should look at whether those policies improve the circumstances for those groups and how that might happen, whether by improving their educational and job opportunities, through access to minimum income standards or through opportunities to achieve a healthy life expectancy and so on.

Most importantly, we should look at ensuring that those policies reduce rather than exacerbate the inequalities that persist between different population groups in our society. It is about ensuring that those policies are fair and that our society is fair. On that basis, it is appropriate for us to debate the issues that women increasingly and disproportionately face as a result of the Government's policies. That is the crux of the debate. It is about how the policies are affecting women now. We should not be

harking back to the past. The policies are unfortunately affecting women in an unfair, unjust and even discriminatory way and we must be mindful of that.

We have already heard that, more than 40 years after the Equal Pay Act 1970, women are still more likely to be paid less than men for the same work and to live in low-income households. Although Labour did much to address income inequalities in recent years—there is evidence to prove it—the pay gap between men and women remains, at around 16.4%. We have heard different figures today for the pay gap, but it is even worse for women in high-paid jobs. Women are also more likely to work part-time, and half of all part-time workers, both men and women, are paid less than £8 an hour. One in five women, compared with one in 10 men, earns less than £7 an hour, but whichever low-pay threshold we use, we find that the number of low-paid women is approximately double that of men.

On top of that, Equality and Human Rights Commission research shows that approximately 30,000 women a year lose their jobs as a result of pregnancy. Those income and other inequalities persist for women throughout their lives. Lone mothers and single female pensioners are more likely to be in low-income households than their male equivalents, although the evidence indicates that that situation improved under Labour.

This is an unsatisfactory state of affairs, but unfortunately it has been exacerbated by the policies that this Government have introduced. Despite earning less and owning less, women are set to lose an average of £8.80 a week, compared with £4.20 for men, because of the Government's deficit reduction programme. Reductions in tax credits, benefits, pensions and attendance allowance will all hit women harder, and, as the Institute for Fiscal Studies shows, last year's regressive spending review saw families most detrimentally affected, with lone parents worst affected of all.

This year's Budget did nothing to compensate part-time working mothers, and women pensioners got nothing from the increase in tax allowance. The threat to universal, affordable quality child care, including the removal of ring-fenced funding for Sure Start, is a major hit to women as well as to their children. Child care is probably the biggest issue for women juggling work and family, and similarly the provision to exempt some organisations from the requirement to provide maternity and paternity leave is a retrograde step.

The measure in the Welfare Reform Bill to incentivise separated parents who currently use the Child Support Agency to make private arrangements in the future for child maintenance, and to place financial penalties on them if they do not, is another example whereby support for women is being eroded. Ultimately, support is needed to address the latent discrimination that women face.

Pensions are another crucial area where this Government have penalised women. In the past few weeks, hundreds of women in my constituency have contacted me about the Government's decision last September to accelerate the equalisation of the state pension age for women to 65 years old in 2016 instead of 2020.

The Government also announced an increase in the state pension age for men and women to 66 years old by 2020 instead of 2024. The Library estimates that in my constituency the changes will affect 4,300 women,

compared with 3,800 men, with a notional loss of income from state pensions of up to £10,700 for approximately 200 women.

We all agree that women are living longer, and that we need to change the state pension age, but the issue is about the time being taken to do so.

3.42 pm

Harriett Baldwin (West Worcestershire) (Con): The hon. Member for Leicester South (Jon Ashworth) is no longer in his place, but I too pay tribute to him for a very assured and interesting maiden speech. It was a privilege to be in the Chamber to hear it.

I had not planned to speak today until I saw this patronising and paternalistic motion on the Order Paper—this drivel that we have had to debate all afternoon. I am absolutely incensed by it, because the way in which we address the fact, which we all acknowledge, that women earn and own less on average is not by ensuring that they continue to receive a stream of benefits throughout their lives or only state-sponsored child care options.

From some interesting points that Opposition Members made, we learned that at the next general election the right hon. Members for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) and for Morley and Outwood (Ed Balls) will stand on a platform of restoring their household's child benefit, which is worth £2,400 a year tax-free, despite their combined income being well into the hundreds of thousands of pounds. That will be a difficult message for them to sell on the doorstep, but it was certainly a fascinating insight into planet deficit-denial on the Opposition Benches.

I also thought that I was living on a different planet when we heard no acknowledgement of the fact that over the past 12 months more than 530,000 jobs in the private sector have been created, with 400,000 more, net of the necessary reductions, in public sector employment. How is it good for families and women to be paying £120 million a day in interest? How is it good for families and women if Opposition Members put their heads in the sand and refuse to identify a single cut or alteration that they support? This Government are introducing welfare reform that will incentivise the economic choices of women in recognising that at the end of the day only additional work will help them to address the earnings gap and the asset gap.

As someone who has fought all my life for greater equality for women in the workplace, I feel somewhat differently about pensions. I think that we should welcome the fact that men and women will be retiring at equal ages and that women and men will be treated equally as regards pensions.

Naomi Long (Belfast East) (Alliance): I agree that the equalisation of pension rights and ages is an important and necessary thing that we should all support. Does the hon. Lady accept, however, that the real crux of the issue for Opposition Members is the amount of time that certain women will have to prepare for the change because the goalposts have been moved so quickly?

Harriett Baldwin: We should bear in mind what these women are preparing for. An average 55-year-old woman today will live to 88, on average, and many more women will live to see their 100th birthday. Having the extra

[*Harriett Baldwin*]

year to prepare for saving for that very old age is not at all a bad thing. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Lorely Burt), I have absolutely no intention of retiring in my early 60s, and I welcome the fact that men and women will be treated equally regarding pension age.

Mark Lazarowicz *rose*—

Harriett Baldwin: I am sorry—I do not have enough time to give way.

I acknowledge that equalising the pension age means that there is a group of women who are disproportionately affected, but I would like to hear proposals on how we could avoid that and still end up in what we all agree is the right place, where we have longer to prepare for a much longer old age.

3.47 pm

Sheila Gilmore (Edinburgh East) (Lab): Some newspapers have an item where they talk about the word of the day or word of the week. For the Government Whips Office, the word is presumably “bandwagon”, because expressing opposition is suddenly seen to be jumping on one. I do not think that the Government have necessarily gone about a deliberate policy of targeting women, because I do not believe in conspiracy theories, but some of their policies, when added together, are having precisely that effect. Perhaps people have not realised or noticed.

I want to take a slightly different tack. I will be very brief in the hope that I get other opportunities to amplify these issues, because they are important. What happens to women, in particular, when they separate from a partner in coming out of a relationship? There is a lot of research that says that women in that situation end up worse off anyway, but some things that are happening will exacerbate it. For example, legal aid is going to be taken away from family cases. In my experience as a family lawyer, it is not going to court and getting embroiled in some dramatic procedure, but good, solid legal advice that will get people the kind of financial settlement that enables them to get back on their feet more quickly. If that is not available, they will be financially worse off.

In addition, there are changes to child support that will require people to go through an obstacle race to get it. I urge the Government to remember why the child support system was introduced in the first place—precisely because people were not getting that form of support.

As well as not getting a good financial settlement and not getting easy access to child support, what else is going to go wrong? The big thing that people need when they are separating is housing, because two into one will not go, so what is happening on the housing front? People in the private rented sector who need housing benefit will get less of it. We are not even sure how mortgage costs will be covered under universal credit. The homelessness rules are changing so that more people will end up in the private rented sector. That costs more money, so it is not actually a cost-saving measure. It will also not give people the long-term security that they want. Women who separate from their partners will therefore find themselves in a more difficult position in terms of housing.

Finally, I turn to benefits. Women will have to re-enter the work force at a younger age because the age at which the youngest child will affect their benefit is being reduced to five. There are also changes to tax credits and to the amount of money to cover child care.

If one thinks about the journey that a woman makes from separating from her partner to re-establishing herself in her new life, I contend that the effect of those Government policies will make her much worse off. I am sorry that I do not have time to amplify those points, because I certainly could. I look forward to having another opportunity to do so.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I call Mary Macleod, to sit down at five minutes to 4.

3.50 pm

Mary Macleod (Brentford and Isleworth) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for Leicester South (Jon Ashworth) on his excellent maiden speech. I commend him for choosing this debate in which to make it. By doing so, he will have kept half his constituents happy. That is a positive thing for any Member.

I will make a few brief points because there is not much time. First, I want to say how disappointed I was at the speech of the shadow Minister for Women and Equalities. All we heard was a rant of negativity about what was not being done, instead of a recognition of the positive things that the Government are doing for women. Labour Members kick-started the work that has been done for women, and I congratulate them on that. I thank the Minister for Women and Equalities, who is in her place, for her positive, inspiring and visionary speech about what the Government are doing to make things better for women, no matter who they are or where they come from.

The shadow Minister for Women and Equalities said that the Prime Minister had a blind spot when it came to women. That is a scandalous comment given that it was the Prime Minister who put his name on the line before the last election to get more women on to the Conservative Benches. The Prime Minister, the Minister for Women and Equalities, the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, who helped to campaign in my seat, and other people all helped to increase the number of women on the Conservative Benches from 18 to 49, and I thank them for that.

I believe that the Government are working hard to support women and families, and to promote equality. We are focusing on giving what we can to the poorest and most vulnerable in society. Of course, the majority of those people are women. We have heard much today about financial support. The key area for me is that the Government are lifting 880,000 of the lowest-paid workers, the majority of whom are women, out of income tax. I look forward to the time when we increase that even further, because these are the people who most need our help.

We have discussed the welfare reforms and the way in which we are trying to incentivise and encourage people to get back into work. My hon. Friend the Member for West Worcestershire (Harriett Baldwin) discussed that matter eloquently. The coalition agreement states that we will look at ways to encourage shared parenting such as flexible parental leave. That is real equality. I have

worked for 20 years in business, and for people such as me, these policies are about bringing real equality into the workplace.

Having women in business is important. My hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Lorely Burt) spoke about Lord Davies' important report. I was pleased to hear from the Minister for Women and Equalities that progress has been made on that. I will be one of the people who follows this matter closely to ensure that more is done. My hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Claire Perry) spoke about the new flat pension rate, which will come into effect in 2016. That will take account of the fact that women take career breaks and will ensure that doing so does not affect their pensions, which is very good. We also have to consider women in small businesses, of whom we want more. If we were setting up small businesses at the same rate as men, we would have 150,000 more businesses, so there is much more to be done.

There is a lot of great work on domestic violence, about which we have heard today.

In summary, I believe that the Government have demonstrated their full commitment to women through financial support for families, by helping women in business and by protecting vulnerable women. We have amazing women and fabulous female role models across the country, and the Government will build on what they are doing to create a much stronger, safer, fairer and more equal society for all of us.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I am grateful to the last four speakers, who ensured that everybody on the list got in.

3.55 pm

Rachel Reeves (Leeds West) (Lab): This has been a lively and welcome debate, and a rare occasion on which women have outnumbered men in the Chamber. That said, it was a privilege to be here for the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester South (Jon Ashworth). He will be a tremendous asset to the House, and he is one of my longest-standing friends in politics. I congratulate him on his election, and also on the birth of his daughter. It will be a busy time ahead for him.

My hon. Friend feared that he would be the token male in today's debate, and overall the debate has been sisterly, although when my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) was referred to by the hon. Member for Devizes (Claire Perry) as simply the shadow Chancellor's wife, that was language that one would perhaps have expected more from the Justice Secretary. *[Interruption.]* Members are saying that that is cheap, but I think it was the hon. Lady's comment that was cheap rather than mine.

One thing is clear: whether by ignorance or design, the Government are disproportionately hitting women with their cuts, their pensions policy and what is happening in the jobs market. Until now, every generation of women have enjoyed greater opportunity than their mothers or grandmothers. My great-grandmother was a cockle picker on the south coast of Wales, my grandmother worked in shoe factories and my mother is a primary school teacher. However, that expectation that women of the next generation will do better than

those of the one before is now threatened, largely by the choices that the Government are making. They risk turning back the clock on women's equality.

I wish to address some of the specific points that have been made today. My hon. Friends the Members for Oldham East and Saddleworth (Debbie Abrahams), for Newport East (Jessica Morden), for Aberdeen South (Dame Anne Begg), for Wolverhampton North East (Emma Reynolds), for Worsley and Eccles South (Barbara Keeley) and for Edinburgh North and Leith (Mark Lazarowicz) all mentioned the state pension age for women, as did the hon. Members for Solihull (Lorely Burt), for North Wiltshire (Mr Gray) and for Belfast East (Naomi Long). Earlier today, the hon. Member for Mid Dorset and North Poole (Annette Brooke) and my hon. Friend the Member for Glenrothes (Lindsay Roy) challenged the Prime Minister about it.

The changes that the Government plan will mean that women have to wait up to two years longer for their state pension, whereas no man will have to wait more than a year longer. They will mean a loss of income of up to £15,000 for up to 33,000 women, yet the coalition agreement states that the parties agree to

"hold a review to set the date at which the state pension age starts to rise to 66, although it will not be sooner than...2020 for women."

Yet under plans in the Pensions Bill, the state pension age for women will start to rise to 66 in 2018.

As the hon. Member for Belfast East said, MPs of all parties can show that they understand the fierce concerns and aspirations of women by opposing the Government's proposals to increase the state pension age at such a pace. A petition with more than 10,000 signatures has been presented to the Prime Minister, and Age UK and Saga are calling on the Government to think again. I welcome the chance to hear what the Minister for Equalities has to say about that, and I welcome the fact that the Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions, the hon. Member for Thornbury and Yate (Steve Webb), is also in his place. I hope that they will listen to the concerns that women are raising.

As for incomes, either by accident or by design the Government's policies on tax and welfare changes will, as my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth mentioned, have twice as much of an impact on women as on men. All incomes are being squeezed during these difficult economic times, but some are being squeezed more than others. That is particularly the case for women and children. Does the Minister for Women and Equalities really believe that it is fair that women are paying the highest price for budget deficit reduction? If not, will she look again at some of the Government's policies?

My hon. Friends the Members for Leicester West (Liz Kendall) and for Worsley and Eccles South spoke passionately about Sure Start and its tremendous work in all our communities. Many mothers and children rely on the services that Sure Start and our children's centres offer, and although the hon. Member for Corby (Mrs Mensch) thinks they are failing families, the women and children I talk to in Leeds West and across the country believe that they are making a massive difference. The Government say that that money is protected, but in reality, particularly in northern cities where there are cuts of up to 27% of total spending, it is not possible to ring-fence that money. I ask the

[Rachel Reeves]

Government to look again at ensuring that vital services such as children's centres and the Sure Start offer are protected.

The latest job figures show that jobseeker's allowance among women is at its highest level since 1996. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford and Urmston said, 474,000 women are now claiming it. Those problems are only likely to get worse. Sixty-five per cent. of public sector workers are women, as are 75% of those working in local government. If the Office for Budget Responsibility's predictions of 310,000 job losses in the public sector in this Parliament are correct, we can expect a large proportion of those to be among women, meaning that the highest unemployment among women since 1996 will get worse, not better, in the years ahead.

Jane Ellison: Given that the deficit is in the public finances, and given what the hon. Lady said about the proportion of women who work in the public sector, how would the Labour plan, which we have yet to hear, address that problem?

Rachel Reeves: There are three issues. First, the speed at which we cut the budget deficit; secondly, the timing of the cuts; and thirdly—this is critical to today's debate—whether the cuts are made fairly. I do not believe that it is fair that two thirds of the cuts fall on women. All Members of the House believe that that is unfair. That is the key point.

The cuts to women's pensions, Sure Start, child benefit and local services are not inevitable; they are choices that the Government have made. As hon. Members have reminded us this afternoon, they are unfair choices—they penalise women pensioners, mothers, women students, women carers and women in the labour market. By choosing to cut too far and too fast, the Government have embarked on a slash-and-burn approach to the services, protections and benefits that provide the most support—in good and bad times—to women up and down the country.

The Minister will have a chance to respond shortly, but surely the question is this: where was she when the Chancellor decided to slash child benefit? Where was she when the Secretary of State for Education decided to cut Sure Start?

Harriett Baldwin: Will the hon. Lady confirm that the restoration of tax-free child benefit of £2,400 for the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) and the right hon. Member for Morley and Outwood (Ed Balls) will be in the Labour manifesto?

Rachel Reeves: I will perhaps ask the hon. Lady—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer!"] I will answer the question, but does the hon. Lady believe it right that a family in which one person in work earns £45,000 should lose their child benefit, while a family in which two people earn a total of £80,000 still get their child benefit? If the Government's plans for a fixed-term Parliament go ahead, the election is four years away, and as we do not know what the circumstances of that time will be, it would be inappropriate to write our manifesto now. The hon. Lady would not write hers now.

Where was the Minister when those choices were made? Given those policies, she was not campaigning and fighting for the women whom she ought to represent. If, as some have suggested, women's equality is a blind spot for this Government, I hope that their eyes have been opened today. I hope not least that the Minister has had a chance today to hear the strength of feeling about the effect on women of the increase in the state pension age. Will she send a message of hope to the 500,000 women who face a delay of more than a year before they receive their state pension, with just five or so years to prepare? If the Government can U-turn on forests—and today they have U-turned on sentencing—surely they can listen and act to protect women approaching retirement with fear and trepidation.

Women must no longer be the shock absorbers for this Government's cuts. I urge Ministers to move forward in a fairer way—in a way that does not turn the clock back on women's equality, for which generations of women have fought and will continue to fight.

4.4 pm

The Minister for Equalities (Lynne Featherstone): We have had an interesting and lively debate, and I thank Members on both sides who made contributions, including the hon. Members for Wolverhampton North East (Emma Reynolds), for Worsley and Eccles South (Barbara Keeley), for Oldham East and Saddleworth (Debbie Abrahams) and for Edinburgh East (Sheila Gilmore), and my hon. Friends the Members for Corby (Mrs Mensch), for Devizes (Claire Perry), for Solihull (Lorely Burt), for West Worcestershire (Harriett Baldwin) and for Brentford and Isleworth (Mary Macleod). We also heard a maiden speech by the hon. Member for Leicester South (Jon Ashworth). I thank them all for their contributions and I will address as many points as I have time for, although I do not have that much time.

It is a bit sad that we have heard some inaccurate and empty speculation about the impact that Government policies will have on women. I welcome the opportunity to respond to this debate, and draw a line under the myths that are endlessly perpetuated by Opposition Members. As the Home Secretary made clear, this Government's commitment to women is clear and unequivocal. From the moment the coalition was formed, we stated our determination to tear down the barriers to opportunity and build a fairer society for all. It is not just that we believe equality to be the right of every individual: we believe it goes to the very heart of our ambition to build a better society and a modern, prosperous economy of the future which genuinely draws on the talents and abilities of all. In fact, we are clear that unless we capitalise on the contributions that women can make, our chances of full economic recovery will be seriously hampered.

Of course, because of the mess we inherited—Labour Members hate us repeating that fact—we have been forced to make some difficult decisions. Let me be clear, for those who have not yet managed to get to grips with the state of our public finances, that the mess I refer to—as many of my hon. Friends have mentioned—is the biggest structural deficit in Europe and the biggest peacetime deficit we have seen in our history. But fairness will always be at the heart of all these decisions.

Yvette Cooper: Does the Minister think that public spending should have been cut in the middle of a recession—and if it had been, will she tell us whether she thinks that we would have had growth by the time of the election?

Lynne Featherstone: The point is that we are dealing with the structural deficit. If we do not get our house in order now we never will, and it will be future generations who suffer because of Labour's failure to address it—[*Interruption.*] Chuntering away at me will not help the right hon. Lady.

Fairness is the reason why in April we lifted 880,000 of the lowest-paid workers out of income tax—and it does not stop there, because more will be added to their number every year of this Parliament. It is why we are protecting the lowest-paid public sector workers—the majority of whom are women—from the public sector pay freeze, and they will get pay rises. It is why we are increasing child tax credits for the poorest families by more than the level promised by the last Government. And it is precisely why we are getting to grips with the deficit so that we do not fritter away more and more on debt interest, and destroy the crucial public services that so many women need and depend on.

Cuts—and the impact that Opposition Members say they have—are not all that we care about for women. We care about being ambitious and about taking them out of poverty. We care about giving them the tools to lift themselves out, not just continuing what went on before. If fairness were simply a matter of benefits, taxes and snapshot comparisons of income, it would be easy to achieve—

Barbara Keeley: Will the Minister give way?

Lynne Featherstone: No, I do not have time.

I echo the Home Secretary when I say that it is extremely patronising, and frankly absurd, to lump together 31 million women in this country as the prime victims of the deficit reduction. Women are not a homogenous group, but different individuals affected by different experiences and coming from different walks of life. So no matter how well intentioned, packaging out prescriptive solutions that fail to recognise that reality will not work. What do work are policies designed for all the roles that women play, tackling not just the symptoms of inequality but its causes. I shall try to address some of those points.

First, I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Leicester South, who made his maiden speech. I thank him for his kind words about Parmjit Singh Gill and congratulate him on being in the Chamber while he has a two-week-old baby. When shared parenting comes in, that could have been his wife, if she were able to walk. And as for Engelbert Humperdinck and “Quando, quando, quando”, I would have liked to say that I did not know what the hon. Gentleman was talking about, but sadly I did.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton North East mentioned impact assessments. I have to say that Labour never published equality impact studies for its Budgets, and I do not think it did one on the 10p tax or the 70p pension rise. She also mentioned the gender pay gap. Yes, we are introducing voluntary pay reporting, but that was started under Labour in the Equality Act 2010. However, we will also impose mandatory pay

audits on anyone found guilty of discrimination, if it is appropriate, and we have introduced the gagging clauses in the Equality Act. She also asked about trafficking and the Olympics. Work is being undertaken by the Metropolitan Police Service, which has a specialist unit that has received extra funding to prioritise activities to disrupt and monitor trafficking in the run-up to the Olympics.

Hon. Members asked about whether we were opting in to the European directive on trafficking. Well, we are opting into the directive, but we wanted to consider the matter and get it right to ensure that we could deliver on it. However, the coalition Government are going even further with our own human trafficking strategy, which will be announced shortly, and which will aim to disrupt activity in the country of origin, and then on our borders and in this country. As we have heard from many hon. Members, we are putting that support in place. We have also extended the Sojourner project

Margot James (Stourbridge) (Con): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Lynne Featherstone: I am happy to give way to the hon. Lady—[*Interruption*]—as a special treat.

Margot James: Briefly, I would like to remind the hon. Lady that the Government are actually investing more money in the safeguarding of trafficking victims. That is a very good result in the current financial climate.

Lynne Featherstone: I agree with my hon. Friend.

Mark Lazarowicz: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Lynne Featherstone: No. I forgot that I was not going to give way. I was seduced by the siren voices behind me.

An important point was made about the Government's commitment to women. Extending the Sojourner project, and finding a long-term solution with the Department for Work and Pensions, mean that such women will not again be put in the position of not knowing where there support is coming from.

My hon. Friend the Member for Solihull said that we should work together. Well, I am very happy to work with her, and I am happy to work with Opposition Members too, because we need to get past these attacks about blind spots and what they say the coalition Government are and are not doing to women. We all care passionately about the position of women in this country. I find it difficult to accept Opposition Members' criticisms, given how much we are doing. The Home Secretary laid that out quite clearly in her introductory remarks when she gave a long list of things that we are delivering for women.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Corby on what was a powerful speech, if not a tour de force, in which she pointed out Labour's failure to reform the welfare system. She talked of our relentless focus on children's well-being, and the fact that we are taking 1 million children out of poverty. My hon. Friend the Member for Devizes talked about health visitors and the importance of Sure Start, and my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull pointed out that not a single Liberal Democrat council has closed any children's centres—[*Interruption.*] Sometimes it is quality, not quantity. Much as I would like to work with Opposition Members, I am afraid that it might not happen.

[Lynne Featherstone]

I wanted to respond to all the points that have been raised, but unfortunately I will not have time. The hon. Member for Worsley and Eccles South asked about support for carers. The Government have provided £400 million to the NHS for respite care over the next four years.

Mr Alan Campbell (Tynemouth) (Lab) *claimed to move the closure (Standing Order No. 36).*

Question put forthwith, That the Question be now put.

Question agreed to.

Main Question put accordingly.

The House divided: Ayes 238, Noes 296.

Division No. 287]

[4.14 pm

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ainsworth, rh Mr Bob
Alexander, rh Mr Douglas
Alexander, Heidi
Ali, Rushanara
Allen, Mr Graham
Anderson, Mr David
Ashworth, Jon
Austin, Ian
Bailey, Mr Adrian
Bain, Mr William
Balls, rh Ed
Banks, Gordon
Barron, rh Mr Kevin
Beckett, rh Margaret
Begg, Dame Anne
Bell, Sir Stuart
Benn, rh Hilary
Berger, Luciana
Betts, Mr Clive
Blackman-Woods, Roberta
Blears, rh Hazel
Blenkinsop, Tom
Blomfield, Paul
Blunkett, rh Mr David
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brown, Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Brown, Mr Russell
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burden, Richard
Burnham, rh Andy
Byrne, rh Mr Liam
Campbell, Mr Alan
Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Caton, Martin
Chapman, Mrs Jenny
Clark, Katy
Clarke, rh Mr Tom
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cooper, Rosie
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crausby, Mr David

Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cunningham, Alex
Cunningham, Mr Jim
Cunningham, Tony
Curran, Margaret
Dakin, Nic
Danczuk, Simon
Darling, rh Mr Alistair
David, Mr Wayne
Davidson, Mr Ian
Davies, Geraint
De Piero, Gloria
Denham, rh Mr John
Docherty, Thomas
Dodds, rh Mr Nigel
Donohoe, Mr Brian H.
Doran, Mr Frank
Dowd, Jim
Dromey, Jack
Dugher, Michael
Eagle, Ms Angela
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Ellman, Mrs Louise
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farrelly, Paul
Field, rh Mr Frank
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Flello, Robert
Flint, rh Caroline
Flynn, Paul
Fovargue, Yvonne
Francis, Dr Hywel
Gapes, Mike
Gilmore, Sheila
Glass, Pat
Glindon, Mrs Mary
Godsiff, Mr Roger
Goggins, rh Paul
Goodman, Helen
Greatrex, Tom
Green, Kate
Greenwood, Lilian
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew

Hain, rh Mr Peter
Hamilton, Mr David
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanson, rh Mr David
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harris, Mr Tom
Havard, Mr Dai
Healey, rh John
Hendrick, Mark
Hepburn, Mr Stephen
Hermon, Lady
Heyes, David
Hillier, Meg
Hilling, Julie
Hodge, rh Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hoey, Kate
Hopkins, Kelvin
Hosie, Stewart
Howarth, rh Mr George
Hunt, Tristram
Irranca-Davies, Huw
Jackson, Glenda
James, Mrs Siân
C.
Jamieson, Cathy
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, rh Alan
Johnson, Diana
Jones, Helen
Jones, Susan Elan
Joyce, Eric
Kaufman, rh Sir Gerald
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Khan, rh Sadiq
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Lazarowicz, Mark
Leslie, Chris
Lewis, Mr Ivan
Lloyd, Tony
Long, Naomi
Love, Mr Andrew
Lucas, Caroline
Lucas, Ian
MacShane, rh Mr Denis
Mactaggart, Fiona
Mahmood, Shabana
Mann, John
Marsden, Mr Gordon
McCann, Mr Michael
McCarthy, Kerry
McCrea, Dr William
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonnell, John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGovern, Alison
McGovern, Jim
McGuire, rh Mrs Anne
McKechin, Ann
McKinnell, Catherine
Mearns, Ian
Michael, rh Alun
Miliband, rh David
Miliband, rh Edward
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin
Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Morden, Jessica
Morrice, Graeme (*Livingston*)

Morris, Grahame M.
(*Easington*)
Mudie, Mr George
Munn, Meg
Murphy, rh Paul
Murray, Ian
Nandy, Lisa
Nash, Pamela
O'Donnell, Fiona
Onwurah, Chi
Osborne, Sandra
Owen, Albert
Paisley, Ian
Pearce, Teresa
Perkins, Toby
Phillipson, Bridget
Pound, Stephen
Raynsford, rh Mr Nick
Reed, Mr Jamie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Emma
Riordan, Mrs Linda
Robertson, Angus
Robertson, John
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Rotheram, Steve
Roy, Lindsay
Ruane, Chris
Ruddock, rh Joan
Sarwar, Anas
Seabeck, Alison
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Simpson, David
Skinner, Mr Dennis
Slaughter, Mr Andy
Smith, rh Mr Andrew
Smith, Angela
Smith, Owen
Spellar, rh Mr John
Stringer, Graham
Stuart, Ms Gisela
Sutcliffe, Mr Gerry
Tami, Mark
Thomas, Mr Gareth
Thornberry, Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Trickett, Jon
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Stephen
Umunna, Mr Chuka
Vaz, Valerie
Walley, Joan
Watson, Mr Tom
Watts, Mr Dave
Weir, Mr Mike
Whiteford, Dr Eilidh
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Wicks, rh Malcolm
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Phil
Winnick, Mr David
Winterton, rh Ms Rosie
Wishart, Pete
Wood, Mike
Woodcock, John
Woodward, rh Mr Shaun
Wright, David
Wright, Mr Iain

Tellers for the Ayes:
Gregg McClymont and
Graham Jones

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Amess, Mr David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Arbutnot, rh Mr James
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Baker, Norman
 Baker, Steve
 Baldry, Tony
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, Stephen
 Barker, Gregory
 Baron, Mr John
 Barwell, Gavin
 Bebb, Guto
 Beith, rh Sir Alan
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Bingham, Andrew
 Birtwistle, Gordon
 Blackman, Bob
 Blackwood, Nicola
 Blunt, Mr Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bradley, Karen
 Brady, Mr Graham
 Brake, Tom
 Bray, Angie
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Mr Steve
 Brokenshire, James
 Browne, Mr Jeremy
 Bruce, Fiona
 Bruce, rh Malcolm
 Buckland, Mr Robert
 Burley, Mr Aidan
 Burns, Conor
 Burns, rh Mr Simon
 Burrowes, Mr David
 Burstow, Paul
 Burt, Lorely
 Byles, Dan
 Cairns, Alun
 Campbell, rh Sir Menzies
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Carmichael, Neil
 Carswell, Mr Douglas
 Cash, Mr William
 Chishti, Rehman
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
 Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
 Collins, Damian
 Colvile, Oliver
 Cox, Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, Stephen
 Crockart, Mike
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davey, Mr Edward
 Davies, David T. C.
 (*Monmouth*)
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Philip
 de Bois, Nick
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Dorrell, rh Mr Stephen
 Dorries, Nadine
 Doyle-Price, Jackie

Drax, Richard
 Duddridge, James
 Duncan, rh Mr Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellison, Jane
 Ellwood, Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Graham
 Evans, Jonathan
 Evennett, Mr David
 Fallon, Michael
 Featherstone, Lynne
 Field, Mr Mark
 Foster, rh Mr Don
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fullbrook, Lorraine
 Fuller, Richard
 Gale, Mr Roger
 Garnier, Mr Edward
 Garnier, Mark
 George, Andrew
 Gibb, Mr Nick
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodwill, Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Damian
 Greening, Justine
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Gummer, Ben
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Hames, Duncan
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, Matthew
 Hancock, Mr Mike
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Hart, Simon
 Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
 Hayes, Mr John
 Heath, Mr David
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Hemming, John
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hendry, Charles
 Hoban, Mr Mark
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Hopkins, Kris
 Horwood, Martin
 Howell, John
 Huhne, rh Chris
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hunter, Mark
 Huppert, Dr Julian
 Jackson, Mr Stewart
 James, Margot
 Javid, Sajid
 Jenkin, Mr Bernard
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew

Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kelly, Chris
 Kirby, Simon
 Knight, rh Mr Greg
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lancaster, Mark
 Lansley, rh Mr Andrew
 Latham, Pauline
 Leadsom, Andrea
 Lee, Jessica
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Leech, Mr John
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leslie, Charlotte
 Lewis, Brandon
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lilley, rh Mr Peter
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Luff, Peter
 Lumley, Karen
 Macleod, Mary
 Main, Mrs Anne
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McIntosh, Miss Anne
 McLoughlin, rh Mr Patrick
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, Esther
 Mensch, Mrs Louise
 Menzies, Mark
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, Maria
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mordaunt, Penny
 Morgan, Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Mosley, Stephen
 Mowat, David
 Munt, Tessa
 Murray, Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Newmark, Mr Brooks
 Newton, Sarah
 Norman, Jesse
 Nuttall, Mr David
 Offord, Mr Matthew
 Ollerenshaw, Eric
 Ottaway, Richard
 Paice, rh Mr James
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, Priti
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, Claire
 Phillips, Stephen
 Pickles, rh Mr Eric
 Pincher, Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Daniel
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pugh, John

Raab, Mr Dominic
 Randall, rh Mr John
 Redwood, rh Mr John
 Rees-Mogg, Jacob
 Reevell, Simon
 Reid, Mr Alan
 Rifkind, rh Sir Malcolm
 Robathan, rh Mr Andrew
 Robertson, Hugh
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Rogerson, Dan
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Rudd, Amber
 Ruffley, Mr David
 Russell, Bob
 Rutley, David
 Sanders, Mr Adrian
 Sandys, Laura
 Scott, Mr Lee
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Shepherd, Mr Richard
 Simmonds, Mark
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Miss Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Julian
 Smith, Sir Robert
 Soames, Nicholas
 Soubry, Anna
 Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
 Spencer, Mr Mark
 Stanley, rh Sir John
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Mr Gary
 Stride, Mel
 Sturdy, Julian
 Swales, Ian
 Swayne, Mr Desmond
 Swinson, Jo
 Swire, rh Mr Hugo
 Syms, Mr Robert
 Tapsell, Sir Peter
 Teather, Sarah
 Thurso, John
 Timpson, Mr Edward
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tredinnick, David
 Truss, Elizabeth
 Turner, Mr Andrew
 Tyrie, Mr Andrew
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, Mr Ben
 Walter, Mr Robert
 Ward, Mr David
 Watkinson, Angela
 Weatherley, Mike
 Webb, Steve
 Wharton, James
 Wheeler, Heather
 White, Chris
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill

Williams, Mr Mark
Williams, Roger
Williams, Stephen
Williamson, Gavin
Willott, Jenny
Wilson, Mr Rob
Wollaston, Dr Sarah

Wright, Simon
Yeo, Mr Tim
Young, Sir George
Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Jeremy Wright and
Norman Lamb

Question accordingly negatived.

Business without Debate

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

GENDER RECOGNITION

That the draft Gender Recognition (Approved Countries and Territories) Order 2011, which was laid before this House on 26 April, be approved.—(*Angela Watkinson.*)

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

WATER INDUSTRY

That the draft Water Industry (Schemes for Adoption of Private Sewers) Regulations 2011, which were laid before this House on 26 April, be approved.—(*Angela Watkinson.*)

Question agreed to.

National Crime Agency

4.33 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mrs Theresa May): With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the new National Crime Agency. Last year's national security strategy recognised that organised crime is one of the greatest threats to our national security. The social and economic costs are estimated at between £20 billion and £40 billion per year, and its impact is seen on our streets and felt in our communities every single day. The drug dealing on street corners; the burglary and muggings by addicts; the trafficking of vulnerable young women into prostitution; the card cloning and credit card fraud that robs so many—all are fundamentally driven by organised criminals.

Our law enforcement agencies assess that there are some 38,000 individuals engaged in organised crime, involving 6,000 criminal groups; and yet, Sir Paul Stephenson, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan police, said last year that law enforcement is impacting in a meaningful way on only 11% of those 6,000 organised crime groups. We must do better.

For too long, central Government micro-managed and interfered in local policing, but at the same time national and international crime was neglected and our borders became porous. There was no cross-government strategy to tackle organised crime, no national tasking and co-ordination, and no co-ordinated border policing. Different agencies had varying responsibilities for policy, prevention and investigation, and there was a tendency to operate in silos. The overall effect was a fragmented and patchy law enforcement response, and we are putting that right.

By introducing police and crime commissioners, we can get central Government out of the way of local policing. We are putting the Government's focus where it should have been all along: on securing our borders, and tackling national and international serious and organised crime. So we will shortly be publishing the first ever cross-government strategy on tackling organised crime and we will establish a powerful new operational body—the National Crime Agency.

The National Crime Agency will be a crime-fighting organisation. It will tackle organised crime, defend our borders, fight fraud and cybercrime, and protect children and young people. With a senior chief constable at its head, the NCA will harness intelligence, analytical capabilities and enforcement powers. Accountable to the Home Secretary, the NCA will be an integral part of our law enforcement community, with strong links to local police forces, police and crime commissioners, the UK Border Agency and other agencies.

The NCA will comprise a number of distinct operational commands. Building on the work of the Serious Organised Crime Agency—SOCA—the organised crime command will tackle organised crime groups, whether they operate locally, across the country or across our international borders. Fulfilling a key pledge in the coalition agreement, the border policing command will strengthen our borders, and help to prevent terrorism, drug smuggling, people trafficking, illegal immigration and other serious crimes. It will ensure that all law enforcement agencies operating in and around the border work to clear, mutually agreed priorities. The economic crime command will make a

major difference to the current fragmented response to economic crime. Working to a new unified intelligence picture, the economic crime command will drive better co-ordination of cases, and better tasking of resources, across agencies such as the Financial Services Authority, the Office of Fair Trading and the Serious Fraud Office. That will mean that a greater volume and complexity of economic crime cases can be tackled. In due course, we will review the relationship between the economic crime command and the other agencies.

Building on the significant contribution that the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre—CEOP—already makes within SOCA, CEOP will as a key part of the NCA be able to draw on wider resources and support to help protect even more children and young people. The NCA will also house the national cybercrime unit, which will have its own investigative capacity and help local police forces to develop their own response to the online threat. Each command will be led by a senior and experienced individual, and will manage its own priorities and risks, but, crucially, capabilities, expertise, assets and intelligence will be shared across the entire agency and each command will operate as part of one single organisation.

Intelligence will be at the heart of what the NCA does. Learning from our experience of counter-terrorism, the NCA will house a significant multi-agency intelligence capability. It will collect and analyse its own and others' intelligence, building and maintaining a comprehensive picture of serious and organised criminals in the UK: who they are and who they work with; where they live; where they operate; what crimes they are involved in; and what damage they cause. The NCA will then use that intelligence to co-ordinate, prioritise and target action against organised criminals, with information flowing to and from the police and other agencies in support of tactical operations. Using this intelligence picture, the NCA will have the ability and the authority to task and co-ordinate the police and other law enforcement agencies.

For the first time, there will be one agency with the power, remit and responsibility for ensuring that the right action is taken at the right time by the right people—that agency will be the NCA. All other agencies will work to the NCA's threat assessment and prioritisation, and it will be the NCA's intelligence picture that will drive the response on the ground. That will be underpinned by the new strategic policing requirement.

As well as having the ability to co-ordinate and task the response to national crime threats by the police and other agencies, the NCA will also have its own specialist operational and technological capabilities, including surveillance and means to deal with fraud and threat-to-life situations. This is a two-way street; the NCA will be able to provide its techniques and resources in support of the police and other agencies, just as it will task and co-ordinate the response to national-level crime.

NCA officers will be able to draw on a wide range of powers, including those of a police constable and immigration or customs powers. That will mean that NCA officers, unlike anybody else, will be able to deploy powers and techniques that go beyond the powers of a police officer.

The agency will be an integral part of the golden thread of policing that runs from the local to the national and beyond. At home, the NCA will work in partnership with police forces, chief constables, police

and crime commissioners and agencies such as the UK Border Agency. Overseas, it will represent the UK's interests, working with international law enforcement partners. It will also provide the central UK contact for European and international law enforcement.

The agency will come fully into being in 2013, with some key elements becoming operational sooner. The total cost of the organisation will not exceed the aggregate costs of its predecessors. The combination of a single intelligence picture, the tasking and co-ordination function, the specialist operational support and the operational commands will result in a dramatic improvement in our response to national and international crime.

Organised crime, border crime, economic crime, cybercrime and child exploitation are real problems for real people. All areas of the country suffer their effects—from the very poorest communities to the most affluent, from the smallest villages to the biggest cities—and it is often the most vulnerable in our society who suffer the greatest harm. We owe it to them to do more to tackle the scourge of drugs, better to defend our borders, to fight fraud and to protect our children and young people. The National Crime Agency will do all those things and more and I commend the statement to the House.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): I thank the Home Secretary for providing an advance copy of her statement. We have already had another day, another debate—now it is another day, another statement. Once again, to listen to the Home Secretary one would think this was year zero, that everything failed in the past and that everything will be nirvana in the future. Yesterday, she told us that the Labour Government's Prevent strategy had failed and her new strategy would make no mistakes. Today, she claims that there was no cross-Government organised crime strategy and no effective work on organised crime before, but that for the future we will see a dramatic improvement in the fight against national and international crime just as a result of these changes. There is no end to this Home Secretary's hostages to fortune.

The right hon. Lady also contradicts herself. She says that there was no cross-Government strategy on organised crime, but then she says the organised crime command will build on the work of the Serious Organised Crime Agency, which was set up by Labour in 2005 to take the fight to organised crime. It had a conviction rate of more than 90%. She says that the National Crime Agency will be a crime-fighting organisation with intelligence at the heart of what it does, with the combined powers of police, customs and immigration officers, but that is what SOCA is. Whereas yesterday we had control orders and son of control orders, today we have SOCA and SOCA plus. It is hardly year zero and hardly a new nirvana.

We think we should build on SOCA. Sometimes, it became focused too purely on intelligence and it makes sense to do more to reform national policing. There are considerable benefits that can flow in this area, but reforms also need to be handled effectively or they can go badly awry—and they have already gone awry. Child protection experts have resigned, counter-terrorism plans have been publicly slapped down by the Met and the Serious Fraud Office has been put in a state of suspended animation. That has all happened at a time when 12,000

[Yvette Cooper]

police officers are being cut across the country and the Government are pushing ahead with American-style plans for police and crime commissioners whom nobody wants. The truth is that these plans have been dogged by chaos and confusion. From her statement, there is no sign that the Home Secretary has a grip. Let us consider the individual points that she has made.

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Agency had good results this year, but Jim Gamble, its successful head, resigned from the agency after seeing the Government's plans to merge CEOP with the NCA. He said today:

"I don't believe that the rebranding or the submerging of CEOP within a far greater entity will allow the critical child protection focus that we need."

He made the point that CEOP will also suffer a 10% per cent reduction in its budget by 2014 and said that he hoped the Government would release the submissions to the consultation on the merger, because they were overwhelmingly against it. We hope too that the Home Secretary will release them, because she has clearly not persuaded the experts on those plans.

On financial crime, the grandly titled economic crime command is a far cry from the Home Secretary's plans to merge the Serious Fraud Office and parts of the Financial Services Authority. Instead, do we have a co-ordinating committee? Or is this just another agency to work with the many already in the field? Does this risk limbo for the SFO, whose director has already said:

"This is a distraction and it is important that a clear direction is made as soon as possible so that the SFO is focused on delivering results for the public."

The Home Secretary has clearly not persuaded the experts or the Chancellor of her plans.

On the border command, the Home Secretary says: "Fulfilling a key pledge in the coalition agreement, the border policing command will strengthen our borders, and help prevent terrorism", but the coalition pledge was for a border police force, not just a command. In the Conservatives' manifesto, it was more boots on the ground. They were talking about 10,000 people a few years ago. Has that been replaced simply by a board to oversee better cross-agency working?

Plans to move counter-terrorism from the Met have been ditched after the commissioner said that national security is "too important" and

"must be based on more than mere structural convenience".

Can the Home Secretary confirm that she does not plan to destabilise matters by revisiting this issue during the important period in the run-up to the Olympics?

On the National Policing Improvement Agency the Home Secretary has said nothing at all, but she is disbanding it in 2012—a year before the NCA starts. We still do not know what is happening to the DNA database or to a whole series of other functions. The chief constable of Derbyshire has said:

"We face an issue that there are absolutely critical services provided by the NPIA that, at the moment, have a date that is going to drop off, with nowhere to go."

What will happen to them? The Home Secretary has not explained how tasking will work, what will happen if chief constables disagree and who will make the final decision when resources become overstretched.

On resources, the Home Secretary says that the total cost of the organisation will not exceed the aggregate costs of its predecessors, but she has not commented on set-up costs. Peter Neyroud has estimated that this top-down reorganisation will cost between £15 million and £20 million. When that is added to the cost of police and crime commissioners we have £120 million being spent on top-down reorganisations while 12,000 police officer posts are being cut, putting the fight against crime at risk across the country. There is a risk that chaos and confusion will make it harder for the police to cope given the drop in resources that they are experiencing.

For this renamed crime agency to be successful, it needs steady leadership, clarity and the resources to deliver. In the end, reorganisation is no substitute for police officers on the ground doing the job on national and local crime and going the extra mile to catch criminals and keep communities safe. That means we need an end to the confusion and a bit more realism both about the past and about the detail of the reform. We need to start closing the gap between the rhetoric and the reality on the ground.

Mrs May: Yes, another day, another Home Office statement and, sadly, yet another similar response from the shadow Home Secretary. Indeed, she repeated many of the phrases that she used in her response to yesterday's Prevent statement. She really needs to go away and think very carefully about what we mean by a cross-government organised crime strategy. She said that the previous Government had such a strategy because it set up SOCA and because SOCA existed, but we are talking about bringing together all the strands of law enforcement, including law enforcement agencies and police forces, that deal with organised crime. We are developing a comprehensive, coherent cross-government approach to dealing with organised crime. That is an organised crime strategy, which is not what the previous Government had.

I accept that SOCA has been doing good work and we want to build on that as part of the organised crime command within the new National Crime Agency, but there are other areas of crime that we need greater focus on. Yes, we need to look more closely at what is happening on our borders and to enhance our ability to bring together various agencies that have responsibility for and operate on the borders. We need to do that in conjunction with organisations such as the organised crime command and CEOP to ensure that we have the advantage of using not only the intelligence capability that will be at the centre of the NCA but the synergies that will be available when those agencies work properly together.

We will also be setting up a new economic crime command. There is a need in this country to look much more closely at economic crime. There is a whole swathe of what could be called middle-level economic crime that we have not dealt with appropriately and properly in the past, and the economic crime command will enable us to put a clear focus on that. It will enable us to ensure that the various agencies dealing with economic crime are working together, are co-ordinated and are working to the same priorities. It will also enable us to ensure that resources are being put in the right place, at the right time, where they are needed. This is a new development and a very important one in enhancing

our work on economic crime. Indeed, it will not wait until the NCA is set up. Within the next few months we will establish a co-ordinating board on economic crime which will already start that important work. This is a powerful new crime-fighting body which I believe will make a real difference to our ability to deal with organised crime.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): I welcome the focus that the NCA will place on tackling organised crime, and the creation of the border command. We need the NCA to be set up seamlessly. Can the Home Secretary set out how the Government will minimise the disruption caused by the structural change and maximise the speed with which the NCA becomes fully operational and effective?

Mrs May: I thank my hon. Friend for an important question. The establishment of the NCA will require legislation. We aim for that legislation to be in place so that the NCA can be fully operational in 2013, but we believe that this is an important area and that we need to start working before then. The transition to the NCA can be eased by work such as developing the organised crime strategy, starting to develop the co-ordination capability on organised crime within the Home Office, which we are doing and, as I have just indicated, starting to develop the co-ordination capacity in relation to economic crime. These are the precursors for a more seamless transition to the NCA.

As we develop the agency, we intend to establish a position for an individual who will head the work. An individual at chief constable level will be appointed fairly soon—within the next few months—and will be able to work within the Home Office over the period before the NCA is set up. At that point there will be a transition for a permanent individual to be established as the head of the NCA.

We want to learn lessons—for example, from the setting up of SOCA, where there were some difficulties in terms of personnel and their move over to SOCA. We will be looking at the lessons to be learned from that.

Mr David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough) (Lab): I congratulate the Home Secretary on the prettiest little speech rewriting history that the House has heard for some time. I plead guilty to having been responsible for launching the Serious Organised Crime Agency. I had hoped for a 50% remission, but I will have to settle for a third instead.

The truth of the matter is that SOCA has had enormous successes but was bedevilled by the over-emphasis on intelligence rather than on enforcement, yet this afternoon the Home Secretary once again placed intelligence at the centre. In the new economic crime directorate, the new border directorate and the relationship with Customs and Excise, who will be responsible for the emphasis on economic and, by its very nature, cybercrime—the Treasury directing the policy or the Home Office laying it down? We had problems with that, and I did not hear any explanation of how the present Home Secretary intends to get round that difficulty.

Mrs May: I am sorry about the approach that the right hon. Gentleman took in his comments. If he had listened carefully both to my statement and to the

response I gave to his right hon. Friend the shadow Home Secretary, he would have heard me make it clear that I think SOCA has done good work over the past few years, but I believe, and I think those involved in SOCA would agree, that we can do more. We can build on the experience that it has built up. By making SOCA the organised crime command within the National Crime Agency and being able to take advantage of the synergies across the law enforcement agencies and police forces, we will be able to do a more effective job in the future.

On the intelligence issue, yes, there will be an intelligence capability at the NCA. That is important, but the difference is that the NCA will clearly be a crime-fighting body and the commands within it will be crime-fighting commands.

In relation to cybercrime, which the right hon. Gentleman referred to, there will be a cybercrime unit at the NCA which will cross all the commands, because cybercrime is both a crime in itself and a tool for the execution of other crimes.

Nicola Blackwood (Oxford West and Abingdon) (Con): I thank the Home Secretary for her statement. On the role of the NCA with regard to human trafficking, it is estimated that more than 2,500 trafficked women were victims of sexual exploitation in 2009 alone. Can my right hon. Friend explain to the House how the border policing command will go further to clamp down on this unacceptable practice?

Mrs May: I thank my hon. Friend for her question. I know that this is an area in which she takes a particular interest. We recognise that a lot has been done in relation to trafficking in recent years, but more can be done. The great advantage of the border command is that it will be able to bring together resources and task resources within both agencies and local police forces. It will work with other command organisations within the National Crime Agency, such as the serious organised crime command, in a way that has not happened until now. One of the problems we have had until now is that the Government have too often approached this with silo thinking, but criminals do not think in silos. The human trafficking gang probably also deals in drugs and might be involved in other things, such as child exploitation, so we need to look across the whole swathe when dealing with criminals.

Mr David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): The Home Secretary has said that the aggregate budget will not be more than the budget for the organisations comprising the new agency. Could she indicate what it will be, and if it is less will she guarantee that key functions now undertaken by the National Policing Improvement Agency, such as the Missing Persons Bureau or the DNA database, will not slip off the edge during the reorganisation?

Mrs May: It will not cost more than its predecessors. It is possible that some of the current functions of the NPIA, such as witness protection and threat to life issues, could move into the NCA, but if they do so they will move as funded functions so that the funding already available will be used for the operations of the NCA. The NPIA will cease to exist, as we have set out very clearly. We are looking at the functions that it is right to bring into the NCA, but, given that it is an operational crime-fighting body, it is not right that all the NPIA functions should come into it.

Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): With regard to law and order and tackling crime, does the Home Secretary agree with Phil Collins, who said that Labour do not have a particularly strong position on crime of any kind? [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. I have made this point several times before: statements are about questioning the policy of the Government, not that of the Opposition. I call Mr Stewart Jackson.

Mr Stewart Jackson (Peterborough) (Con): I welcome the Home Secretary's statement. I am sure that she, like me, would congratulate Cambridgeshire constabulary on the work it is doing to combat people trafficking through initiatives such as Operation Sodium. On a specific point about people trafficking, how does she see the priority for the NCA in respect of the sharing of criminal records data across the European Union, an area that, regrettably, was ignored by the previous Government?

Mrs May: I thank my hon. Friend for his question and am happy to join him in congratulating Cambridgeshire constabulary on its work and the operations it has undertaken on human trafficking. In relation to all those issues, the National Crime Agency will be looking to operate across international borders as well as across police force borders in the UK. The sharing of information within the European Union, and indeed the sharing of information in other ways, as he knows, has been and is a matter of discussion within the European Union. The NCA will be the key point of contact for both European and wider international co-operation.

Ann Coffey (Stockport) (Lab): The Missing Persons Bureau provides a single database of all missing adults and children, a valuable national and international resource. In addition, it continues to provide advice and support to some families of missing children, although some services have gone to CEOP. Will the Home Secretary give some more information on where the Missing Persons Bureau will sit operationally, particularly in relation to CEOP, in 2013 and between now and then?

Mrs May: The hon. Lady raises an important issue. As she says, we have already announced that the missing children aspect will be going to CEOP. We are now looking at the wider work on missing persons to see where it is appropriate for that to sit. It might be that it is appropriate for that to be within the National Crime Agency. We will ensure that decisions are taken so that there is no opportunity for this to slip between two stools, because it is an important area of work.

Mrs Anne Main (St Albans) (Con): I welcome the Secretary of State's admission that the agency will pull together a lot of strands that had a silo mentality within the previous Government. On illegal immigration, given that under the previous Government many illegal immigrants came into the country, disappeared and could not be found, could it be that through this new overarching structure we will now have a greater way of informing intelligence, so that anybody with local information on the ground will be able to help and feed in information to the correct place?

Mrs May: Yes, indeed. We will be looking to create a situation with the border police command in which it will be possible to use greater intelligence in relation to the issue that my hon. Friend raises—in due course, of course. Through our borders work, we are in the process of further developing our understanding of individuals who are in the United Kingdom, but of course those who come to the UK to work do have to have a biometric residence permit.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): What discussions did the Home Secretary have with the devolved Administrations when she was setting up the agency, and what relationship will it have with devolved police services?

Mrs May: We have had a number of discussions on the matter with the devolved Administrations, and the National Crime Agency will deal with some aspects of crime which are reserved matters, but we are very conscious of working with the devolved agencies. In relation to Scotland, we expect the NCA to work with, for example, the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency and the Scottish police forces—or force, should there be a single police force in future. In working with the devolved Administrations, we will respect the primacy of law enforcement agencies in the devolved nations.

Sarah Newton (Truro and Falmouth) (Con): I represent a large port in a county with a long coastline. Can the Home Secretary confirm that the border police command will ensure that all agencies responsible for the nation's coastline and ports work together to prevent illegal immigration, drug and people trafficking and tax evasion?

Mrs May: I am happy to give that confirmation to my hon. Friend. Given her constituency, I realise that the issue will be of particular interest to her. Crucially, the border police command will be able, not only by itself but working with other commands in the National Crime Agency, to provide much better co-ordination of all the forces and law enforcement agencies that need to be brought to bear in order to deal with the issues that she raises.

Mrs Jenny Chapman (Darlington) (Lab): Online crime against children and the exploitation of children are growing in prevalence, and I know that the Home Secretary is concerned about that and wants to do something about it. CEOP is a very successful organisation, with many admirers throughout the world and, from what I can tell, very few critics. Given that it does not just detect crimes but assesses whether a crime has taken place, how will the Home Secretary assess whether her decision to merge it is the right one?

Mrs May: CEOP will continue to do the work that it has been doing, but it will be able to be even more effective because it will be part of that wider agency. The CEOP brand will continue to exist, and we have made it absolutely clear—we have talked to CEOP and to Peter Davies about this—that CEOP will continue to operate as it does at the moment, because an important part of its work is its links with the private sector. It will be able to continue to do that work within the National Crime Agency, but on top of that it will have the

advantage of access to intelligence capability, of access to that prioritisation of work and of working with those other commands.

Dr Julian Huppert (Cambridge) (LD): I congratulate the Home Secretary on her statement. I am comfortable that the National Crime Agency will be able to deal well with serious and organised crime, but what about serious but not organised crime? What about serial killings, rapes and issues like that, which the NPIA currently deals with? It still seems unclear where its injuries database and all its other services in relation to serious but not organised crime will sit. What will happen to all that?

Mrs May: Of course, one of the difficulties in all such issues relates to the definitions that one uses for those types of crime, but serious crime that is not undertaken by organised crime groups is predominantly dealt with by individual police forces. As a result of the National Crime Agency being set up, however, I believe that it will be possible to share intelligence on serious crimes of that sort. It will encourage greater regional co-operation among police forces, so it will be possible to deal better and more effectively with serious crime that is not related to organised crime groups.

Angela Smith (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Lab): The Home Secretary bravely claimed that the new initiative will result in a dramatic improvement in our response to national and international crime. May I therefore ask her how the performance of the NCA will be measured and how it will be reported to the House?

Mrs May: As I have made clear, the National Crime Agency will be accountable to the Home Secretary. We will look at the procedures that we can put in place to ensure that there are appropriate timed reports to the House on this matter—although, as I observed to somebody who asked me that question earlier today, I have every confidence that the Home Affairs Committee, apart from anything else, will show an interest in it. The measurement of success is one of the issues that has dogged SOCA, because SOCA's role is not only about finding and prosecuting criminals and seizing assets but preventing crime from taking place. Indeed, the success of such agencies often lies as much in what they prevent as in the number of criminals that they catch. We will be looking very carefully at the measurements that can be used because, as I say, SOCA has suffered from the sort of measurements that have been applied to it.

Elizabeth Truss (South West Norfolk) (Con): This is an extremely positive move. Criminal gangs do not operate in the context of 43 forces, and for too long we have lacked a proper link between the forces in terms of intelligence and operations. Will the Home Secretary be looking for a similar model to that of the counter-terrorism hubs whereby local forces can collaborate and link into a national network?

Mrs May: Counter-terrorism is a good example of where there is a national organisation that deals with a matter at national level. When the National Crime Agency is in place, it will want to look at how it chooses to operate with the different commands that are under its remit.

My hon. Friend's question reminds me that I did not respond to one of the points that the shadow Home Secretary made about counter-terrorism. I will do that now, if I may, because it is an important issue. We have never said that counter-terrorism would come under the remit of the National Crime Agency. We have made it clear that we will not do anything to disrupt the current counter-terrorism arrangements before the Olympics, and we will not do anything to disrupt those arrangements before the National Crime Agency is up and running. There will be a point at which it will be appropriate, in the new landscape, to look to ensure that counter-terrorism is still being dealt with in the most effective way possible.

Naomi Long (Belfast East) (Alliance): The UK's only land border is with the Republic of Ireland in Northern Ireland. Given the particular and specific challenges that that border raises, what discussions has the Home Secretary had with my colleague, the Minister of Justice in Northern Ireland, about how to implement this in the Northern Ireland context and how to ensure that the NCA benefits from the very positive working relationships between the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Garda Síochána?

Mrs May: We have been talking to all the devolved Administrations, including in Northern Ireland, about the establishment and operation of the NCA. We are very conscious of the particular issues in relation to Northern Ireland, particularly given the existence of the common travel area in relation to border issues. We are also conscious of the very good relationships between the PSNI and the Garda in dealing with a number of issues that affect both sides of the border. Obviously, we respect the relationships that have been established and will continue to work with and talk to the devolved Administrations about how the operation of the NCA will affect them and how we can all work together.

Caroline Dinenege (Gosport) (Con): From speaking to police, head teachers and other community workers in my constituency, it is clear, without question, that the biggest cause of crime, poverty and deprivation is drugs. With the best will in the world, having more police on the streets will not tackle the root cause of that problem—it is about tackling the dealers, the traffickers and the low-lives who most benefit from the proliferation of drugs on our streets. Can the Home Secretary expand a little more on how the NCA will effectively tackle that?

Mrs May: Yes, indeed. We need to tackle the drugs threat at all levels. In relation to those who are drug addicts, we have already issued our new drugs strategy. My hon. Friend is absolutely right that we need to look at the organised crime groups that are plying this trade and bringing drugs into the country. We will be putting a focus on the disruption of activity upstream. SOCA has had some success on this in relation to a number of countries, including Colombia. We will want to build on that to ensure that we can cut off the supply before it reaches our streets.

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): Many Members and development non-governmental organisations are extremely alarmed by the Home Secretary's apparent decision to put the Serious Fraud Office on 12 months' notice. The uncertainty about the SFO's future has led to key staff leaving in recent

[Catherine McKinnell]

months, which has undermined the fight against crime and corruption. Will the Home Secretary explain what is the point of prolonging the damaging uncertainty and instability in this organisation?

Mrs May: I gently suggest to the hon. Lady that she should not believe everything she reads in the newspapers. There is no suggestion that the SFO has been put “on 12 months’ notice”. What we have said has been absolutely clear. The SFO is continuing to exist and to operate as it has done. We will set up an economic crime command in the NCA. In the interim—very soon, within the next few months—we will set up a co-ordinating board, initially chaired by SOCA, which will bring together those involved in dealing with economic crime, including the SFO and other agencies, to see how we can develop better co-ordination among the agencies to improve the way in which we deal with such crime. In due course, we will consider what is the appropriate relationship between the NCA, the SFO and other agencies that deal with economic crime.

Mr Rob Wilson (Reading East) (Con): It is often said that an organisation is only as good as its leadership. It is therefore important that the new head that is appointed is of sufficient quality. Has my right hon. Friend appointed a new head? If so, perhaps she can share with the House who that person is and what their experience is.

Mrs May: No, I have not appointed a new head, but an advertisement for the post has been published today. As I indicated in my response to my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake), we intend that the head of the NCA will be a senior chief constable who is at the top tier in terms of salary and rank. It is important that they have crime fighting experience so that they can drive the NCA as a crime fighting body.

Mr Tom Watson (West Bromwich East) (Lab): The convicted private investigator, Jonathan Rees, who was contracted to News International, targeted the former Prime Minister, Tony Blair, for covert surveillance, as well as at least one former Home Secretary. It is likely that witness testimonies have been available to the Metropolitan police for a number of years. Given the seriousness of this case, is it the sort of case that the Home Secretary would take from the Metropolitan police and give to the new National Crime Agency?

Mrs May: The hon. Gentleman tempts me to comment on an ongoing investigation, but it is not appropriate for me to do so. As he knows, because he asked this question at Prime Minister’s questions today, an investigation is being carried out by the Metropolitan police. We have made it absolutely clear that they should follow the evidence wherever it goes.

Mr Tobias Ellwood (Bournemouth East) (Con): I welcome the statement. Cyber-security is a growing concern. It is fair to say that Britain has been slow to recognise this threat. Every day, there are more attacks on Government Departments. Will my right hon. Friend outline how the NCA will co-ordinate the response to this growing threat?

Mrs May: There is a cyber-security office in the Cabinet Office that looks at cyber-security from a national security point of view. The NCA will focus on cybercrime. It will have a specific cybercrime unit that will develop our capability to deal with such issues. The mistake is often made of talking about cybercrime as if it is something completely new. Sometimes cybercrimes are new forms of crime, but sometimes it is simply that cyber-techniques and technology, rather than physical means, are used as tools to commit normal crimes such as fraud or robbery. That capability will be developed in the NCA.

Stephen Mosley (City of Chester) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend’s statement, but I echo some of the concerns expressed by Opposition Members, including the shadow Home Secretary, in highlighting the success of CEOP. I ask for reassurance that CEOP’s excellent work, such as its leading global role in tackling international child abuse networks on the internet, will continue under the NCA.

Mrs May: My hon. Friend absolutely has my confirmation and reassurance on that point. We are very conscious of the excellent work of CEOP, and nothing that we are doing will upset it. CEOP will continue to work in the way that it has, but it will also be able to build on its work because of the links that it will have with other commands under the National Crime Agency. I suggest that if he has any further concerns—I hope he will not, following my reassurance—he look at the comments that the chief executive of CEOP made a couple of weeks ago on the “Today” programme. He was absolutely clear that moving to the NCA would in no way degrade or affect CEOP’s ability to carry on doing its work.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): May I thank the Home Secretary for coming to the House to make a statement yet again? It is a real improvement in parliamentary form. At this late hour, Members on both sides of the House have still been very interested in hearing what she has said.

Will the NCA effectively lose responsibility for human trafficking? The non-governmental organisations are very concerned that after the specific trafficking centre in Sheffield went into SOCA, it may now get lost. I know that the Government are keen to move forward on human trafficking, but that is a concern.

Mrs May: My hon. Friend obviously has a particular interest as chairman of the all-party group on human trafficking. I know that he is waiting, I hope with some interest and excitement, for the Government’s publication of our human trafficking strategy in a matter of weeks, when we will be able to set the matter in more context. The aim is that human trafficking will come within the National Crime Agency’s remit. Whether it is in a specific unit in the organised crime command or dealt with in another way will be a matter for the NCA when it is set up, but once we have an individual in place who is driving the creation of the NCA, I expect that to be exactly the sort of issue that they will want to examine.

Graham Evans (Weaver Vale) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend reassure me that the National Crime Agency will build on some of the good work of SOCA in tackling organised crime?

Mrs May: I can give my hon. Friend that reassurance. As I have said in response to a number of hon. Members this afternoon, SOCA has done good work, but we believe that more can be done. The organised crime command being within the NCA will enable greater synergies of operation both across law enforcement agencies and with police forces' activities. I believe that we will be able to build on our work in dealing with organised crime. As I indicated in my statement, Sir Paul Stephenson has said that sadly, at the moment we are not doing enough in that area and need to do more.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): Crime is often linked with terrorism. Will the National Crime Agency have primacy over other agencies when several agencies have an operational interest?

Mrs May: It will for those matters that are under its remit, but as I indicated in a response a few minutes ago, the counter-terrorism policing structure will not be changed—certainly not before the Olympics, and not before the National Crime Agency is set up. That is staying as it is. There will be links between the NCA and the Association of Chief Police Officers' terrorism and allied matters committee in dealing with terrorism, and when there are links between organised crime and terrorism it is obviously important that those bodies work together to ensure that they deal with them effectively.

Christopher Pincher (Tamworth) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend's determination to make the NCA a crime-fighting organisation, but can she say at this stage how many officers she expects will serve in it and what the balance of resources will be between the various commands?

Mrs May: By definition, we are bringing a number of existing agencies into the NCA, so it is expected that those who are in those agencies at the moment will come into it. The exact disposition of the numbers and those individuals among various commands is not yet set in stone. It will of course be considered in the transition period, once the individual who will head up the NCA in its transition is in place.

PETITIONS

Post Box Provision (Nelson, Lancashire)

5.19 pm

Andrew Stephenson (Pendle) (Con): This petition is from the residents of Nelson, Lancashire, and the surrounding area. It is signed by more than 500 residents.

The petition states:

The Petition of residents of Nelson, Lancashire, and others,

Declares that there is a need for a post box outside the main Post Office in Nelson.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to encourage Royal Mail to take all possible steps to ensure that a post box is provided outside the main Post Office in Nelson.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.

[P000924]

Bus Service (Little Harrowden, Northamptonshire)

5.20 pm

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): Last week, I had the great pleasure to attend a protest meeting in Little Harrowden about the No. 24 bus—or lack thereof. We nearly overflowed into the car park because there were so many people there. A petition has been given to me to present to the House to get Little Harrowden reconnected with Wellingborough. With your permission, Mr Speaker, I shall read the petition to the honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The petition states:

The Humble Petition of residents of Little Harrowden, Northamptonshire and the surrounding areas,
Sheweth

That the decision by Stagecoach bus company to eliminate most of the bus services between Little Harrowden and Wellingborough due to cut backs in subsidy from Northamptonshire County Council has led to considerable hardship to the old, disabled, vulnerable and young in isolating the village from Wellingborough and necessitating a difficult and dangerous walk along a busy and partly unlit road.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House urges the Secretary of State for Transport to liaise with Northamptonshire County Council and the Borough Council of Wellingborough to find a resolution that will lead to the Number 24 bus service being re-established between Little Harrowden and Wellingborough.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

[P000925]

NHS (Cornwall)

5.21 pm

Andrew George (St Ives) (LD): I am proud to present a petition of more than 6,000 residents of west Cornwall, which was gathered by my constituents who have been, and remain, justifiably concerned about the Government's Health and Social Care Bill. They have gathered support for their petition over the past few months, before and since the Government's "pause and listen" process. They look forward to the formal outcome of that process and hope that the Government will have been encouraged to scrap the Bill and start again. I have also been given a disk copy of a similar petition undertaken by 38 Degrees. That amounts to a total of 300,000 signatures.

The petition states:

The Petition of residents of West Cornwall, the Isles of Scilly and St Ives, and others,

Declares their opposition to the Health and Social Care Bill currently before Parliament as it will take away their single Cornwall National Health Service and replace it with consortia led by GPs. Further, the Bill will allow the increased involvement of profit-led companies in our health service.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons rejects the Health and Social Care Bill.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.

[P000926]

Greenock Coastguard Station

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(*Mr Newmark.*)

5.23 pm

Katy Clark (North Ayrshire and Arran) (Lab): I am very pleased to have secured this debate today on a topic of concern to many in my coastal constituency who rely on the service provided by the Clyde coastguard service at Greenock. Of course, the debate takes place in the context of the consultation on the future of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, which was announced to the House in a written ministerial statement on 16 December 2010. The consultation proposes the closure of more than half the current coastguard stations and the loss of approximately 248 jobs.

A number of my constituents work at Clyde coastguard station at Greenock, and many of the points that I shall put to the Minister today, and the questions that I will ask him, come directly from them. The House will be aware that coastguards have recently been prevented from giving evidence directly to the Select Committee on Transport. Operations room staff at the Clyde coastguard station have, however, authored a response to the consultation, which was submitted on 5 May. I hope that the Minister will look at that submission and ensure that it is considered constructively. It makes many detailed points in support of retaining a coastguard station at Greenock.

Iain Stewart (Milton Keynes South) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing this important debate. I am a member of the Transport Committee and, as she rightly says, we are conducting an inquiry into the future of coastguard stations. Although we were not able to take evidence formally from the staff at Greenock, we visited the station and met the staff informally as part of our inquiry. I pay tribute to the officers. The views they expressed were noted, and will be helpful in formulating the response to our inquiry.

Katy Clark: I am grateful for that intervention. I hope that the views expressed by coastguards at Greenock and other coastguard stations are listened to by the Government, and I strongly welcome the fact that coastguards were able to speak informally to the Committee. They have made many technical points which it is helpful for Members of Parliament to listen to—

Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab): I add my congratulations to my hon. Friend on securing this important debate on the future of Greenock. Does she know whether staff or former staff at Greenock were involved in drawing up the proposals that inform the consultation? That is a concern that has been raised with me by staff at the Crosby coastguard station, which is also under threat in this review.

Katy Clark: The constituents of mine who work at Greenock and other members of staff—I have spoken to them on several occasions over the years—were not involved in any way with the proposals, and that is one of the concerns that has been expressed up and down the country. The proposals do not seem to be based on the experiences of those who have been actively involved in providing the service.

If the proposed closure of the Clyde and Forth coastguard stations goes ahead, it will leave the central belt of Scotland without a coastguard station. Indeed, if the proposals go ahead as originally announced in December last year, there will be no coastguard stations south of Aberdeen or north of Bridlington in Yorkshire. My constituents are concerned that it is far from clear what criteria were used to develop these proposals, so it is not clear why Clyde has been proposed as one of the stations that will close. That is also far from clear to my constituents who rely on the service provided by Clyde coastguard station. I hope that in the reply to this debate we will get more information on that point, so that we can try to rebut some of the arguments.

Mark Lazarowicz (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab/Co-op): I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this debate. Does she agree that one of the characteristics of this debate in so far as it affects Greenock—and the constituents of mine who sometimes work out of the Clyde station and other coastguard stations—is that strong and reasoned arguments have been made against closure, but similar arguments have not been made by those who propose closure? That is why it is important that the whole process should be rethought.

Katy Clark: I agree with my hon. Friend, and I commend the work that he has undertaken in relation to the Forth coastguard station. In this debate I will be asking a number of questions specifically about why Clyde has been proposed for closure, but hon. Members on both sides of the House have questions about many of the other coastguard stations. As I look around the Chamber, I see the familiar faces of hon. Members who have been campaigning on behalf of their constituents and the coastguard stations on which they rely. I hope that answers will be forthcoming from the Minister. This debate concerns the Greenock site, and he might be unable to reply today to some of my points. If not, I would hope to get written responses later.

Clyde coastguard station is the busiest station in Scotland and, depending on how the figures are read, it is also one of the busiest in the United Kingdom. My figures have been provided by those who work at Clyde coastguard station. They have used their knowledge to provide those figures, although one of the problems is that it has not been easy to get much of the information. According to the figures I have been given, Clyde coastguard station seems to be the top coastguard station in Britain for urgency calls; second behind Falmouth for distress calls; third for search and rescue hours; and fifth for incident numbers in the United Kingdom. Whichever way we look at it, it seems to be one of the busier stations in the United Kingdom.

The station has the largest coastline to look after, because of the number of islands and the length of the sea lochs in the area for which it has responsibility. The station has 41 coastguard rescue teams under its control, and has more ferry routes—28, including four in my constituency—than any other district coastguard station. In many ways, the seas for which it is responsible are getting busier, despite a significant reduction in the number of fishing vessels owing to the seas in the part of the world in which I live having been fished out. There are more fish farm support vessels, and there will

be an increasing number of vessels for offshore renewable projects as well as a considerable number of cruise vessels, Navy vessels, submarines, including nuclear submarines, and a significant increase in the number of small leisure craft.

We have heard a lot about local knowledge in the debate about the future of the coastguard service. I believe that Clyde, as one of the largest stations, must have developed a significant amount of local knowledge about the huge terrain for which it provides a service. I cannot see any sense in closing such a large station and losing staff with so much local knowledge, and having other stations take on the work. The economic reality is that Greenock staff are unlikely to be able to transfer from low-cost areas such as Inverclyde or north Ayrshire to high-cost areas such as Aberdeen and the south of England, which have comparatively expensive house prices. When stations such as Greenock close—if that is allowed to happen—such knowledge is lost. It will not move with them.

As I said, many aspects of this matter do not seem to have been given proper consideration. In particular, as far as we can tell, the costs involved in the different coastguard stations do not seem to have been given detailed consideration. The relevant figures, however, many of which are quoted in the response of the operational staff to which I referred the Minister, suggest that Clyde is a cheaper station, because it is situated in a low-cost area with cheaper property prices. The figures also show that there is a large number of applicants whenever posts are advertised there, because it is an area with high unemployment and few quality available jobs. Furthermore, when people get those jobs, they tend to stay, so the retention rate is far higher than in other stations. As I say, detailed work has been done on that—work to which I refer the Minister. However, I would also ask him to say whether that issue was taken into account before December, when the proposals were made.

Bill Esterson: My hon. Friend talked about whether staff would relocate. I have heard no indication in the comments made to me of a significant relocation package for staff. Does she have any information from staff who have approached her about whether that has been offered or mentioned, or does she know whether it is part of the consultation process?

Katy Clark: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. The terms of the civil service relocation package do not necessarily make relocation an attractive option, particularly for those living in areas where accommodation is comparatively cheap and for whom the available options are probably not attractive.

Mark Lazarowicz: Given the age profile, will not many of those working in such stations have done so for many years and often have family commitments and other connections? They cannot simply uproot and move 200, 300, 400 or 500 miles away. They will not go, and that expertise will be lost and they will be unemployed.

Katy Clark: My hon. Friend is obviously correct that, often, not just one individual working in a household will be affected. Relationships will be complicated, and frankly, many people will simply not be in a position to

move. Indeed, I suspect that that will probably more often be the case at coastguard stations with experienced long-term staff. We also need to be aware that coastguards are already on very low incomes.

The Minister will be aware that Inverclyde and North Ayrshire are areas of high unemployment and deprivation. Have the economic impacts of the proposals been considered, in particular on Clyde and the wider community? The decision to close Clyde, but keep open the other large coastguard station in Scotland at Aberdeen, seems to be based on current leasing arrangements rather than on operational reasons—or, indeed, on the ongoing running costs of each station. The lease for the Clyde station comes to an end in 2012, with the Aberdeen lease coming to an end in 2020. It has been put to me repeatedly that this seems to have been a major consideration in the proposal to close Clyde. Will the Minister confirm whether that was a factor in coming forward with the proposals, and if it was, will he say how large a factor it was? Has any work been done on the comparative costs of the various options of keeping one coastguard station open as opposed to another?

Mark Lazarowicz: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way, and I assure her that this is my last intervention. On the question of having one or two coastguard stations, just to make it clear, I am sure that she does not mean to suggest that we want the Aberdeen station to close instead Greenock. The whole point is that we do not want the entire coastline of Scotland and parts of the north of England to be served by just one station, which is clearly not a practical solution.

Katy Clark: I agree with my hon. Friend. I am trying to get the Minister to provide more detail on the reasoning behind the proposals. I am strongly of the view that we need a geographical spread of coastguard stations and that we need more than one in Scotland. I have not necessarily looked at the detail of every coastguard station, but I suspect that some hon. Members in the Chamber have.

Dr Eilidh Whiteford (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): Perhaps the hon. Lady's concern about stations on all parts of the coastline echoes her comments about the transferability of staff. Does she agree that local knowledge is critical to the successful operation of coastguard services?

Katy Clark: I agree with the hon. Lady. I am in no way trying to set one coastguard station against another; what I am trying to do is put points on behalf of the Clyde coastguard station that I do not believe will be put in any other forum. There is huge frustration about the fact that it has not been possible to make those points, and we know that very few reasons were given for the proposals.

In every debate about the issue that has taken place in the House, members of all political parties have strongly made the case for local knowledge. There is a considerable distance between the constituency of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Dr Whiteford) and mine. At present that local knowledge is held in the Clyde coastguard station, and if Aberdeen were to take on the work, the acquisition of such knowledge would take a number of years. That point has been made to the Minister a number of times.

Bill Esterson: The hon. Lady made the same point about local knowledge when speaking about the growth of shipping in the Clyde estuary. It is a crucial factor. While the technology on the larger ships will enable them to make the most of the new technology that the MCA is proposing to introduce, many smaller vessels—including fishing vessels and, in particular, pleasure craft—will not. It is particularly important to retain local knowledge in areas such as the Clyde, where there will be much more shipping than there is at present.

Katy Clark: I thank my hon. Friend for his helpful intervention. In my constituency, a number of marinas have opened in recent years. We have the largest marina in Scotland in Largs. There has been a huge increase in the use of our seas for pleasure activities and sailing of all types, but with that come many inexperienced users, with whom coastguard station staff will find it more difficult to deal.

Submissions put together by the Clyde staff, with the assistance of Inverclyde council, contain costings for a site at Greenock. The lease at Greenock will expire in 2012, and a number of other local options have been costed. I should be grateful if the Minister would confirm that they will be considered. The Driving Standards Agency recently decided not to close its Cardiff office after the Public and Commercial Services union was able to make proposals for a cheaper site, and I wonder whether a similarly open-minded approach will be adopted in this instance. Will the Minister ensure that the submissions from Clyde staff and Inverclyde council are given proper and careful consideration?

As I have said, it is far from clear what criteria were used for the proposals that were announced on 16 December. I hope the Minister agrees that it is only fair for there to be a transparent process, and for proper responses to be provided to questions such as those that I have asked today. The Clyde coastguard station has provided an excellent service, and I hope that once the Government have an opportunity to consider the issues in detail, they will decide to reconsider the proposals and keep it open.

5.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mike Penning): It is a pleasure to respond to the debate initiated by the hon. Member for North Ayrshire and Arran (Katy Clark). It is one of many debates on the subject in which we have engaged in the last few months, and that is right and proper, because the Government are making a very important decision.

May I take the first opportunity that I have had to pay tribute to David Cairns, whose Inverness constituency contains the Clyde maritime co-ordination centre? He was very active in the campaign as it is now, but long before these proposals were made he had engaged considerably with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and had visited the station on many occasions, particularly when the Ministry of Defence indicated that it was likely to withdraw the lease and that, in this respect, we would be homeless in that part of the world. His attitude to his constituents was exemplary, as was the way in which he conducted himself during our debates. He will be sorely missed by the House, and whoever replaces him—I understand that the writ for the by-election was moved today—will have a very large pair of shoes to fill.

Although I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing the debate—and I also congratulate the hon. Members who are present for sticking around when they could have disappeared this afternoon—I should point out that the consultation process has ended, even though we extended it considerably, and all representations from all parts of the coastguard community as well as from the public and colleagues in this House will be carefully considered.

All the information will be looked at, as will all the concerns. Let us take the costings, for instance. It is difficult for a coastguard representative or member of the Public and Commercial Services Union to work out the modelling costs. That will be undertaken by the Department, and we will publish all the consultation documents on the website. There are a lot of them, and we will publish them online because we do not want to chop down too many trees. We will also reopen the consultation for a very short time to allow for the Transport Committee report to be taken into account when we draw our conclusions. Finally, the Secretary of State has announced that we will make our announcement before the summer recess.

We realise how emotive this subject is. I come from an emergency service background, so I know very well how emotive issues involving the emergency services in general are. I am enormously proud to be an ex-fireman, and it is a great honour and privilege to be the Minister responsible for Her Majesty's Maritime and Coastguard Agency and everything to do with it. The MCA is world-renowned. If my hon. Friend the Member for Truro and Falmouth (Sarah Newton) was not being so nice, I am sure she would want to tell me about the fantastic international work done at Falmouth on behalf of the coastguard nationally in this country.

But we are talking about a co-ordination centre, and we are in the position we are in today because a set of station cuts and closures were made over a series of years. I do not think anybody in the Chamber or in the country would claim that the current structure has any logic at all. I have gone around the country visiting stations, and my chief executive, Sir Alan Massey, has been to every single coastguard station during this process, and we have had some robust discussions; I had such a discussion when I was up by Liverpool. Everybody knew that these sorts of changes were coming down the line, however. The previous Government had the current proposals on their desk, and they have been discussed with the PCS for almost two years; I have a record of the dates when those meetings took place, and I myself met and held discussions with PCS representatives before these announcements were made.

We knew in advance, therefore, that we needed a reconfiguration of the coastguard service, so that we have the resilience, training and communication systems that are required, as well as a pay structure that is fit for the 21st century. Anybody who has visited a coastguard station in this country will know that one of the first subjects the staff talk about is pay and career, because £13,500 a year as a basic salary in an emergency service is unacceptable. That is one of the reasons why we are looking at this reconfiguration and realignment of the way the service works. That is a fact; this topic was discussed with me because there was a dispute that I inherited when I first became the responsible Minister,

and which had been going on for several years. It is unacceptable that such a dispute went on for such a long time.

We must also look at the geography—at where the co-ordination centres are located. We are talking specifically about the Clyde today. The Clyde station is twinned. The hon. Member for North Ayrshire and Arran might be aware that each of the coastguard stations, apart from the Western Isles and Shetland, is twinned with another station so that they have some resilience. The Clyde station is twinned with Bangor in Northern Ireland, so if the systems go down in the Clyde and the local knowledge—which I accept is there—disappears, Northern Ireland will look after that coastguard area. I have visited Bangor and put the following point to its staff: if local knowledge is so important—and I accept that it does have importance—why are there such huge geographical distances between twinned co-ordination centres? Interestingly, in other parts of the country twins are ridiculously close, such as Brixham and Falmouth. That makes it very difficult to have a national co-ordination facility, and we do not have it; there is no national resilience within the coastguard service in the UK today. We need to look at that.

The very first visit that I made—I know I am going to repeat myself, but some of these comments need repeating—was to Liverpool, on 13 January. A robust and free debate took place, and I do not think I held much back; nor did some of the coastguard representatives, who included volunteers as well as full-time staff. Interestingly, during that debate—the hon. Member for Sefton Central (Bill Esterson) was there—one of the senior members of uniformed staff said to me, “But Minister, we’ve been talking about nine co-ordination centres for years.” I said, “Please put that in writing—be part of the consultation.” I also went to Bangor, where a very detailed report was put in.

Bill Esterson: I remember the exchange about the nine co-ordination centres extremely well. It was an informal proposal put forward by members of staff there some years ago. It is important to put it on the record that they had suggested it to the agency at an earlier date.

Mike Penning: That is exactly the point I am trying to make: this has not come out of the blue. The coastguard representatives there, in front of the hon. Gentleman, me and everybody else assembled there, said that they had previously suggested having nine centres around the country. If the hon. Gentleman remembers, I said to them, “I’m talking about eight, you’re talking about nine. We’re not that far apart, are we?”

On 9 March, I visited Bangor, in the Province, where a detailed presentation and submission was put to me suggesting having 10 centres around the country. As I have said before, three types of submission have been made in this lengthy consultation process. One suggests that we should leave things alone, and that everything is okay. Another says, “Leave us alone”, without making any real comment about anybody else. Then, there are the really detailed submissions, such as that from Falmouth, which I also visited. They say, “We know there needs to be change—standing still is not an option. We’ve said that since day one, when we started the consultation, but actually, we think the figure for the country as a

whole should be about 10.” There have also been discussions about how many national co-ordination centres, or maritime operations centres, there should be. The suggestion arising from the consultation is two; others have suggested one. I do not think anybody is suggesting that there should be none—at least, not in the detailed submissions. There is no national co-ordination at the moment, and I think everybody accepts it is needed.

We are proud of our extended coastline, and we should perhaps look at how other countries are dealing with their co-ordination centres. I must stress that this issue is purely to do with co-ordination—the wonderful volunteers who carry out the rescues, and the RNLI and others, are not affected. In fact, we are going to enhance those services by providing them with more investment and more full-time staff. So, naturally, when I first looked at our proposal, I examined how other countries with an extended coastline structure their co-ordination centres. I looked at other English-speaking countries that might have replicated our approach, and Australia, for instance, has one centre. Spain, I believe, also has one; Norway has two; France has seven. It is not feasible for us to stand still and say that what we have today, in this ad hoc procedure, is suitable going forward.

The consultation was put out and there were discussions with the PCS. These proposals, in one shape or form, have been around for about four years. Evidence was given to the Select Committee, and a letter was published in *The Guardian* only the other day from the former chief executive of the MCA, saying that Ministers had fudged this issue for years and it had not been addressed. We are determined to bring the coastguard service and the MCA into the 21st century—to have a fully resilient service with a pay and career structure that is fit for the service and its dedicated staff.

Sarah Newton (Truro and Falmouth) (Con): I am grateful to the hon. Member for North Ayrshire and Arran (Katy Clark) for securing this debate. I very much welcome, as I am sure coastguards all around the UK do, the fact that this was a genuine consultation exercise. You have repeatedly said that the current proposals are not a done deal and the Secretary of State underlined that only a few weeks ago. It would be of enormous help to coastguards in Falmouth and all around the UK if you could share with us what is going to happen once your response to the consultation is published—you promised this before the recess. Will alternative proposals be introduced? If so, will they be further consulted upon?

Mr Speaker: I cannot share anything and I cannot offer any response, but I have a feeling that the Minister might.

Mike Penning: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am sure that we understand exactly what my hon. Friend is trying to say to the House.

It is very important that we understand exactly what the Government’s position has been from day one. Of course I am going to be accused of doing U-turns, cartwheels and so on, but I said, and the Secretary of State said, that these proposals were not set in stone and that the consultation is a proper one. We said that we wanted everybody to be fully involved in the future of

[Mike Penning]

the coastguard service. I said from day one that what comes out the other end of this consultation process will not be what we go in with, but that we cannot end up with the status quo. The service has to modernise, it has to have proper resilience and it must be fit for the 21st century.

Katy Clark: I asked a number of questions about the criteria that were used. The Minister might not be able to give a response today, but will a response be given at the end of this process outlining the basis on which decisions are being made? It is not at all clear to those working in the coastguard service why particular stations have been chosen and others have not, so will the criteria be made publicly available?

Mike Penning: Of course. I was still responding to the intervention made by my hon. Friend the Member for Truro and Falmouth and when I have finished dealing with it, I will discuss the points that the hon. Lady has raised. In that intervention, I was asked specifically what will happen later in the process. We will announce our proposals once we have taken into consideration the Select Committee's report. That means that I will have to reopen the consultation, but I stress that that will be just to allow that report to be taken into consideration. If I did not do so, I would be insulting the Select Committee and there is no way I intend to do that. The Government will announce their conclusions before the summer recess—as we have said all the way through, they are likely to be different—and then I will reopen the consultation. That is the right and proper way to proceed if we want to work with the public, with the service and with Members of this House. It is different from the way in which a lot of consultations have historically been carried out over the years, but I do not think this will be a one-off; I think that the Government will take this approach on a regular basis. I recall a consultation on my local general hospital in which 85% of respondents said they did not want the hospital to close, yet it was closed in any case. No consideration was given to people's concerns. Does this approach mean that everybody is going to be happy? No, of course it does not. However, proper consultation will take place again once we put forward our proposals.

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): I apologise for arriving so late to the debate and I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. It would be very helpful if he gave a commitment at the start of that consultation to avoid compulsory redundancies at every stage in the process from there on in.

Mike Penning: I hope that there would not be compulsory redundancies, but I cannot give that commitment and I am not going to stand at this Dispatch Box and mislead people. The PCS has known that all the way through. It is important to understand that there will be job losses if we reduce the number of co-ordination centres, although I hope that such job losses will not be compulsory. I have gone through redundancy, despite my union fighting to help me, so I understand where people are coming from. However, if I am going to increase salaries, training and career prospects, I have to find that money from somewhere and that money will come from the savings we are finding. There are quite significant costs up

front, particularly for the resilience we want to put in to the system. The Treasury has been generous and I have money, but I cannot carry that forward—I must make savings. To be fair, the union—

Dr Whiteford: Will the Minister give way?

Mike Penning: I want to clarify the point that the hon. Member for North Ayrshire and Arran mentioned in her intervention, because if I am not careful I will not finish one intervention before I take another. I know we have a few hours, but everybody will understand if we do not speak for the whole time.

It is really important that we do not get bogged down by the fact about the Select Committee because, as anyone who has been a Minister knows, a civil servant cannot go before a Select Committee and criticise Government policy. That is not the protocol; it is not what happens. The job of a civil servant, if they go before a Select Committee, is to support Government policy. That is why civil servants at the grade of those we are talking about do not go before Select Committees. I took advice from the Cabinet Office and I ensured that we were in absolutely the right position. I bent over backwards to ensure that the Select Committee could go to any station it wished and talk to any member of staff, but I could not have uniformed staff criticising Government policy. They are fully entitled to fight through their union representatives for what they think is right, but a Select Committee is not the right and proper place to do that. Anybody who has served as a Minister knows that. We can go back through Westland if we want, and see those differences.

Dr Whiteford: I agree with the Minister that it is very important that we have a coastguard service that is fit for the 21st century, but I would put it to him that all the other emergency services in Scotland are devolved and one way to protect smaller stations, such as Inverclyde, might be to amend the Scotland Bill to devolve the operation of the coastguard agency in Scotland. That would mean that the services could properly address our vast coastline, in line with people's expectations in Scotland.

Mike Penning: I do not want to disappoint the hon. Lady, but the Scottish National party has absolutely no chance of my breaking up a national emergency service such as this one. That will not happen. If we go down the avenue of saying that we can break up the service and that it can be operated in a completely independent little station, we will move completely away from the needs of the service. The service needs national resilience. If we do not have that, we are not offering the service that our constituents—including the hon. Lady's constituents—deserve. It cannot happen.

When I visited the Western Isles, I saw that when the power goes down—I understand that it does so on a fairly regular basis—volunteers go up to the wireless towers on the hills and operate them manually. That is the situation we are in in the 21st century. There was a lightning strike at Falmouth and they luckily managed to keep going, but there is no proper resilience to lock in the service. In our part of the world, the police love the VHF system we operate because they operate on Airwave and although we use some of it we have a very good radio system. However, what we need is networking.

I am sure that the hon. Member for North Ayrshire and Arran is aware that at Clyde we have a hub that comes into the existing building, but we cannot stay in that building. That is one reason for the decision. We have talked about costs, and of course costs are involved—there is no illusion about the fact that costs are involved and there would be significant costs if we had another station in Clyde that was not in that building. Even if we stayed in that building, there would be considerable costs, and we cannot do so, as the Ministry of Defence has decided that it wants to be gone from that building in Clyde by 2013. We will have to move from that building. There are significant costs that we will publish and put out there, but I am in the middle of the consultation and I will not jeopardise that. Judicial review or something similar could be pushed against me if I broke into the consultation in the middle of it. I am trying to be as open as possible.

Bill Esterson: I assume that the Minister has finished with the previous interventions. Let me make a few points about learning lessons regarding future consultations and advice. First, there is grave concern among coastguard officers that at one point he advised them that they could give evidence in public to the Select Committee.

Mike Penning: No, I did not.

Bill Esterson: Well, he will get his chance in a moment to answer my points, but that has categorically been stated by a number of coastguard officers. I think there is a lesson to learn there about the advice given by Ministers.

The other point is that we should listen to front-line staff when drawing up proposals on such important issues as these emergency services and we should include their ideas. The Minister mentioned what happened at Crosby when he visited: the ideas of those

staff were not put into the consultation document and were not part of the proposal, and that is of concern to staff there.

Mr Speaker: We are extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman. The Minister is winding up the debate on the future of Greenock coastguard station.

Mike Penning: May I just place it on the record that I openly said at Crosby and as I went around the country that I wanted coastguards and the public to engage? I am quite careful about my words, even though I regularly read without notes, as I am doing now, and I did not say that those staff could give evidence to the Select Committee in oral session, but I did say that they could submit written evidence. I also said that to the Chair of the Select Committee when I went before it last week in what was also an interesting session.

I have just been informed, a few moments ago, that there will be another Adjournment debate on this issue—on a slightly different subject very close to this one—for an hour and a half next Tuesday morning. It is key to this issue that we make sure that things are done correctly and I am willing to take into consideration all the submissions, but keeping the status quo is not an option. Nearly every detailed submission has accepted that and it was accepted by the previous Administration before I became the responsible Minister. I have been very impressed by the time and effort that many of the stations have taken not just to say, “Look after me, guv,” or “Protect me,” but to suggest what the service needs to look at and look like in the 21st century, and I pay tribute to everyone who has submitted evidence to the consultation. It will reopen just to allow the Select Committee report to be considered, and the Government will make an oral statement to the House before the summer recess on the future of the MCA.

Question put and agreed to.

6.7 pm

House adjourned.

Westminster Hall

Wednesday 8 June 2011

[MR CLIVE BETTS *in the Chair*]

Wild Animals (Circuses)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the sitting be now adjourned.—(*Stephen Crabb.*)

9.30 am

Robert Ffello (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Lab): I am disappointed that I had to ask Mr Speaker for this morning's debate, disappointed that the Minister has had to come to the House to try yet again to defend his position and disappointed that the Government are all over the place on the question of wild animals in circuses.

I am grateful for the support of Members from both sides of the House, and I know that many loyal Government Members will be saddened that they should have to raise the matter. I thank those Members who are here today and those who have sent apologies for not being able to attend; this debate clashes with other business of the House and some Members who wanted to attend cannot do so. However, the hon. Members for Belfast East (Naomi Long), for Manchester, Withington (Mr Leech), for Truro and Falmouth (Sarah Newton), for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas), for St Ives (Andrew George) and for Chippenham (Duncan Hames) and others are present, and I am grateful to them for attending.

I realise that after the forestry U-turn, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs cannot see the wood for the trees, but are Ministers really saying that the thousands of people who have signed *The Independent's* online petition are wrong, that the 94.5% who responded to the consultation are wrong, or—dare I say it—that the vast majority of the British public are wrong? I understand that the Secretary of State has said that most people would prefer not to see wild animals performing in circuses. The British Veterinary Association has said that

“the welfare needs of non-domesticated, wild animals cannot be met within the environment of a travelling circus; especially in terms of accommodation and the ability to express normal behaviour. A licensing scheme will not address these issues.”

Despite all those people saying that 21st century Britain is no longer willing to allow wild animals to perform in travelling circuses, we have a Government and a Department that are dithering and scrabbling to find the flimsiest of arguments to avoid a ban. The Secretary of State is looking to implement a licensing scheme. It is likely to cost £1 million, but it will not resolve the issue—and I thought that the Government were opposed to new regulations and wanted to save money.

Why can DEFRA find time to bring in a new licensing scheme and £1 million to underwrite it, but it cannot pursue a ban? It cannot still be awaiting the consultation results, because they were available more than a year ago. It cannot be starting from scratch, as I understand from the Minister responsible for animal welfare in the

last Labour Government that all the paperwork was in the Department's red box last March. Is it that the Minister does not know his Annies from his Nellies? No; I think that he has learned that lesson. Perhaps it is because a huge number of circuses and animals are involved. No, only four circuses are involved—not 40 or 400, but four—and about 40 or so beautiful wild animals. At least, that is how many there are now, but under this marvellous licensing scheme it could well become 60, or 100 or more.

Are someone's human rights being violated? The Minister of State seemed to think so, given his answer to an urgent question in the House on 19 May, yet DEFRA's impact assessment, which was undertaken as part of the consultation, states that there are no human rights aspects. The thought that someone's human rights could be infringed by banning wild animals from circuses would make a mockery of all rights.

Simon Hart (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire) (Con): Is there a reason why the previous Labour Government failed to address any of these issues in 13 years of government?

Robert Ffello: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that point, but he is not correct. When the Animal Welfare Act 2006 was going through the House, we debated banning the use of wild animals and concluded that a report—the Radford report, which I shall come to in a moment—should be commissioned. Indeed, by March 2010 a ban was on the cards.

Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con): On the cards?

Robert Ffello: Does the hon. Gentleman wish to take part in the debate or just sit and heckle all morning?

Is the problem that the European Circus Association may—or could, or is thinking about, or is sabre-rattling, or has thought up a good ruse, or just might—take a case to the Austrian court? Is Parliament is now bound by the whims of a lawyer acting for a European association?

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): The hon. Gentleman will know that Governments have been given legal advice saying that it would be impossible to ban the import of cat and dog fur, and same was said of seal fur, yet when Governments challenged that so-called legal advice they were able to make those bans happen. Does he agree that we should challenge the legal advice in this instance, thus ensuring that we ban this cruel practice once and for all?

Robert Ffello: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her intervention. Indeed, I was coming to that very point.

How long does the Minister intend to wait to see whether that hypothetical court case actually starts? If the legal advice from DEFRA officials is so overwhelming, I am sure that the Secretary of State will be only too pleased to publish it. Does the Minister have a copy with him, or will he place it in the Library later today? Legal advice supplied to me suggests that the UK is entitled to make its own domestic legislation on this matter.

Duncan Hames (Chippenham) (LD): The hon. Gentleman may recall that, on the day of the urgent question, I asked the Minister if he would publish the legal advice that he had received. I am pleased to advise the House

[*Duncan Hames*]

that I received a letter from the Secretary of State yesterday; the Minister has followed through on his commitment to discuss the matter with her. However, I am disappointed and frustrated that, in line with practice elsewhere in government, the Secretary of State has declined to publish that advice. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, if we cannot see the advice from Government lawyers, it places a greater burden of responsibility on the Minister to argue the merits of that position?

Robert Flello: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman; it does indeed place an extra burden, an extra duty, on the Minister. I repeat the point that, if the legal advice is so overwhelming, we should be able to scrutinise it.

I shall take a step back and set out our recent journey to this point. Circuses existed long before wild animals became a feature. Indeed, it is often said that the Roman circuses were the foundation for what we know today. The use of animals in circuses probably dates back to the early 18th century, when exotic animals were put on display. The year 1833 is often cited, as that was when big cats were first seen in a cage act at a circus. Interestingly, the Slavery Abolition Act was passed in that year, as was the Factory Act that limited child labour—a connection that is slightly ironic.

During the passage of the Animal Welfare Act 2006, it was agreed that the use of wild animals in travelling circuses should be banned, subject to there being sufficient scientific evidence. The circus working group, chaired by Mike Radford, concluded that there was not sufficient scientific evidence to justify a ban. However, on a closer reading of the 2007 report, the conclusion seems to be that there is almost no evidence to consider—no evidence to support a ban, and no evidence to support the status quo. My reading of the Radford report is that there is no scientific data for either side to rely on.

There is another argument, however. Do we really need a report to tell us right from wrong? Does a report that says there is insufficient evidence override our moral sense of what is or is not acceptable? In the 20 years leading up to 1833, did Wilberforce say in the face of so-called evidence against him, “Oh well, that’s okay. I’ll give up now.”? No, of course not, and neither should we. I do not suggest that the owners of travelling circuses are cruel or that they mistreat their animals, but I fail to see—and looking around me, I note that colleagues who are here in support of a ban, fail to see—how keeping wild animals in mobile cages as they travel around the country, even with some respite in exercise areas, is for the best welfare of the animals concerned. Perhaps it is me, but I find it plain wrong that wild animals should be used in travelling circuses.

As an important aside, I believe that it is wholly unacceptable for circuses to be targeted for vandalism and worse. We should not descend to that level but should win the argument instead.

Andrew George (St Ives) (LD): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing this debate. He is absolutely right to push this issue. The Government should re-examine the legal case, so that we can move towards a ban as speedily as possible. Does he not think that a further Back-Bench debate, which many are pushing for at the moment, would give us the opportunity to re-examine

the legal argument and the apparent legal impediment to a ban? We need to ensure that the Government are given the tools and the encouragement to move towards a ban as quickly as possible.

Robert Flello: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. The Radford report suggests that, because of the lack of scientific evidence, the legal impediment comes from the use of secondary legislation. It says that the ban could be implemented if Parliament passed primary legislation. Having not seen the legal advice, I can only speculate that that is the problem and that the Ministry is unwilling to go down the route of primary legislation.

Andrew George: I was referring to the EU services directive and the debateable position of the Austrians. If we can learn lessons from that, we could ensure a smooth passage towards a ban.

Robert Flello: Indeed, but coming back to the European services directive, the legal advice that I have seen suggests that that was not an issue. The complaint against the Austrian Government was made in 2008. The European Circus Association took Austria to the European Commission and made a complaint. The case was folded and no further action was taken. The ombudsman looked into the matter and felt that reasons should have been given. Ultimately, though, he found that the European services directive did not apply in this circumstance and that it was up to nation states to bring in their own legislation. Again, I come back to my initial point: if the Secretary of State made available the legal advice, it would be far easier to mount a challenge and for lawyers on both sides to determine whether or not it was robust. If there was a problem, they would at least be able to see it in the open.

The 2007 Radford report noted that circuses have hesitated to update cages and facilities because of the uncertainty. It said then that the status quo was unsustainable, and that was getting on for four years ago. It says that we cannot continue in this way. The Government’s own impact assessment says that human rights are not an issue and legal advice says that the European services directive is not an issue, so what is the issue?

As Members already know, circuses are exempt from the Zoo Licensing Act 1981 and the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976. The Performing Animals (Regulation) Act 1925 does not address the welfare requirements of performing animals, and as I have mentioned previously, the Animal Welfare Act 2006 can be hard to bring to bear when circuses are travelling around the country. Where does that leave us? In my view, it leaves us quite rightly pushing for a total ban on wild animals in travelling circuses.

Naomi Long (Belfast East) (Alliance): I thank the hon. Gentleman for securing this debate. This issue has been of interest to me from my time at Belfast city council when we banned animal circuses from using council property. I am interested in one of the challenges that is presented by exotic animals being permitted in circuses. Under regulation, or self-regulation, people are required to go through constant retraining as new species are introduced into circuses. Is there not a

chance that that is just impractical in protecting animal welfare and that a complete ban on all species would be better?

Robert Ffello: The other thing that that raises is a widening of scope. If it was difficult to use a type of wild animal because it was mentioned in regulation, would circuses effectively be encouraged to start looking at other species to get round the cumbersome and burdensome regulations? All this leaves us pushing for a total ban on wild animals in travelling circuses, as discussed during the passage of the 2006 Act and as proposed at the end of the previous Government. Although the lack of scientific evidence for or against the ban would seem to preclude using secondary legislation, it is for Parliament to use primary legislation to give weight to the ethical issues, the will of the British public and the rights and needs of wild animals themselves.

In conclusion, we have a situation in which DEFRA is once again in disarray and out of touch with the public. The Minister has been given another chance today to get this right. I hope that he will announce today that his Department will introduce a ban without further delay and that the use of wild animals in circuses will be another Victorian legacy that can be properly assigned to the past.

Mr Clive Betts (in the Chair): Does any other Member want to speak? Members have to stand if they want to speak.

9.45 am

Duncan Hames (Chippenham) (LD): I did not realise that there would be so little competition for the opportunity to enter the debate. I have already thanked the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Robert Ffello) for securing it for us. My timidity was purely because I thought that it would be ill-mannered of me to seek an early speech in the debate given the fact that I will need to leave before it concludes, but as I do not seem to be preventing others from speaking, I will proceed.

I mentioned earlier that by asking the Minister to bring out the legal advice that supported his position, I seek only to aid him. It would certainly shed a lot of light on the situation for many Members. It is a matter of disappointment to me that that will not be possible, but I am sure that we all look forward to the Minister's comments as he tries to explain his position.

Various legal impediments have been presented to the case for bringing an end to the use of wild animals in circuses. Some people have spoken about human rights issues, but the Government, in their consultation, made it clear that they did not believe that was an impediment. Others have looked at the European services directive, which is an interesting case but not one that prevents the UK from legislating as it sees fit on the matter of animal welfare; I recognise that it would require primary legislation.

Given that a ban is in place in Denmark and that Austria has taken measures, we would not be standing alone in that respect. We are not in the position that our views are wholly out of line with those elsewhere in the European Union. Forming public policy to protect animals from cruelty is certainly a legitimate ground for taking legislative action. We have yet to see the legal

advice that has prompted this case. It is not for me to claim to be a legal expert on the matter, so I look forward to hearing further clarification.

The key issue about taking action, which has emerged from our discussions both here and in the main Chamber, rests on the potential exposure of the UK to a legal challenge. That is clear given what happened to the case in Austria. I urge the Minister to keep the situation under constant review. If the facts and the threat of legal challenge change, we want the Government to be able to take action. Will the Minister tell us if he is willing to look at the issue as events unfold, or indeed fail to unfold, in other parts of Europe?

At the end of the day, for many of my constituents, this is not a matter of legal nicety. It is about expressing our values in our society. We are prepared to do that on other matters of animal welfare, and there is no reason why circuses should not come under such concerns.

Andrew George: Like my hon. Friend and doubtless many others, I would have liked to contribute further to this debate but unfortunately I too have to be elsewhere shortly for another meeting. Nevertheless, I wish the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South, who secured the debate, great success in advancing the cause.

I want to respond to the point that my hon. Friend has just made. Leaving aside the legal debate around the issue, there must be a debate across all Departments about whether a policy of working towards a ban on wild animals in circuses can proceed. Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be helpful for DEFRA to say, in due course, whether it is minded to introduce a ban if all the other impediments to imposing a ban can be overcome?

Duncan Hames: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. I agree that a statement of intent—of desire—by the Government would be helpful, so that our constituents would be in no doubt that the refusal so far to countenance the introduction of primary legislation to end the practice is not a political judgment but a practical one, in light of the legal impediments. A statement from the Government to express that view would certainly be very helpful.

However, in response to the urgent question that was put last month in the main Chamber on this issue, we had a somewhat more *laissez-faire* piece of encouragement from the Minister, when he said:

“If people are really so opposed to the use of wild animals in circuses, I suggest that they do not go to the circus.”—[*Official Report*, 19 May 2011; Vol. 527, c. 499.]

I am happy to take the Minister's advice, but to be honest I do not think that his response is sufficient. That type of response has certainly not been considered in relation to many other issues of animal welfare. For example, when it comes to the regulation of practices within abattoirs, it would not be sufficient simply to tell people not to eat meat. People who eat meat expect good standards and I know that the Minister's Department is keen to ensure that good standards are upheld. In recent months, concerns have been expressed about other animal welfare issues, for example in horse racing, and it would not have been sufficient for people simply to have turned off the television set that Saturday afternoon in April.

[Duncan Hames]

There are other examples of animal welfare issues when such a response would not have been sufficient, for instance in relation to the fur trade. Yes, consumers, members of the public and society as a whole can take a stand and make their views clear. However, to do that alone ignores the fact that we are all part of one democratic society where we want to be able to set standards that we should all have confidence in, regardless of our personal choices, as I said just now in relation to the meat industry.

I hope that the Minister will accept that there is widespread support for action on the issue of wild animals in circuses. In the Government's consultation, 94% of respondents wanted an end to the use of wild animals in circuses. In addition, 26,000 people signed the petition that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South referred to in his speech. That petition was also supported by many respected organisations, such as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the British Veterinary Association, the Born Free Foundation and the Captive Animals Protection Society. I hope that we can find a way through the current impasse.

Caroline Lucas: Like others, I have a meeting to attend shortly. However, I congratulate the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Robert Ffello) on securing the debate. I want to reiterate the European experience. When I was an MEP and we were trying to progress animal welfare issues in the European Parliament, we were always told to go back to member states and galvanise them. When a number of member states are calling very strongly for action on something, that is precisely what enables the EU position to be much easier. If there is any suggestion that the EU is somehow preventing us from moving on the issue of wild animals in circuses, I reiterate that if we look, for example, at the action that was taken, first, on dog and cat fur, and then on seal fur, on both occasions it was action by member states that enabled the EU to say, "Yes, go ahead", and then the bans on those types of fur could go forward. There really should be nothing stopping us from moving on this vital issue of wild animals in circuses. Does the hon. Gentleman agree?

Duncan Hames: I thank the hon. Lady for her intervention. I certainly agree. It is my view that this matter is not controversial and it is not one on which we stand alone. There is support for us from citizens not only in our own country but in other countries in Europe, and as a consequence we should not be timid about expressing our views.

In fact, there have been many other areas where regulation and action by Government has been far more controversial than in this case, whether in relation to the endless debate—as it was—about hunting or to the delicate balance that must be struck between competing interests around animal experimentation. Certainly there is an argument to be made about the use of animal experimentation for medical purposes but action has been taken to outlaw animal experimentation for the use of cosmetics, where there is much less justification for such experimentation. Indeed, even in relation to some of the issues that we discuss in this place about

farming practices, there are much more complex and difficult matters to weigh up when we are considering action to protect animal welfare than in the case of wild animals being used in circuses. It seems to me that the argument for banning wild animals in circuses is very much about protecting animals and we would miss an opportunity if we did not take that action. I hope that the Minister will give us some encouragement in that respect in his response to the debate.

9.56 am

Mr John Leech (Manchester, Withington) (LD): I start by congratulating the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Robert Ffello) on securing the debate.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Chippenham (Duncan Hames), I had not intended to make a speech because I am unable to stay in Westminster Hall until the end of the debate. However, given the fact that everyone else here this morning seems to be in exactly the same position, I will briefly take the opportunity to say a few words.

The debate is timely and I am pleased that as part of Back-Bench business, we may have an opportunity to vote on the issue. My impression is that across the House, in all parties, a majority of people probably want a ban on the use of wild animals in circuses, which is in line with the view of the general public; as has been said, 94% of people seem to be in favour of a ban. I very much hope that we will get the opportunity to debate this important issue in the main Chamber, with the opportunity for a vote in the Chamber, so that Back-Bench MPs can express their views and the Government, hopefully, can listen to those views, because I think we actually represent the views of the vast majority of the general public.

My real concern is that the action proposed by the Government might inadvertently legitimise the use of wild animals in circuses. Over a number of years, we have seen a dramatic reduction in the number of wild animals used in circuses. However, by proposing some sort of licensing scheme, there is a real danger that we might legitimise the use of wild animals in circuses. Indeed, it may actually be extended. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South suggested that we might end up seeing more wild animals in circuses if the Government's proposals go ahead and I do not think that anybody wants that to happen.

In the Minister's closing remarks, will he give us an indication exactly where the decision has come from? It has been suggested that it was actually a decision from the top—from the Prime Minister—and that DEFRA would have been quite happy to go along with a ban but unfortunately the Prime Minister seemed to be strongly in favour of not introducing one. Perhaps the Minister can clarify whether that is indeed the position of DEFRA and whether the Prime Minister has had personal involvement in this case.

For me, a ban is a no-brainer. I recently went to the cinema to watch the film, "Water for Elephants". I am quite happy to plug that film, because I thought it was great. I accept that the conditions in which the vast majority of animals in circuses are kept are very different from those in the film, but I do not believe that wild animals can be looked after appropriately in the sort of cages and the kind of environment where they have to

live in circuses. Although there have been massive improvements over the decades, I think that we would all generally agree that that environment is not appropriate.

I would also like the Minister to explain why the decision was made not to publish the legal advice. As a coalition Government, we have argued that we are more open and transparent than previous Governments, but I am afraid that refusing to publish the legal advice gives our opponents the opportunity to argue that we must have something to hide.

Finally, I want to plug the organisation 38 Degrees, which contacts all Members of Parliament. It has recently been asking them for suggestions about what its next campaign should be. I think it should concentrate its efforts on the campaign to ban wild animals from circuses because the vast majority of people support it—it is a no-brainer. I urge the Minister to reconsider the decision about the advice and bring it to the Floor of the House. Let us see what MPs think and let us ban wild animals in circuses.

10.1 am

Simon Hart (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire) (Con): I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Robert Flelo) on securing the debate. I should apologise for referring to him earlier, I think, as my hon. Friend. Members may not know that we recently spent a week together in a tent in the Falkland Islands, where I became friendlier than I had perhaps intended—[*Interruption.*] That is reflected in his comments.

I am not here to make a speech in favour of wild animals in circuses. Such spectacles hold no great attraction for me—I would not go to one myself or take my children to see one. However, I have always been fundamentally opposed to the politically tempting prospect of abolishing things because it suits a particular political narrative. We have seen that total bans do not necessarily result in actual total bans and do not necessarily produce the welfare benefits that some passionate and articulate advocates suggest. Having listened to the debate so far, I am concerned that we are confusing two things which, to my mind, are absolutely different—the welfare of wild animals in circuses and the legality of abolition.

It is right and proper that we should debate the welfare of wild animals, and part of that debate should be about separating cruelty from suffering. Something that has beset animal welfare debates in this House for some time is the fact that we sometimes complicate the emotive description of the treatment of animals in the context of cruelty, which is not a scientific measurement, with that of suffering, which is or can be. We should perhaps put ourselves in a position to legislate on the back of reports and debates on the issue of wild animals in circuses, but that is entirely different from the debate on the legality of abolition.

It is absolutely proper than any Government take the legal advice that they are offered. We simply cannot go around ignoring legal advice on the basis that using expressions such as “total ban” plays to our popular instincts. People will sue us, and the taxpayer will pay if we get it wrong.

Mr Leech: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it would be far better for the Government to publish the legal advice, so we can all have a look at it?

Simon Hart: I am sure that the Minister will come to that. There is always sensitivity when it comes to the publication of legal advice, particularly when cases are, or are possibly, in play. I do not think that there is necessarily anything to be suspicious about; I do not necessarily smell a conspiracy just because a Department fails to publish advice when we demand it. I am sure that the Minister will, as usual, give a compelling answer to the hon. Gentleman’s question.

The Department is absolutely right rigidly to stick to principle and evidence when it comes to decisions on legislating in favour of abolition or of regulation. In many debates on animal-related issues in this House over the years, Ministers have stood up and thumped the table, stressing their commitment to evidence and principle, and have then promptly gone and legislated in the absence of both. That has had long-term consequences for the animals concerned, which have failed to benefit from the legislation, and also for the taxpayer, who has been forced to pick up enormous legal bills—several of which I have been unashamedly responsible for—as the process is challenged in every court in the UK and further afield. It is absolutely proper that the Department should avoid getting itself into that particular pickle.

I can see us moving to a situation, over a period of time—a time scale with which I would be entirely comfortable—in which we no longer see wild animals used in circuses but neither do we subject the taxpayer to undue expense as a result of our over-enthusiasm to do something that is simply popular on the back of an electronic campaign that might catch the mood of the day.

Mr Russell Brown (Dumfries and Galloway) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman has mentioned the taxpayer. The taxpayer comes in a variety of forms, one of which is the council tax payer. The scheme that DEFRA has proposed would place an additional burden on council tax payers, because it would fall to local authorities to license and to inspect but, ridiculously, they would not have the power to prosecute.

Simon Hart: I am grateful for that contribution, but I am not entirely sure that I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman’s position. The local authorities are in a more powerful position than he suggests in that they have the ability, presumably, not to regulate or not to license. Despite what the Government may say, that is, to some extent, a local authority decision. I do not want to steal the Minister’s ground on that issue as well, because he will almost certainly deal with it himself.

Naomi Long: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Simon Hart: I was into my final gasp, but go on.

Naomi Long: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way at such a late stage in his speech. He has said that he wants to move to a situation in which wild animals are no longer used in circuses. It is hard, however, to see how regulation would bring that about, because its use would almost be an acceptance that it is appropriate to have wild animals in circuses and that the only issue is the regulation of welfare. My argument is that it is inappropriate for wild animals to be held in such circumstances, because the circus environment is by its very nature not an appropriate place for them.

Simon Hart: The hon. Lady's point is fair, but it goes back to my earlier comment about having to separate the moral, ethical argument about the appropriateness of wild animals in circuses from the legality of abolition legislation. Those things are entirely different; they always have been; and there is nothing particularly new about that. I am fundamentally not an abolitionist—I dislike banning things. I happen to dislike abolition not because I am a 1960s liberal but because I often see examples of the consequences of legislation not being the same as the intention of those who proposed it in the first place. It would be fine for me if we moved to a situation in which the circuses—I think there are only two or three—that use wild animals were not using them in five years' time without our having to go through various legal challenges. Hon. Members and the Minister might take a different view, but that is my position, which I think strikes the right balance between trying to attain the highest possible welfare standards and not compromising the taxpayer's interests.

Penny Mordaunt (Portsmouth North) (Con): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Simon Hart: I will never finish at this rate, but of course.

Penny Mordaunt: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way. I have great sympathy with what he has said about finding a pragmatic solution that is good value for the taxpayer, but does he accept that even if the legal advice is correct, a legal challenge might be unlikely? I have a unique perspective on the issue, because I used to be a magician's assistant. That was my first job, before I gave up that sensible career path for this crazy world, and I am happy to report that the only creature harmed in the shows in which I was involved was, frequently, me. I have some knowledge of the sector, and I think that a legal challenge would be unlikely. We have a pragmatic opportunity. Fewer than 40 animals would need to be rehomed. A ban seems to be the most pragmatic way forward.

Simon Hart: My hon. Friend makes an interesting contribution, particularly regarding her downward career path from magician's assistant to politician. I must confess that I am not overly sympathetic to the process, for the reasons that I have given. Part of me is hugely resistant to the theory that the most pragmatic approach is simply to strike a red pen through an activity, because it suits our political agenda to do so. History is littered with examples of our having fallen for that temptation only to regret it at our leisure and expense.

I will finish on this point. I do not like making cheap political observations too often, but I will make another one now. We cannot ignore the fact that we have lived through 13 years of Labour Administrations who made a lot of noise about such subjects yet failed to do anything about them. Nothing much changed over those 13 years as far as wild animals in circuses were concerned. I hope that my south Atlantic colleague the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South will forgive me for saying that it is a little rich to come here and lay the blame fully at the foot of the current Administration, when his party had such an opportunity to deal with the matter itself.

10.12 am

Zac Goldsmith (Richmond Park) (Con): I was not expecting to be called so quickly, Mr Betts. I was also not planning to speak, as I believe the debate finishes at 11 o'clock and I cannot stay. I hope that you will forgive me for leaving before the debate finishes. I will make a few brief remarks.

Mr Clive Betts (in the Chair): Order. I accept that Members have other, pressing engagements, but the hon. Gentleman should be a little careful about coming in halfway through a debate and leaving before the end. It means that he is not really engaging in the debate, but simply coming to make a speech by himself. I am giving him a bit of advice for the future on that point.

Zac Goldsmith: I will take that on board and will stay as long as I can. I think that the debate finishes at 11 o'clock, and there is a chance that I can stay until then; I will do my best.

I thank the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Robert Ffello) and congratulate him on securing this debate. I have had a huge number of letters from constituents, and the issue clearly resonates with the public at large. I do not believe that there are any circuses in my constituency that use wild animals, but nevertheless the issue has caught people's imagination. Like previous speakers, I put on record my support for a ban on the use of wild animals in circuses.

I am confused by the Government's position. I do not see any real arguments against the ban, other than abstract ones. It seems to come down to an argument about the vague threat of a possible challenge by the European Union at some point in the future. That seems to be what the arguments boil down to. Alternatively—I do not want to paraphrase or caricature the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire (Simon Hart)—it boils down to an in-principle opposition to the very notion of prohibition. I share my hon. Friend's antipathy to the use of bans—we have had far too many bans over the past 13 years that could rightly and usefully be repealed—but there are situations in which a ban is the most clear-cut and straightforward solution, and I cannot offer a better example than this one.

I will not rehearse the arguments for a ban on the use of wild animals in circuses, partly because they have already been laid out clearly but also because they are blindingly obvious. The public have an overwhelming appetite for the clear-cut solution of a ban, and the law should reflect the general wishes of the public. If the opinion polls are accurate or even half accurate—92% or 93% of people say that they favour a ban—surely the law should adapt to reflect the interests of that vast majority of people.

I also suspect that if the issue were put to a vote in the House, irrespective of the various positions taken by different parties, Members of Parliament would overwhelmingly support a ban. It would be interesting to see what would happen. I understand that moves are afoot to negotiate a votable motion with the Backbench Business Committee, and it would be interesting to see the result. I suspect that if the Government were to maintain their position, they would lose that vote, although they would probably realise that in time and reverse

their position. I wish the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South all the luck in the world in achieving that opportunity, because the debate would be fascinating.

I encourage the Government to rethink their position, which does not make any sense to Members of Parliament, our constituents or those involved in the campaign for a ban. It seems totally illogical. I will do my utmost to remain here for the rest of the debate in order to hear the Minister's substantive points in favour of the current position, which seems extraordinary.

10.16 am

Mr Jamie Reed (Copeland) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship for the first time, Mr Betts. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Robert Ffello) on securing this debate. It is evident that he speaks for thousands of people up and down the country. We have heard from Members from various parties in support of a ban on the use of wild animals in circuses. I thank them for showing interest, attending this debate and making such a strong case, which is valuable.

Members' support reflects the views of the country at large. As we have heard, Labour's public consultation last year found that close to 95% of the public want a ban. More than 25,000 people have signed *The Independent* petition calling for one, and every one of us will have had constituents write to us to support taking that strong, simple, pragmatic, clear and logical action.

The Minister's answer to those concerned individuals—I am sure that he will regret it—was:

"If people are really so opposed to the use of wild animals in circuses, I suggest that they do not go to the circus."—[*Official Report*, 19 May 2011; Vol. 528, c. 499.]

How disappointing.

From the moment when this Government took office, their record on the issue has been weak and ineffective. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent South has said, proposals were in the red box of the previous Government's animal welfare Minister, ready to go after the election, so the work and heavy lifting have been done, but for more than a year after the end of the consultation, the Government have dithered and delayed in the trademark fashion of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. They suggested in answers to Members that they were carefully deliberating, but a written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry South (Mr Cunningham) confirmed that they had not held a single meeting with animal welfare groups or circus representatives since July last year.

The process went on. Finally, in April, the Secretary of State leaked to the *Sunday Express* that she would be introducing a ban. It appeared that the Government had at last listened to the public and to common sense, and Members from all parties welcomed the news. Unfortunately, as the public are beginning to realise, we made the mistake of thinking that this Government do what they say they will do.

A month later, in another answer, repeated in oral questions and in a written ministerial statement, the Secretary of State claimed that the Government could not implement a ban due to an ongoing case in which the Austrian Government had been taken to court over a breach of the EU services directive. Wrong again; there is no ongoing case against the Austrian Government's

ban on wild animals in circuses. That has been confirmed by the Austrian constitutional court, the European Court of Justice and the European Circus Association.

Will the Minister apologise for misleading the House? I hope that he will take this opportunity to do so, but I doubt it. The hasty statement rushed out by the Secretary of State said that she

"would like to avoid any misunderstanding"—[*Official Report*, 19 May 2011; Vol. 528, c. 27WS.]

and pointed out that the Government had got their information from a European Circus Association press release. That Government policy should be determined by a circus press office is unbelievable.

The Minister will now claim that although the Austrian Government might not have been taken to court, they are about to be, which is why the Government cannot introduce a ban, much as they would like to. The issue, however, has already been decided at European level. The European Circus Association submitted a complaint against the Austrian protection law to the European Commission, but the Commission closed the case in 2006, categorically stating that

"animal welfare questions are better left to Member States".

The circuses looked to the European ombudsman to overturn the decision, but instead, just last year, the ombudsman upheld the Commission's decision. The Commission, responding to the Government's announcement against a ban last month, again stated:

"The EU rules ensure services can be easily provided across borders. But there are of course valid reasons for exceptions to the rules and restrictions are allowed".

Since Austria's ban in 2005, other countries, including Luxembourg, Hungary and Greece, have introduced similar arrangements without challenge. The answer is therefore clear: Europe is no reason not to introduce a ban. What other excuses will the Minister provide for the Government's failure? Will he repeat his assertion that a ban requires primary legislation? That is not true. DEFRA's own impact assessment states:

"Section 12 of the Animal Welfare Act allows the Minister/Secretary of State to make such provisions as he thinks fit for the purpose of promoting the welfare of animals for which a person is responsible. Under this legislation a complete ban on wild animals in travelling circuses could be introduced."

That is pretty conclusive. It is no wonder that that assessment is no longer available on the DEFRA website. Instead, it has been hidden away in the National Archives.

The very same impact assessment dispels the other myth suggested by the Minister, namely that a ban would somehow contravene our obligations under the Human Rights Acts, an argument that my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent South has already put to bed. Without hesitation or ambiguity, the assessment states:

"There are no human rights issues raised by these proposals."

That is a black and white rebuttal of the Minister's ludicrous suggestion from his own Department.

What are the Government proposing instead of a ban? A strict licensing regime that is so strict that the Minister claims it will be as strict as if a ban were in place. If that is going to lead to the same outcome, why not have a full ban? This is absolutely baffling. This is the world of DEFRA today. The Minister must explain

[Mr Jamie Reed]

why he did not follow his own Department's advice from its own impact assessment, and why DEFRA will not publish the legal advice.

The Minister claims that a licensing regime can be introduced quickly, so that animal welfare can be improved as quickly as possible. However, in the Secretary of State's statement to the House outlining the policy, she proposed further consultation on the nature of the licence. More consultation means more delay. It is hardly a speedy resolution or a prudent use of taxpayers' money.

Zac Goldsmith: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the regulatory approach would not only fail to solve the problem to which the public are demanding a solution, but be far more bureaucratically cumbersome and expensive than a ban? Given that there is no real public demand for wild animals in circuses, does he agree that a ban is the cheapest, cleanest and simplest solution?

Mr Reed: I could not agree more with the hon. Gentleman. He makes the case succinctly, logically and clearly. The situation is precisely as he has described it, and I agree entirely.

Animal welfare organisations, which we must listen to, are absolutely clear that it does not matter what strict rules would be established under a licensing regime. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the British Veterinary Association agree that a licensing regime is unworkable. They are joined by Animal Defenders International, the Born Free Foundation and the Captive Animals' Protection Society in supporting a ban. Not a single animal welfare organisation supports a licensing approach; the only ones that do are the circuses themselves.

A licensing regime would be practically unenforceable. Even if inspectors were appointed by the Department, the regime would still be overseen by local authorities, if the system continues to be based on that used for assessing welfare standards in zoos. Circuses, unlike zoos, move around, making it impossible for councils to enforce the strict welfare standards that the Minister says that he wants to see introduced.

Even if local authorities wanted to take action, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has just closed a consultation on burdens on local authorities, where he proposes to remove their powers to prosecute for animal cruelty. Not only has DEFRA been forced to implement the biggest cuts of any Department, but it is now being sidelined and ignored by other Ministers. DEFRA has become a laughing stock, an embarrassment and a figure of fun. For every stakeholder and everybody who cares about the DEFRA agenda and environmental politics in this country, it is a disaster.

It is no wonder that DEFRA has been sidelined. We have already seen the humiliating debacle over the sale of our forests, delays to the water White Paper, cuts to the flood defences and confusion on waste, and now we have this excuse for a policy. DEFRA is a Department in special measures and I am not surprised that the Prime Minister has intervened. However, he needs to get a grip and stop treating this Department as the political equivalent of the mad woman in the attic.

Intervening to prevent a ban is a mistake. Animal welfare organisations want it; Members in all parts of the House want it; and the public want it in overwhelming numbers. It has been implemented successfully in Europe. There is no need for new legislation, and the Human Rights Act certainly does not have anything to do with it.

The Minister knows this, so I urge him to stop digging and to print the legal advice, or risk accusations of their being none. If he will not print and publish it, why not? Would it be, as has been suggested, because of the hidden hand and influence of No. 10? Is this not more about saving face than animal welfare? This is an opportunity for the Department to do the right thing, to begin the climb out of special measures and to implement the ban. It is what the House wants; it is what the country wants; and I suggest that the Government get on with it.

10.26 am

The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Mr James Paice): I am happy to serve under your chairmanship again, Mr Betts. Surprising as it may be, I am happy to welcome this debate, because it allows me to put on the record a lot more information than I was able to in response to the urgent question a few weeks ago. I congratulate the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Robert Fello) on securing the debate, but his introductory speech was full of innuendo and somewhat puerile humour and did not really address some of the key issues that I want to address. I am sorry that several Members have left the Chamber after asking me to discuss particular things in my wind-up speech. Nevertheless, I intend to address their comments, and I hope that they will read my words in *Hansard*.

The whole issue of animal welfare is extremely emotive and creates huge public concerns. As my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire (Simon Hart) has said, it can sometimes lead to mistakes or unforeseen consequences, but we cannot and should not ignore the fact that it is a matter of huge public concern. We also have to recognise that Governments, like everybody else, have to operate within the law, whether it is law that they themselves have passed or international law to which they are signatories. As I will explain in a moment, it is European law that is significant to this issue.

I have a little more time than is usual in such debates, so I will try to address fairly and squarely all the issues that have been raised. The timetable between primary and secondary legislation has been mentioned. Using secondary legislation to introduce a licensing regime—I will discuss that regime in more detail later—would enable us to consult informally with all the animal welfare and interested groups over the next few weeks and months. A formal public consultation would start at the end of the year, and the regulations would be in place well before the end of next year. It is not feasible to expect primary legislation to be fitted in and to go through the parliamentary process in anything like that time. We would, moreover, also have to allow a period of grace before that primary ban could be put in place, for the animals to be re-housed or for any further action to be taken.

The second issue that I want to raise is that about numbers. I do not think that there is much disagreement that the number of animals concerned is in the order of 39. I saw some figures yesterday that might indicate the number is considerably less than that, but it is in that region. We believe that only one circus is using the big cats—tigers—and that the others have zebras and camels. However, of course, a ban on wild animals full stop would include reptiles and everything else. I think that the hon. Member for Chippenham (Duncan Hames) referred to Denmark, where only certain species have been banned and there is no complete ban on wild animals. That raises the issue of licensing and regulation.

The debate is about whether the matter of animal welfare can be accommodated within a circus. I fully understand those people who believe that the interests of a big cat cannot be accommodated in those circumstances, but that might not apply to everything that comes under the heading of a wild animal. We take the definition of a wild animal to be the one used in the Radford report:

“a member of a species that is not commonly domesticated in the British Islands; that is to say, a species whose collective behaviour, life cycle or physiology remains unaltered from the wild type despite their breeding and living conditions being under control for multiple generations.”

It is worth emphasising that we cannot be absolutely sure, but we believe that all the animals concerned come from several generations of domestic captive breeding. However, they are still wild animals.

A number of hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South, have referred to the previous Government's work on this matter, the Radford committee and so on. As he and other hon. Members will know, Ministers of this Government are not allowed to see the papers of a previous Administration, but the impact assessment was, of course, published and is a public document. It was based on an initial view of the legal powers available to impose a ban. However—this is the key point and why I am afraid the hon. Member for Copeland (Mr Reed) is somewhat adrift in his criticism—the impact assessment does not give any legal advice at all because that was provided separately. I will return to that issue of openness. As he rightly says, the impact assessment makes the assertion that, under section 12 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006, it would be possible to introduce the legislation to impose a ban, but it does not then provide advice on whether that ban would be upheld if it were challenged in the courts. I will return to that point. The impact assessment should not be seen as being the same as the legal advice, which I obviously have not been able to see.

We should remember that the Radford report summarised the issues as follows. It stated that the scientific evidence that welfare was being compromised was not compelling and, as I said, that although section 12 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 permits legislation to “promote animal welfare”, it does not enable legislation to be made on the basis of ethical or moral judgments about the acceptability of using wild animals in circuses. The welfare argument is given by many people, but—this is the critical bit—the report stated that a ban imposed on welfare grounds would be disproportionate in the absence of evidence that welfare was compromised and that an outright ban might be beyond the powers in section 12 anyway, even if the welfare case was made. Radford concludes:

“it is submitted that to introduce a ban on the use of any type of non-domesticated animal presently in use by circuses in the United Kingdom...by way of a Regulation made under the authority of section 12 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 would be vulnerable to legal challenge”.

That is printed in the advice given to the previous Government.

It is worth making the point that, during the debate on the Animal Welfare Act 2006, for which I served on the Bill Committee, attempts were made by hon. Members—I have not checked who they were—to introduce a ban through that primary legislation. Labour Ministers at the time—the right hon. Member for Exeter (Mr Bradshaw) was the Minister responsible then—clearly opposed that. In the House of Lords, Lord Rooker spoke for the Government and clearly stated that any measures would have to be based on science. Labour Ministers endorsed the approach that Radford subsequently supported in his report, which was commissioned after the 2006 Act.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South raised the issue of human rights. I will not resile from the point that it is perfectly correct that the impact assessment stated that no human rights issues were raised by the proposal for a ban. For the reasons that I have given, no Minister in the present Government can see the legal advice that led to that statement in the impact assessment. All that I can tell hon. Members is that that is not the legal advice that we have now received.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South referred to advice that he had received. He did not attribute it, but I guess that it was from Animal Defenders International. We also received that advice yesterday and our lawyers are considering it. Obviously, our lawyers need to take time to consider that advice, but it seems on first examination that it concludes that, in principle, England—I stress that it is just England and that this is an English measure—could ban wild animals in circuses if it were a proportionate measure. However, the advice does not appear to provide any idea about whether it would be a proportionate measure. It does not refer to the Radford report, proportionality or, indeed, the ombudsman, to whom I now come.

I will take a few moments to consider the ombudsman, because it is important that hon. Members fully understand the sequence of events during the mid to late noughties, as they are called, in the European context. That issue was raised in the urgent question, and I am afraid that some of the assertions made were just incorrect. The ban in Austria came into force on 1 January 2005, following which a circus association submitted a complaint to the European Commission on 25 May, arguing that the ban was a breach of the principle of the free movement of services. The Commission wrote to the Austrian Government on 12 October, expressing concern that the ban might infringe the principle of the free movement of services and asking Austria to explain why a ban was a proportionate response to the problem. At that point, the Commission did not regard the question of how to protect wild animals in circuses as one to be left to individual member states, otherwise it would not have asked that question.

Austria replied that a ban was the only way to deal with the issue, and it is perfectly correct that the Commission subsequently decided not to pursue the matter. However, the complainant asked for an explanation and received

[Mr James Paice]

a letter from the Commission in October 2006, purportedly explaining why it had taken such a decision. That letter restated the general principle that restrictions on the provision of services need to be justified, but it concluded that, because animal welfare was so important, the question of how to protect wild animals in circuses should be left to member states.

The matter was then referred to the European ombudsman. In a letter of 19 February 2008, the ombudsman sought a more detailed explanation of the very limited reasoning in the letter, particularly in the light of Austria's failure to provide any detailed explanation of why more limited measures might not be sufficient. On 3 June 2009, the ombudsman made the following draft recommendation:

"The Commission should evaluate the proportionality of the Austrian law. In light of its analysis, if it considers that Austria has not demonstrated that it complies with all the conditions set out in the Gebhard test"—

the conditions that are now in the services directive—

"the Commission should a) pursue its infringement proceeding against Austria or b) provide valid reasons for dropping the case."

In September 2009, the Commission replied in vague terms and the ombudsman therefore made a final decision on 8 March 2010. It is really important that hon. Members read these reports, rather than just taking the selective extracts that we have heard this morning.

I will read out what the ombudsman said. He concluded:

"The statement used by the Commission in order to justify its political stance in the present case, that is, that 'animal welfare questions are better left to Member States' appears to be tantamount to acknowledging that, in all matters concerning animal welfare, the Commission is ready to abdicate from its role as guardian of the Treaties. Such a statement does not comply with the duty to provide correct, clear and understandable reasons to justify the exercise of the Commission's discretionary powers to close an inquiry on an infringement complaint. This was an instance of maladministration."

I therefore suggest that there is ample reason to believe that although that case had to close—the ombudsman could do nothing more than make that finding—in a further application the commission may well find itself in a very different position.

On our recent legal advice, I am pleased to see that the hon. Member for Chippenham has returned to his seat, as he challenged me on this issue. I am pleased that he has received the Secretary of State's letter, which stated that we will not publish the advice itself. I appreciate that the hon. Member for Chippenham has not long been a Member, but it is a convention, under all Governments going back over a long period, that legal advice is not published any more than any other advice from civil servants to Ministers. Indeed, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, passed by the previous Government, ensured that that remained exempt, so that is the principled reason. I am, however, happy to share an element of detail with the Chamber, with your forbearance, Mr Betts.

Our advice is that any ban on travelling circuses would be vulnerable to a legal challenge both from a circus in another member state on the basis that it contravened the services directive—it is worth emphasising that although I referred earlier to the number of circuses that have their own animals, we believe that circuses

buy-in or hire acts from other circuses for part of the season, so that could apply to overseas circuses—and from both European and UK-based circuses under the Human Rights Act 1998. Without strong evidence that a ban is needed for welfare reasons, it is likely that a challenge would be successful. Radford concluded that we do not have that evidence on the welfare reasons.

Article 16 of the services directive requires that we would have to meet three legal tests for a ban: non-discrimination, necessity and proportionality. A ban would meet the non-discrimination test, but we believe that it would fail the necessity and proportionality test because there are means of protecting animals other than with an outright ban. A ban based solely on ethical grounds would be difficult to justify under the services directive, for public policy reasons. A ban can only be used if there is

"a sufficiently serious threat to a fundamental interest of society".

That is not met when we are considering approximately 39 animals in three or four circuses. Under the Human Rights Act, circuses could mount a challenge under article 1 of protocol 1. Any limit on the use of a person's possessions must be proportionate to the aim of the action being taken. It is difficult, on the basis of the welfare evidence, to justify a ban as a proportionate response.

A number of hon. Members raised the issue of licensing. I do not intend to take all the time available to me, but I want to place a number of points on the record. As has been repeatedly said, there are only a few circuses involved in this situation, and a limited number of animals. We will, therefore, not need the kind of big inspection regime that we have for zoos. This is not an issue for local government—I have to emphasise that to the hon. Member for Dumfries and Galloway (Mr Brown), who raised that point earlier. We will use appropriately qualified Government-appointed veterinary inspectors who are independent, obviously, of industry interest groups. It is conceivable that there may be some local involvement in the inspection process, but they will be DEFRA inspectors. The clear basis of the whole scheme—obviously, we are yet to develop the detail—is that it will be self-funding and that there will be no cost to the taxpayer, contrary to assertions made by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South. Licence fees would be charged on a full cost recovery basis. We will, as I said, publish proposals, and having had informal conversations with relevant parties—

Fiona O'Donnell (East Lothian) (Lab): I apologise for my late arrival to the debate. As part of those discussions, has the Minister spoken to the devolved Governments in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales?

Mr Paice: The answer is no, because the issue does not affect the devolved authorities. As I said a few minutes ago in my speech, this is an England-only measure.

Naomi Long: The Minister indicated that there have been no discussions. I am aware that the previous Minister with responsibility for agriculture and rural development in the Northern Ireland Assembly contacted DEFRA about this issue, because I raised it with her.

Her officials had been advised that consideration of the issue was ongoing. It is being followed closely in Northern Ireland and in Scotland.

Mr Paice: I am happy to correct my statement if I am wrong. As I said, this is an England-only matter. *[Interruption.]* I have just been informed that, incorrectly, I said that there had been no contact. We have kept them informed of what we are doing, but in terms of discussions about structure and so on, the answer is no.

Mr Russell Brown: The Minister mentioned zoos earlier, and I seek a point of clarification. Do we keep solitary elephants, camels or big cats in small enclosures in zoos, or is that something that only happens in Scotland? Do we keep solitary animals in zoos?

Mr Paice: I have to confess that I cannot answer that question off the top of my head. The zoo licensing regime stands alone from the subject of circuses. As I think the hon. Gentleman appreciates, that is not my responsibility in the Department, so I am afraid that I am not familiar with the detail of the zoo licensing regime.

Mr Brown: I am pursuing this because, if it is not appropriate to keep solitary animals in small enclosures, surely that is the same with a circus.

Mr Paice: That is a perfectly reasonable presumption to make. I have to come back to the point about how animals are kept, which was raised by the hon. Member for Copeland, and the comments that he attributed to me from an urgent question. In the informal consultation that we are now embarking on, which will lead to draft regulations for formal consultation, we clearly need to take the advice of all interested parties—not just the circus community, but welfare bodies, a number of which have been mentioned today—on what would be appropriate arrangements to ensure the welfare of the animals in a circus, species by species. Obviously, that will vary. We will have to listen to that advice and, presumably, take it. Whatever that advice will lead to will go into the final regulations.

It is quite possible—I can say no more—that the proprietors of circuses, rather than facing the licensing regime, may say that they cannot provide those facilities and stop keeping the animals. I think that the hon. Member for Copeland was trying to ridicule that point, but it is perfectly valid. It could well be—we do not know, because we have not got to that stage in the consultation—that some, if not all, proprietors may say that the costs of licensing, facilities and the area of ground or size of the pen or enclosure are such that they cannot provide them at a reasonable cost and will stop

doing so. I cannot pre-judge the outcome, but that is quite possible. What matters—we must not forget this—and what is right at the core of the debate is the welfare of the animal. It is about how we can move, as quickly as possible, to ensure the best welfare for those animals.

I return to my references to the Radford report. Following Radford, the then Government asked two zoo inspectors—I stand to be corrected, but certainly two experienced people—to visit I am not sure how many circuses but at least one to see whether a licensing system could deal with welfare in circuses. They reported that it might well be possible, which is why such a system was considered.

I have no more knowledge of what was in the Minister's red box before the election than anyone else, but if the then Government were proposing a ban, it is for those Ministers to defend why they wished to override the Radford report and the two inspectors. All that I can say is that our advice is that a serious challenge under two pieces of legislation would be likely. I have tried to be open with the House today, and as helpful as I can be, given the constraints.

We can bring in a system of regulation and licensing that would not cost the taxpayer and would swiftly improve the welfare of wild animals in circuses, and that might well lead to a reduction in animal numbers. I find it difficult to believe the suggestion that such a system could lead to an increase in numbers, certainly of the types of animal that we are discussing—camels, zebras, big cats and so on. Someone used the phrase “no-brainer” earlier, and it is clearly a no-brainer that the conditions that we lay down will be pretty rigorous and robust, and therefore expensive to provide, so expecting them to lead to more animals in circuses I find very difficult to understand.

I have taken a little more time because, fortunately, it was available. I have tried to respond to the various points made by Members in all parts of the House. I fully understand that the subject is highly emotive and that the public are seriously concerned about the welfare of animals, as well as about the ethics and morals. As I have tried to explain, however, that alone cannot provide a basis for legislation because we and Governments of all persuasions must accept the legal conditions in which we operate, whether under legislation previously passed by the House or to which we have become signatories as part of international law. We therefore remain of the view that the quickest, best and most effective way of dramatically improving the welfare of animals in travelling circuses is by the system of regulation and licensing announced by the Secretary of State.

10.52 am

Sitting suspended.

UK and Georgia

11 am

Mr Denis MacShane (Rotherham) (Lab): It is a great pleasure to serve under you, Mr Betts.

I declare an interest as chair of the all-party parliamentary group on Georgia. I have just returned from Georgia's European week, which I attended with my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Ms Stuart) and the shadow Europe Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr David). Other friends in the Georgia group, from other parties, were in the country earlier this year.

It is also a pleasure and honour to have the Chairman of the Georgian Parliament, Mr David Bakradze, with us. He has already met Mr Speaker, and we will be meeting the Foreign Secretary this afternoon.

I have a series of questions to put to the Minister, and I hope that he will write to me if he cannot deal with them in his speech.

Ninety years ago, Georgia was a peaceful, social democratic nation, which had escaped the clutches of imperial Russia. Schools, trade unions, co-operatives and votes for women were all established on the Black sea, but that was intolerable to that son of Georgia Mr Stalin, who sent in the Russian army to crush the spirit of freedom and to re-colonise Georgia.

Fast forward eight decades, and Russia looked unhappily on the rose revolution in Georgia, just as it looked unhappily on the orange revolution in Ukraine and on efforts in the other Baltic nations once occupied as Russian colonies to establish their freedom fully. In 2008, matters came to a head with the invasion of Georgia by Russian land, sea and air forces. The tiny Georgian forces fought valiantly and actually shot down a number of Russian aircraft.

However, having occupied large swathes of Georgian territory, Russia did not seek a repeat of 1921. One reason was the courage of the then Leader of the Opposition, now the Prime Minister, who flew to Georgia in August 2008 with other European leaders to show personal solidarity. At the time, the Prime Minister told the "Today" programme:

"One of the most important things we continue to do is stand by Georgia, give Georgia support—support in terms of rebuilding the infrastructure that's been smashed and broken, support in saying 'You will be welcome as members of the EU and NATO.'"

I believe that the Prime Minister was speaking for the broad mass of the British people in 2008, when he referred on the BBC to the

"alternative of appeasing Russia and saying, 'All right then, Ukraine, Georgia, the Baltic states, these are your backyard, you can do what you like there and we'll just turn a blind eye'. I think that would make our world far less stable, far less secure. Russia has to understand that she has lost an empire, just as we lost an empire. You have to come to terms with that and it does take time."

I am not sure whether, during the remainder of this Parliament, I shall again quote at such length and with such agreement the words of the Prime Minister, but he was right then, and his comments remain right today. Will the Minister repeat the Prime Minister's words, and confirm that the Government's view is still that the presence of Russian troops and the de facto annexation of the territory of a sovereign UN member state—Georgia—is not acceptable?

The Prime Minister will be aware that two small countries, which were no doubt offered suitable inducements, have offered to recognise the occupied Georgian territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. One is Nicaragua, which is currently seeking to negotiate an EU association agreement. Will the Government make it clear to our good friend, Baroness Ashton, that the UK will veto any such association agreement while Nicaragua maintains its recognition of the illegally occupied sovereign territory of Georgia? Might it not be right, and the fate and future of both South Ossetia and Abkhazia require careful handling and a new approach. It cannot be right, and does not serve the interests of the people who live there or the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons, notably from Abkhazia, who are keen to return home, to maintain the fiction that these are independent states.

There will soon be elections in both Russia and Georgia. On past visits, the Georgian President, Mikhail Saakashvili, told me that he would not seek to stay in office or imitate Mr Putin, who seems to alternate between being President and Prime Minister of Russia in the time-honoured way of pre-1989 Russian rule. I hope that Mr Saakashvili maintains that principled decision, because one of the curses of the post-Soviet political space is the failure to understand the need to have what the French call *alternance*—a change of Government and a change of leader. The desire of leaders to stay in power for ever debilitates all democratic politics.

There is a genuine problem with the lack of coherent opposition in Georgia. Many are opposed to Mr Saakashvili, but even the most diehard of his opponents would find it hard to disagree that the opposition spends as much time in opposition to itself as to Mr Saakashvili. It seeks short cuts to power, such as staging street protests with windy claims that Mr Saakashvili will be ousted.

Last year, I was in Georgia when the opposition created a tent city around the Parliament, and stopped Georgian MPs attending to their parliamentary business. I listened to the speeches then, just as I saw with hon. Friends the demonstrations last week. I gently pointed out that it is a denial of democracy to try to prevent elected parliamentarians from attending their Assembly, Congress or Parliament. The demonstrations 10 days ago turned nasty when a handful of opposition militants covered the faces in *cagoules*—we might call them *balaclavas*—which are the symbol of the extreme right throughout Europe's political history, and used sticks to attack people and the police. The police certainly overreacted and tragically there were deaths, just as there was a death at the London G8 demonstration three years ago.

The Minister for Europe rightly called for an investigation, and there must be no effort to brush what happened under the carpet, but equally the message must be that deliberate provocation aimed at inducing an overreaction with a view to destabilising the country is the antithesis of democratic European politics. I should be grateful if the Minister will write to me with details of the serious allegations that the people who were arrested in Georgia, some of whom were carrying explosives, were apparently sent on the order of forces

outside the country to plant small bombs as part of a deliberate strategy to create tension and destabilisation in Georgia.

Mr Wayne David (Caerphilly) (Lab): My right hon. Friend referred to the demonstration in Tbilisi some 10 days ago, and to elements of the demonstration who were intent on causing trouble. Will he confirm what I saw there: individuals with sticks, weapons and balaclavas who were clearly intent on making trouble rather than having a peaceful demonstration?

Mr MacShane: My hon. Friend is right. He never misses a good demonstration if there is one to witness or take part in, and his witness statement is an important correction to the view that the violence came only from the state security services, even if in my judgment—I have spent too much of my life at too many demonstrations—there was an overreaction by the state authorities.

A strategy of deliberate tension will not help the people of Georgia, who need bread and roses, jobs and freedom, and the patient establishment of democratic norms and values. This morning, Mr Speaker did his opposite number, the Chairman of the Georgian Parliament, the honour of receiving him, and I hope that the Minister will tell the House today that the Minister for Europe plans to visit Georgia shortly. We must not forget the sacrifice of Georgian troops standing side by side with our own in Afghanistan. Five have paid the ultimate sacrifice, and I am glad that the Under-Secretary of State for Defence, the hon. Member for Aldershot, has recently paid a visit. As we approach the third anniversary of the Russian invasion and the Prime Minister's solidarity trip to Georgia, I hope that he will go there again soon. Will the Minister say something about the plans that the Foreign Office might have for a ministerial visit?

Georgia is a loyal friend at the United Nations, and when I met President Saakashvili 10 days ago, I urged him to recognise Kosovo because, for understandable if mistaken parallels, Tbilisi is on the same wavelength as Moscow, not its Euro-Atlantic friends. It would be an important diplomatic step for Georgia to line up with this country, and the bulk of the European Union and the world's democracies, by offering diplomatic recognition to Kosovo.

Mr Saakashvili has insisted that Georgia will never be the first to use force in the event of further military aggression or pressure from Russia. He has said that he is willing to meet President Putin and Prime Minister Medvedev in any place and at any time to negotiate a settlement. Will the Minister assure us that when the Prime Minister goes to Moscow in September, he will urge the Russian leadership to meet Mr Saakashvili and negotiate on a Government to Government basis, instead of continuing with the highly ad hominem abuse that Moscow directs towards the Georgian leader in a manner that demeans the honour and dignity of a great nation such as Russia?

Will the Minister speak to coalition Members of Parliament who serve on the Council of Europe? Many members of the Council were shocked to find that Conservative MPs sit in the same group as Kremlin-controlled Russian MPs, and thus failed to support moves to hold Russia to account for its invasion and

occupation of Georgia. As the Minister is a Liberal Democrat, perhaps he will have a word with one or two—at least one—of his Liberal Democrat colleagues at the Council of Europe who take a similar position and seem keen to get into bed with Russia.

Will the Minister confirm that the installation of S300 missiles in Abkhazia is in violation of the ceasefire agreement that was signed with President Sarkozy on behalf of the European Union in August 2008? Will he confirm that the EU, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and other international monitors, are denied full access to Russian occupied territories in Georgia, in violation of the Sarkozy-Medvedev agreement? I have seen the new internal line of occupation and European division deep in Georgian sovereign territory. How sad to look through sandbagged bunkers over barbed wire, at Russian soldiers under a Russian flag glaring down their gunsights at me. Surely that is not the Europe in which we wish to live two decades after Soviet communist tyranny came to an end.

Mr John Whittingdale (Maldon) (Con): In case the right hon. Gentleman's earlier remarks suggested that there are differences between the parties on this matter, let me say that a few months ago I went to Georgia with the Inter-Parliamentary Union. I, too, visited the internal border with South Ossetia and saw the Russian troops through binoculars. Admittedly, they were standing around looking rather bored, but I agree that it is wholly unacceptable that such a throwback to the old Soviet empire exists today, with Russian troops occupying part of an independent sovereign state.

Mr MacShane: The hon. Gentleman is right. I wish that more people could see that Russian occupation, and the sandbags, barbed-wire divisions, checkpoints and full-scale occupation that we thought had disappeared 20 years ago. It is a shocking sight in contemporary Europe.

Will the Minister convey to the Minister for Europe my request, and that of many hon. Members, that he goes to Georgia to see the situation for himself, and will he ask the Prime Minister to reaffirm UK support for Georgia? Why has the Foreign and Commonwealth Office cut the grant to the British Council in Georgia by nearly 50%? Surely we need more contact with Georgian civil society, not less. The Georgian economy is doing well and growing by more than 6% a year. As Professor Neil MacFarlane of Oxford University noted in a recent paper for the Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House, on whose council I have the honour to serve:

“Economic performance since the 2008 war has been better than expected.”

That, he argues, reflects

“the Government's improvement in economic governance since the rose revolution. The Saakashvili Government did a very impressive job of stabilising the political situation after the war.”

There are opportunities for UK business, especially in tourism, education and services, and I am seeking to establish contacts between the scrap metal industries in both our countries. It may be little known in London, but Britain and Georgia are experts in the business of scrap metal. Due to great demand, more steel was

[Mr MacShane]

produced last year than in most of the previous century, so there is some economic opportunity for the northern regions of the UK and Georgia.

Georgia is wisely opening its borders to investment and abolishing visa requirements for its neighbours, and it is time that Britain liberalised its visa regime. In the current issue of *The House* magazine, Members can read an article by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston about the visit she went on with me and our hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly to Europe week in Georgia. She states that the EU should offer a type of European Free Trade Association deal to Georgia. It is for the four remaining EFTA member states to decide who can join them, although EFTA countries have to accept most EU directives and regulations, which may not be appropriate for Georgia at this stage of its development. My hon. Friend is right, however, to underline the need for Georgia to develop good relations with the EU. As ever, it is strange to go to a small nation such as Georgia and hear positive words about the EU, and then come home to listen to the whine of Europhobic comments from the Conservative party and the Europhobic media. Luckily, the Minister is a Liberal Democrat, so we will hear no such nonsense from him.

Russia's policy is clear: Russia up, America down, and Europe out. I want to see a common EU policy in the Black sea region, and a common EU policy towards Georgia that aims to bring the country fully into the community of European nations. I hope that the Minister will instruct his officials to work towards that end.

11.15 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr Jeremy Browne): Thank you, Mr Betts, for the opportunity to conclude this short but important debate; it is a privilege to serve under your chairmanship.

I congratulate the right hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr MacShane) on introducing the topic with his customary panache and considerable wisdom; it is an important opportunity for hon. Members to consider our relationship with Georgia. We all benefit from the right hon. Gentleman's long-held interest and active approach towards Georgia, and I am pleased to join him in welcoming the Speaker of the Georgian Parliament to this short debate. I am also pleased that the Speaker of the Georgian Parliament has had the opportunity during his time in London to meet the Speaker of our Parliament, and that he will meet the Foreign Secretary this afternoon.

Georgia matters to Britain, and its stability, democracy and prosperity are important. The Government are keen to build on our excellent bilateral relationship and help Georgia to become a leading example of a country that has made a successful transition to democracy and an open market economy. Georgia is a key energy transit route and provides a corridor from central Asia to Europe, which importantly bypasses Russia. That makes Georgia an important partner and offers good prospects for United Kingdom trade and investment. The right hon. Gentleman also touched on existing economic opportunities, and the Government are alert to those opportunities and are working to develop them.

Since the rose revolution, President Saakashvili's Government have embarked on an ambitious reform programme that combines modernised law enforcement bodies, market liberalisation and the building of democratic institutions. Georgia has made a great deal of progress in a relatively short period of time.

Mr David: Does the Minister agree that one of the most impressive changes to have occurred in Georgia is the transformation of the police force? The Georgian Government have acted speedily in that area to bring about not only change but a transformation in a short space of time.

Mr Browne: I have not had the same opportunity as the hon. Gentleman to see those matters at first hand, but I am delighted that he feels that important progress has been made. Such progress is a key trait of a country that is increasingly embracing those values to which we in Britain attach importance.

Mr Whittingdale: On that point, I concur with the hon. Member for Caerphilly. As the Minister may know, I am chair of the British-Ukraine all-party group. One of the greatest problems afflicting all former Soviet states is corruption. I am hugely impressed by the progress that Georgia has made in stamping out corruption, which is the greatest barrier to the development of industry and trade with those countries.

Mr Browne: I am further reassured by that piece of expertise. It is important to have police forces which are not corrupt, which the public have confidence in and which strike the right balance in maintaining law and order without inappropriately extending the power of the state.

Although considerable progress has been made, I am sure our Georgian friends will readily agree that Georgia must keep up the pace of economic and political reform to realise her Euro-Atlantic aspirations. With parliamentary and presidential elections in 2012 and 2013, Georgia will be stronger for vigorous debate between the Government and the democratic opposition.

We are saddened by the loss of life and injuries caused on 26 May, when a demonstration in Tbilisi turned violent. The right hon. Member for Rotherham has given his analysis of that situation. The British Government are concerned about allegations of excessive force used against some protesters and journalists, and we urge the Georgian Government to ensure that there is a prompt and transparent investigation.

Equally, we are concerned by reports that some protesters were more interested in violent confrontation than peaceful protest. As the Minister for Europe has said, there is a place for legal protest and demonstrations in a democracy, but there can be no place for the organised violence that some, including the right hon. Member for Rotherham, believe was the characteristic feature of the protest on 26 May.

We strongly support Georgia's independence and territorial integrity and its continued progress towards European Union and NATO integration. I take the point made by the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr David). As we can also see in the Balkans, there are many countries around Europe that are not members of the European Union but aspire to be members, which is an

important lever for ensuring progress in those countries. We should bear that in mind during our internal debates in Britain. We are arguing Georgia's corner strongly in negotiations on closer integration with the European Union, and in NATO we are backing Georgia's efforts to meet the standards required for eventual membership.

We stand firmly with Georgia in its ongoing dispute with Russia over the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. When the Prime Minister, as the then Leader of the Opposition, visited Tbilisi in August 2008 in the immediate aftermath of the conflict with Russia, he highlighted the importance of holding Russia to account for its actions. More than two and a half years after the conflict, we continue to press the Russians to comply fully with the Sarkozy-Medvedev agreements that ended the fighting in 2008—in particular, by allowing access for the EU monitoring mission to Georgia's breakaway regions and withdrawing troops to pre-conflict positions.

Mr MacShane: May I reiterate the importance of making the position clear to Nicaragua? Vanuatu, wherever that is—it may still be above the sea somewhere—has also recognised South Ossetia. But in the case of Nicaragua, which is a serious country, it cannot expect to have full agreement with the EU while it is still playing these childish games of interference in the Black sea region.

Mr Browne: Perhaps I will gloss over the right hon. Gentleman's observations on Vanuatu. I accept that Nicaragua has a foreign policy that is occasionally erratic. I will ensure that his points are understood and that the people in the Foreign Office who consider Latin American policy do not do so while divorced from considerations about Georgia and, more widely, European issues.

The British Government work hard to keep the unresolved conflicts on the EU's agenda and continue to fund the secondment of UK personnel to the EU monitoring mission. That mission has played a crucial role in promoting stability and preventing renewed fighting in the region. However, Russian pressure on Georgia is persistent and persistently provocative. We remain concerned about the Russian military build-up in Georgia's breakaway regions. Georgia has shown admirable restraint, and we encourage it to continue to do so as a solution is sought.

Georgia's conflicts will not be resolved overnight. Resolution will require patience and engagement from all sides in the long term. We continue to encourage the Georgian leadership to engage the South Ossetians and, in particular, the Abkhaz. Direct dialogue with the breakaway regions is the only way to prevent their de facto absorption into Russia and to lay the foundations for a negotiated solution, however distant that prospect may appear at the moment.

The United Kingdom has worked alongside other international partners to encourage a policy that does not isolate the breakaway regions but gives them incentives to maintain links with Georgia. We will continue to support projects that provide people-to-people contacts that help to improve understanding between Georgians, Abkhaz and South Ossetians; support confidence building and conflict resolution; and improve the human rights and welfare of the affected populations. Again, we recognise that that will not be easy, but we will encourage Georgia to take a pragmatic and flexible approach to

engagement that will help to persuade the people of Abkhazia and South Ossetia that they stand to benefit from co-operation with Tbilisi.

The United Kingdom continues to support fully the Geneva talks, which remain an important tool for conflict resolution. They remain the only regular forum at which all parties to the conflict meet. The regularity of the meetings, combined with the local-level incident prevention and response mechanism meetings, helps to manage tensions among Georgia, Russia and the breakaway regions. Despite the slow rate of progress, we believe that it is very important to continue the talks, thus keeping open the prospect of building on areas of common interest—in particular, human rights and internally displaced persons.

The British Government believe that the European Union plays a crucial role in preserving stability in Georgia through the presence of the EU monitoring mission, an EU special representative and a comprehensive package of financial assistance. The UK continues to offer strong political support to the EUMM, currently providing 17 monitors and headquarters staff. The presence of the EUMM has been a crucial stabilising factor, helping to defuse any potentially serious situations along the administrative boundary lines. With the demise of the United Nations observer mission and the OSCE mission in Georgia, the EUMM is the only remaining international observer mission on the ground, although it does not have access to the breakaway regions. We continue to raise that with Russia.

The prospect of greater integration with the European Union, particularly on trade and visas, remains a key driver of Georgia's reform programme, as I have mentioned. Negotiations on an EU-Georgia association agreement started last year. We look forward to further progress on that and towards achieving a deep and comprehensive free trade agreement, while encouraging and assisting Georgia to meet the necessary technical requirements. Progress in those areas will help to improve trade and prosperity and bring about closer ties through culture and education.

On that note, I acknowledge the points made by the right hon. Member for Rotherham with regard to the British Council. I value the work of the British Council. It is very important that Britain's values, if I can put it in those terms—I am talking about our soft power—are extended through the work of many institutions, of which the British Council is one. Georgia's culture and traditions are part of the European heritage, and the younger generation in particular are attracted by what we might describe as broad European values. There is a particular interest in learning English, which is now officially the second language of Georgia. It is obviously in our interest that that interest is encouraged. I am pleased to note that the British Council is working to take advantage of that demand, building on its strong reputation locally. I hope that the British Council will be able to continue to exercise a strong presence in Georgia.

I reiterate the United Kingdom's strong support for Georgia. The Prime Minister underlined that when he met President Saakashvili at the Lisbon summit last November. Only this week, the Minister with responsibility for international security strategy, the Under-Secretary of State for Defence, the hon. Member for Aldershot (Mr Howarth), was in Tbilisi to discuss Georgia's NATO

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aspirations and to thank Georgia for its invaluable support for our joint efforts in Afghanistan. The right hon. Member for Rotherham rightly recognised that, and the Minister for Europe—the right hon. Gentleman also asked about this—plans to visit Tbilisi later this year.

All that adds up to a strong bilateral relationship, which we hope to develop even further as we continue to support Georgia's desire for deeper European Union integration, assist the Georgian reform process and work to enhance trade links. Again, I thank the right hon. Member for Rotherham for the opportunity to discuss these issues. I also thank other hon. Members who take an interest in Britain's relations with Georgia and matters in Georgia more generally, and I encourage them to continue to take an interest.

In conclusion, I again extend a warm welcome to our Georgian friends who are here in London. I know that the Foreign Secretary is very much looking forward to meeting the Speaker of the Georgian Parliament here in London this afternoon.

11.29 am

Sitting suspended.

Victim Support

[MR LEE SCOTT *in the Chair*]

2.30 pm

Andrew George (St Ives) (LD): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Scott. I am pleased to have secured this debate on the support for victims in the judicial system. Many Members are interested in the subject, and some might wish to take part in the debate. I made it clear to both the Minister and the shadow Minister that I wish to focus on the tragic case of Claire Oldfield-Hampson, which I raised more than 10 years ago in a parliamentary debate on 8 January 2001.

I have been working on the case with Joanne Bryce and her family, who come from my constituency in St Ives. We have pursued a number of issues that have arisen from the killing of Claire Oldfield-Hampson in 1996. Unfortunately, those issues have never resulted in any kind of closure for the family and many remain unresolved. I am pleased to say that my constituent was able to visit me in Parliament today and will be monitoring this debate.

I wish to bring this issue to a number of general conclusions that may be relevant to other cases in today's debate. I have given the Minister advance notice of the background to the case and the issues that arise that are relevant to his portfolio. A range of concerns fall under the broad umbrella of victim support. No doubt, Members will find that a number of those concerns differ from the ones that they want to raise, but some will be similar.

We are debating this issue on a day when the consultation on the Government's sentencing policy has come to a close. Although that is not directly relevant to the issues that I raise, there are some indirect references to the manner in which the cases are dealt with. In this instance, the case was mounted in mitigation. In other words, the convicted was prepared to accept a manslaughter charge rather than a murder charge.

I come to this issue in support of my constituents. I have no legal training or any experience of the court system, particularly the criminal justice system. Looking at the issues that have arisen from this case, I have to say that I was overwhelmingly shocked at what I considered to be an absolute travesty of justice. As I said in the debate more than 10 years ago, this is the case of an innocent victim who was treated by the judicial system as if she were the perpetrator of the crime and her husband the victim: the trial primarily dealt with the case in mitigation and did not address any of the points that would have challenged that.

The people whom we are talking about today are the victims of a series of events, which, if their case gets to court, could be described as life-changing, life-defining or, tragically in the case of Claire Oldfield-Hampson, life-ending. The justice system uses as a metaphor the image of the scales—the scales of justice—which have to be balanced. Yet the debate that takes place is often remote from the events themselves and can be conceptual and intellectual. Those engaged in the system never wish to appear to prejudge any case. None the less, the case that I wish to present today shows that victims are often treated in an imbalanced manner by the system itself.

Let me explain the background to the case. According to the courts, Claire Oldfield-Hampson was unlawfully killed by her husband with a hammer on 25 September 1996. He buried her body in a shallow grave in the garden in the early hours of the following day. Within two days, he was using her bank accounts and leading a life of deception involving their seven-year-old child, Felicity, who provided excuses for her mother's absence.

The deception was perpetrated for two years. Calls in person and by telephone were received by Hampson and further excuses were given. Regular contact was maintained between Felicity and her grandmother, Mary Oldfield, who became a constituent of mine, but who sadly died a few years ago. At that time, she lived only five miles away. Mary met the child on a fortnightly basis. She baked cakes to send to Claire, knitted for her and exchanged Christmas, birthday and wedding anniversary cards. They had been very close. Mary Oldfield gave a cheque for £3,000 to David Hampson to give to Claire to help them through some difficult times and she offered them a car. The family was supportive to the Hampsons in many ways.

The deception continued until the family—Joanne Bryce and her husband, Alex—became increasingly concerned and encouraged the commencement of police investigations in December 1998. Hampson confessed to killing his wife only when it became absolutely clear that there was no other possible explanation for her absence.

Hampson was tried at Northampton Crown court in October 1999. He pleaded guilty to manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility because he alleged that he was depressively ill as a result of his wife's constant nagging.

Judge Francis Allen concluded by accepting that Hampson's wife behaved in a way that was calculated to impact on his mind. The judge gave Hampson a six-year prison sentence that was then reduced to four years on appeal in July 2000. He was released in December 2000, only 14 months after the original trial.

During the two-year deception, Hampson plundered Claire's bank account, shares and insurances to the tune of £11,000 and fraudulently claimed benefits. The intention of seeking a conviction for fraud was dropped on the grounds that Hampson would ultimately be tried for a more serious capital offence. Four days before the original trial, the Crown Prosecution Service accepted a plea for manslaughter. No witnesses were called; there was no jury; and the trial took under an hour. If anyone wishes to read an example of what I consider to be injustice, they should read the transcript of that trial, which was purely a case in mitigation.

Claire Oldfield-Hampson was killed by her husband in 1996 and then she was exhumed by the state from the garden that she had been buried in, dragged along to the court and slaughtered again in public—verbally. It was a travesty, frankly. I urge people to look at this case. If it is an example of what our judicial system does, we should be ashamed of what we do in the name of the victims of capital offences, such as murder and manslaughter.

In fact, there were several travesties in the court, beginning with the opening words of the defence counsel. The defence counsel said that Hampson was

“a man of good character”.

Hampson killed his wife; buried her in the garden; took her money from her; deceived her family and the world; involved a child in that deception; attempted to defraud the benefit system; fraudulently accepted money from his mother-in-law; and he only accepted his guilt at the 11th hour. In addition, he had a less than impressive—in fact, it was rather dubious—employment record. Apart from all that, perhaps he was a man of good character, but the rest of it does not look very good, does it? Nevertheless, we were told that he was

“a man of good character”.

We were also told that Hampson was depressively ill and that there was a causal link between that illness and the killing. Two years after the killing, he was seen by two psychiatrists. Basically, the case for prosecuting him for manslaughter rather than murder was based on what I described at the time and still describe now as the flimsy science of retrospective psychiatry. Somehow, it is thought that a psychiatrist can determine the state of mind of someone two years previously—someone who, as the evidence shows, was known to be very successful at deceiving people—yet Hampson was able, in my view, to deceive everyone involved in the whole system into believing that he had taken those actions and killed his wife as a result of her constant nagging, which we were told had impacted on his mind. In fact, we were told that the nagging was calculated to impact on his mind. So we were told that Claire was constantly nagging Hampson, making him depressively ill. Once again, however, there was little corroborative evidence and no opportunity for proper cross-examination.

Perhaps what was most hurtful of all were the claims made in the case that Felicity, Claire's seven-year-old daughter, had

“received very little love or affection from her mother”.

The transcript of the case continues, saying that Felicity “turned very much more to her father, who was a warm, kind and loving parent to her.”

I sent the *Hansard* report of the 2001 debate in Parliament on this case to the then Director of Public Prosecutions, David Calvert-Smith, and subsequently I met him to take him through what I considered to be some of the inadequacies in the system. We went through some of the issues and indeed he wrote to me again in August 2001 to try to contradict some of the claims that I had made to him. The claim that Claire's daughter received very little love or affection from her mother might sound like a rather subjective assessment, but I felt that it was very significant and that I should say so. Joanne Bryce and her husband demanded a police investigation, which was undertaken by Bedfordshire police, as a result of the complaints that were made about the way that Claire's family were treated.

Then David Calvert-Smith wrote to me out of the blue in December 2002 with a letter of apology, which I thought was very noteworthy. In that letter, which is dated 24 December 2002, he said:

“Specifically, in my letter of 7 August 2001 third paragraph I asserted there was no evidence on the prosecution file to support the statement “that Claire loved her daughter very much”. At the time of the prosecution and indeed at the time I wrote to you that was correct. What has now become apparent from the Bedfordshire enquiry is that had other witnesses been seen and interviewed during the original investigation and other sources of information examined and revealed to the CPS, then that assertion (that there was no evidence that Claire loved her daughter) should not, and

[Andrew George]

would not, have been made. Although not directly privy to the Bedfordshire Police enquiry, the Chief Crown Prosecutor for Cambridgeshire and his staff have been assisting that Force's investigation in every possible way. I do not know and cannot anticipate what the eventual outcome of that enquiry will be"—etc, etc. He continued:

"My statement will understandably have caused distress to Mr and Mrs Bryce. I am sorry that you and they were given what has now been revealed to be wrong information."

The fact is that one of the fundamental arguments in mitigation was the charge that Claire was an uncaring and unloving mother and a nagging wife. Of course, just a small amount of additional investigation proved that charge to be untrue.

Quite apart from what, in my view, was the travesty of justice meted out to the memory of Claire Oldfield-Hampson by two courts of law, a number of other issues need to be addressed. Some of them have been addressed by the Government since the trial. The Crown Prosecution Service at Huntingdon had said that the charge would never be downgraded from murder to manslaughter, yet Claire's family were told only five days before the trial that the charge would be manslaughter rather than murder when the CPS phoned to let them know, giving them no opportunity to have a discussion or to challenge why.

My constituent, Joanne Bryce, points out:

"There was no trial only a hearing with no jury and no witnesses, and no-one to challenge the information that had been taken from Hampson."

Only Hampson's argument was heard. Joanne also pointed out:

"There was a complete character vilification of Claire – 9 out of 11 national newspapers ran with the headline "Nagging Wife killed by husband". It seemed that nagging was the capital crime and the killing just a minor incident. All this went unchallenged...Claire's personal diaries must have evidence of family relationship"

There was certainly a lot of material in Claire's diaries that was never made available at the time or shown to the court. There was also video evidence about Felicity's relationship with her mother and Joanne notes that

"there were 66 exhibits which had there been a trial would have been in the public domain."

I have already mentioned the flimsy science of retrospective psychiatry. The police failed to provide a Home Office information pack; they did not provide a family liaison officer and there was a failure to identify the senior investigating officer, so Claire's family were never told who that officer was. There was a failure to provide information about the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme in respect of the funeral expenses; there was a failure to obtain evidence of Claire's character; there was a failure to investigate fraud and theft; and the family were denied access to Felicity, who had been placed in the care of the murderer's family.

There are other issues that have arisen that I want the Minister to address, particularly the fundamental right of a murderer to remain the next of kin of their victim. As a result, the murderer still has the right to access the estate of the person they have murdered, in the case of a domestic killing such as this one, so my constituent, the sister of the woman who had been killed, had no right of access to the house, whereas the murderer's family

could go in and help themselves to what they wished. She had to plead with the murderer for access to the death certificate to proceed with the funeral. The murderer had full access to all the family heirlooms and to Claire Oldfield-Hampson's records from way before they first met, but all of that was denied to the blood relatives.

I think the Minister knows the question I wish to ask today. Is it not right that someone charged with a capital offence, but not yet convicted, should have such rights at least suspended, if not removed entirely? I cannot understand how this kind of situation can occur in this country, with a murderer having control over the estate and life memory of the person they have murdered. Should we not be addressing ourselves to these issues?

There was a swathe of other failings in the case, many of which were identified by the Bedfordshire police investigation. The report of the investigation was submitted in December 2002, but even now, nearly 10 years on, the family are seeking to gain access to the full version, which contains more than 100 redactions.

Before today's debate, I sent the Minister my notes, and I urge him to look carefully at the case and address the issues that I have outlined. I had hoped that the Claire Oldfield-Hampson case was a one-off, but since then other people have contacted me about similar ones. Recently, Angela Geddes of Carnoustie in Angus contacted me. She spoke out after her father Roger admitted killing his wife Ann at the couple's home there. She gave me a newspaper cutting, which states:

"The daughter of a woman killed in a horrific axe attack by her husband has hit out at a decision to allow her father to plead guilty to a reduced charge of culpable homicide. Speaking after her father Roger Geddes admitted killing wife Ann, the couple's daughter Angela Geddes said: 'The family are devastated at the lack of justice and the charade we have seen in court'."

That case is in the different legal context and judicial system of Scotland, but the killing took place only last year and the same argument applies. Angela Geddes says:

"I do believe he has managed to deceive the psychiatrists who do not know his true colours and only hope he shows them before he is released and becomes a danger to my family and the wider public."

Again, just last year psychiatric evidence was used to mount a case in mitigation.

It is a good thing that this Government and the previous Government have committed resources to Victim Support and other advocates for victims. There is also the code of practice for victims of crime, but even Victim Support has contacted me to complain that although the code covers most of the issues,

"Local Criminal Justice Boards have now been asked to stop reporting on it to the Ministry of Justice, meaning it's now essentially not being enforced. This bodes very badly for victims".

Steve Rotheram (Liverpool, Walton) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman paints a very vivid picture of the trials of his ongoing fight for justice for his constituents. I was interested to read the extract from *Hansard* that he sent us, of a speech he made in the House in 2001:

"First and foremost, our justice system should consider the victims and their families. After all, it is primarily on their behalf that our society seeks to uphold the law and administer justice. Victims are already grieving and aggrieved parties. The process should not leave them more aggrieved."—[*Official Report*, 8 January 2001; Vol. 360, c. 852.]

In my constituency, James McVey, a young man of just 18 years of age, lost his life to what is sometimes termed “a one-punch assault.” Does the hon. Gentleman agree that at times far too much emphasis is placed on the rights of the perpetrators of acts of violence and not on the rights of their victims?

Andrew George: Although I say it myself, I could not have put it better myself. The hon. Gentleman’s point is absolutely right. The conclusion that we draw from these kinds of cases is that the perpetrators appear to be treated with a great deal more respect than the victims. I do not think that we have the balance right; the scales of justice have tipped over too far in some cases.

I am aware that many other people wish to take part in the debate and I apologise for having spoken at such length, but I feel very passionately about this deeply concerning matter. I have these questions for the Minister. Does he agree that the issues raised by this case and by the difficulty that we have had in trying to secure justice, clarity and closure, would benefit from a departmental review? What progress has been made in the 10 years that have passed since I first raised the issues, and what progress still needs to be made? Although the introduction of victim statements has helped, they have been rather intermittent and not widely used, so what further proposals are there to ensure that victims and their families receive fair treatment? Does the Minister agree that it is appropriate to suspend the rights of people charged with murder and manslaughter, including their entitlement to be next of kin, hold the death certificate and handle the victim’s estate, and finally, does he agree that claims made in mitigation should be open to challenge in court by victims and their families?

My constituents have been unable to achieve what they seek: closure. In fact, the further they look into the case the further they appear to be from closure. We would certainly welcome an opportunity to meet the Justice Minister to ensure that lessons are learnt from this and the many other cases in which we believe justice has not been served.

2.58 pm

Tracey Crouch (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con): This is the first time that I have had the pleasure of serving under your chairmanship, Mr Scott, and I hope that I do not disappoint. I assure both you and Members who are hoping to speak that I intend to make only a very short contribution.

I congratulate the hon. Member for St Ives (Andrew George) on securing the debate, and I am afraid that with my contribution I shall further demonstrate that his constituents’ experience was not a one-off. This is a very timely debate because yesterday one of the men convicted of murdering Russell, the son of my constituents, Mr and Mrs Crookes, was released from prison after serving a 12-year sentence. The murder of Russell Crookes by Graham Wallis and Neil Sayers was brutal and sent shock waves through the local community, but it is the experience of the victim’s family, who have lived the past 12 years at the mercy of the criminal justice system, on which I wish to focus this afternoon.

As I read the *Hansard* of the debate secured by the hon. Member for St Ives a decade ago, I was struck by his words:

“I simply want to make the case for greater consideration in the courts of victims and their families, especially in cases involving capital offences in which victims cannot be present in person to defend themselves against accusations that may be made against them.”—[*Official Report*, 8 January 2001; Vol. 360, c. 848.]

Russell was a victim who could not defend himself. In the blink of an eye, his family lost their son. They will grieve for ever, but they lost more than their son; they lost their faith in a system that has, in their view, consistently put the rights of the perpetrators before their own. That system promises on paper to protect and support victims, but sometimes fails to do so in practice. The charities that do an excellent job of supporting victims’ families emotionally are being undermined by mistakes that could be avoided easily if the system were improved.

I do not have time to discuss in detail all the errors experienced by the Crookes family, but Mr Crookes has been left in no doubt that the victims of crime and, in his case, murder are treated with little or no thought whatever. It is clear from my constituents’ experience that communication and co-operation between the various units working within the criminal justice system are poor and need complete overhaul. In his case, the left hand and right hand did not always know what the other was doing. Unfortunately, as a consequence, the Crookes family lost the opportunity to provide a victim personal statement to the parole board reviewing Mr Wallis’s conditions, an incident that a previous Justice Minister called “unacceptable”.

As the family of the victim, they have experienced additional trauma due to communication failures and have often been left feeling that the system is loaded in favour of the perpetrator of the crime, with little or no understanding for the victim. A recent example occurred when the Crookes family requested that a particular London borough be included in the exclusion zone when Mr Wallis was released, as a member of the Crookes family regularly works in and visits the borough. Their request was not granted, as the perpetrator has family of his own in the borough, which would apparently assist greatly with his rehabilitation into the community. The decision has left the Crookes family feeling as though asking for their views was merely a tick-box exercise. Although they recognise that their natural desire for the men who killed their son to stay in prison for ever is an impossible one, they feel that it is unjust that their rights should appear secondary, and that is what makes them angry.

Finally, I turn to the financial impact on victims’ families. The issue has been in the news recently, and I know that the Government and the victims’ commissioner are considering it, which is welcome. Understandably, the families of those who are murdered can be left severely traumatised during difficult periods such as parole boards or release dates and may need psychiatric assistance. It is an expensive service that they would not need if it were not for the actions of others. Yet again, it is the victim who is punished. I hope that when the Government and the commissioner consider victims’ financial losses, they consider counselling costs.

The Crookes family have suffered from a system that they think has not served them well. Over the years, they have made useful suggestions through my predecessor and me for reform to increase equality for victims. They include proper consultation and listening exercises with

[Tracey Crouch]

victims rather than tick-box exercises; better training for those involved in offender management and victim liaison so that victims know, for example, that they are entitled to submit statements in advance of parole boards; and a system that makes it apparent to the panel in cases when no victim personal statement is made that it is because the victim has decided not to submit one, rather than because a mistake has been made in the process.

We must gain some sense of justice for victims. Mr Crookes said to me in an e-mail yesterday that

“we miss Russ greatly but as victims his and our human rights are being violated all the time to suit the criminal”.

If that is how a family feel at the end of the process, the system has failed, and the Government need to recognise and reform that failure before they let down the family of another murder victim.

3.3 pm

Gregg McClymont (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (Lab): I apologise for the hoarseness of my voice, Mr Scott. Hopefully, with the help of a glass of water, I will be able to proceed.

This debate is on support for victims of crime. I want to raise the issue of a group of British victims who have received no material support from their Government—British victims of terrorist attacks overseas. Those victims deserve support from their Government not only on the practical level—travel insurers are usually unwilling to cover the costs associated with death or injury resulting from a terrorist attack—but, more fundamentally, because British citizens remain British citizens wherever they may be, and particularly because of the context of Britain’s central role in the fight against global terrorism.

For those reasons, British victims of overseas terrorism deserve the state’s support, yet British victims of attacks in Bali, Sharm el Sheikh, Turkey and Mumbai have received no material support from their Government. They have been left to struggle with the costs of repatriation of dead or injured loved ones and the costs imposed by serious injury and disability. That is wrong. Our Government’s obligations to citizens do not cease outside our borders, and it is fair to say that Britain’s central role in the global fight against terrorism creates added risk for British citizens. The Mumbai attacks are one example. As I am sure that hon. Members are aware, the Mumbai terrorists specifically sought out those with US and British passports. British citizens must not be intimidated out of travelling the world freely by the threat of terrorist attack. We, as a state, and our Government should do everything in our power to minimise the risks associated with terrorism overseas.

The absence of Government support has been deeply frustrating for victims and their families. In the aftermath of attacks in Turkey and Egypt in 2005, survivors and bereaved relatives were initially told to look to the perpetrators of the attack for damages, or to the Government of the country where the attack occurred. Neither of those options is credible. One can imagine the difficulties in trying to receive compensation from the terrorists themselves, and although we have reciprocal agreements with some foreign countries, particularly within the EU, we have no such agreements, or no

effective agreements, with many other countries. Egypt, Indonesia, Turkey and India are but a few of those countries, and threats in those countries to British and western tourists are growing.

Since 2005, groups of families have run sustained campaigns to change the situation. The families have worked with Members past and present from all parties to bring the issue to the Government’s attention. Those Members include Ian McCartney, the hon. Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich and West Norwood (Tessa Jowell), who as Minister with responsibility for the issue set up the previous Government’s humanitarian assistance unit.

After many false starts, the previous Government instituted a victims of overseas terrorism compensation scheme in January 2010. Sections 47 to 54 of the Crime and Security Act 2010 made full provision for the Secretary of State for Justice to introduce the scheme. Compensation would have been payable to all victims of overseas terror attacks occurring from 18 January 2010 onwards. In addition, the previous Government promised one-off, ex gratia payments specifically to survivors of the Bali bombings. Many terror survivors received letters informing them about their compensation signed by the former Justice Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr Straw), and the former Cabinet Office Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich and West Norwood. We know that the practical and legal obstacles to a terror compensation scheme can be overcome. It is possible to give British victims of overseas terrorism the support that they deserve.

Of course, with a change of Government, the landscape often changes. After an election, families are forced to go back to square one with a new Government—one cannot complain about that, because that is what happens in a democracy. However, families have had to ask for an explanation of the new Government’s position on the statutory scheme and the ex gratia payments to survivors. They were told to wait first until after the comprehensive spending review and then until after the current review of the criminal injuries compensation scheme. As hon. Members will understand, that was a real blow to survivors and families when they felt that their battle had been won.

MPs of all parties have been pushing the Government on this issue. In a recent Adjournment debate initiated by the hon. Member for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy), the Minister signalled that the review of the CICS would be completed by the summer recess, and that is welcome news. However, that leaves many unanswered questions, which survivors would like the Minister to address, so let me put them to him. First, what aspects of the overseas terror compensation scheme will be covered by the review? Secondly, will the Government make a decision on the implementation of those clauses of the Crime and Security Act 2010 that relate to this issue? Thirdly, will they make a decision on ex gratia payments to existing terror victims in the course of their review? Fourthly, if they are unwilling to fund compensation, what work are they doing to persuade insurers to extend their coverage to include acts of terror? Finally, what contact have they had with British victims of recent terror attacks in Morocco, Israel and

Russia, who would have been eligible for compensation had the previous Government's legislation been acted on?

I hope that the Minister can throw some light on those and other issues. I know for a fact that the families of British victims of overseas terrorism will be delighted if the Government can push forward on this issue.

3.12 pm

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Scott. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for St Ives (Andrew George) on securing the debate. He set out the tragic case of his constituent, Claire Oldfield-Hampson, which he has clearly pursued relentlessly over the past 10 years.

I thank my hon. Friend for drawing my attention, and possibly that of other Members, to a number of issues. For example, when the defendant attacks the victim's character or reputation, the victim or their family should have the opportunity to defend it. Defendants should also be made fully aware of the fact that if they accede to a guilty plea, any claims they make against their victims will be open to full and proper scrutiny. My hon. Friend also made a number of points about who can control the estate. All of them are strong points, and I am sure that the Minister will give them detailed consideration when he responds. Incidentally, it is one of the strengths of this Chamber that Members have time to raise such issues in detail, given that the time to do so is often not available to us on the Floor of the House.

I welcome the steps that the Government have taken so far to support victims, such as their proposals to ensure that the victims fund is supported through deductions made from prisoners' earnings while they are working in prison. At the beginning of this year, the Secretary of State also announced funding that organisations such as Victim Support could bid for, and that is very welcome.

I want to raise a couple of cases that are relevant in general terms. They involve victims of crime abroad, although not victims of terrorism, which was the issue raised by the hon. Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East (Gregg McClymont). I understand that this is the responsibility not of the Minister, but of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, but I hope that he will be able to respond, because the issues are pertinent to victims. There are also issues about whether UK victims of crime abroad could access victim support services here, so these things have a UK bearing.

I shall refer to two cases, which I have raised previously in this Chamber, most recently on 3 November 2010, when the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton Deane (Mr Browne), responded. The first involves Robbie Hughes, who is a British citizen. He was on holiday in Malia, in Crete, when he was allegedly attacked by a group of British tourists, and left severely brain-damaged as a result. The second involves Neil Juwaheer, the son of a constituent, who died in suspicious circumstances in a Brazilian police station. According to the autopsy carried out by the family, he had been bound with cable and had suffered serious injuries, including head injuries. The police allege that he had drugs on him, but the

evidence they say they had went missing and suspiciously turned up a number of months, if not years, later. The family have been trying to have DNA tests made on the package of alleged evidence, about which they are very suspicious, to see whether it was ever inside Neil Juwaheer, as the police allege, or whether the police in fact produced it subsequently because they thought they needed evidence to substantiate their allegations about what happened, which seemed to be in direct contrast to the family's autopsy.

I know that at least one other Member is seeking to get into the debate, so I will make just two points. First, the Minister may not be aware that work is going on at European level on victim support systems. The European Justice Commissioner, Viviane Reding, is looking at new laws to require victim support systems in every EU country. This is the sort of thing the hon. Member for Shipley (Philip Davies) might be inclined to intervene on, so before he does, let me just say—he might be surprised to hear this—that I do not support the initiative. I do not think the EU should set EU-wide laws on the victim support systems that should be required in every country. However, the EU may have a role in trying to ensure that other European partners learn from best practice here. As I understand it, victim support in the UK is indeed very good, compared with virtually anything else that is happening in Europe.

The Minister may want to take the issue up with the FCO to see what discussions have taken place on the initiative. It has been pushed by Maggie Hughes, the mother of Robbie, my constituent, and it has received a lot of interest around Europe, including in Germany, where it is likely to feature shortly in a television programme. As a result of Maggie's work, the victims commissioner in this country has looked at the support that could be provided to UK victims of crime abroad, and the FCO website has certainly been improved as a result. I hope the Minister will want to pursue that matter with colleagues.

On the second case, undertakings were made in a previous debate in response to a number of queries that I raised. I asked about the information that can be provided to UK victims of crime abroad, the support that can be given to them and members of their family and the help that can be given to ensure that crimes are properly reported. One of the biggest problems for victims of crime abroad is getting the crime recorded in the first place. If the police abroad are not willing to register the crime, the FCO might need to ensure that it is properly registered. I also mentioned the need to tackle police corruption, as and when it is encountered, and the need for additional support for victims of crime who are seriously injured.

The Government are improving services for those who are killed, which I welcome, but they are not improving them for those who are seriously injured. In the Neil Juwaheer case, the Government could argue that he was, perhaps, a criminal and therefore not entitled to support; but, first, that has never been proven in the eyes of the family and they are pursuing the matter, and, secondly, even if it were true, the family need support, because there is no suggestion that they are involved in any criminal activity and they are UK citizens.

Those are the two points that I leave with the Minister. My hon. Friend the Member for St Ives made some very strong points about support for victims of crime in

[Tom Brake]

the UK. Equally, we heard about victims of terrorism abroad, but the Government could be more proactive in supporting the large group of UK citizens who experience other crimes abroad.

Mr Lee Scott (in the Chair): It is my intention to call the shadow Minister and the Minister to speak at approximately 3.40 pm.

3.20 pm

Mike Weatherley (Hove) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Scott. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for St Ives (Andrew George) for securing this much-needed debate on the support available for victims of crime.

I want to raise two separate points. The first relates to victims of car theft. BBC “South Today” recently contacted me about a constituent of mine who had had his car stolen. When the police informed him that the vehicle had been recovered, he was obviously pleased, and he agreed to the police request to fingerprint the car in an attempt to find the perpetrator. When he had managed to recover his vehicle from the police, one can well imagine his surprise when he, as a victim of crime, was also presented with an £80 parking charge and a release fee of £150. That is not an isolated incident—it is Government policy and has been since 2005. Victims of crime are treated as if they had parked incorrectly or abandoned their vehicles, which have then been towed. In this case, Sussex police responded that it acts in accordance with the law. I am sure that hon. Members agree that such a policy merely adds insult to injury for the victims of crime and needs to be re-evaluated. I ask the Minister to review the guidelines urgently.

My second point is rather longer and relates to issues that have come to my attention in my capacity as chair of the newly formed all-party parliamentary group on retail and business crime. I will focus on victims of crime in a business context, with particular reference to the small business sector, which is disproportionately targeted and for which less support is available. The APPG inaugural meeting on 29 March was attended not only by an impressive number of hon. Members, but by business representatives who sit on the National Business Crime Forum, whose members collectively represent hundreds of thousands of businesses across the UK, and by the press, including representatives from *Crime Reduction Partnership News*, *Retail Newsagent* and *Retail Express*.

At the meeting, we heard that the trade magazine *Retail Newsagent* carries weekly stories about shopkeepers who have been victims of crime, ranging from systematic shoplifting to assault, robbery and murder. Many of us remember the high profile murders last year of convenience retailers for little more than the cash in their tills, cigarettes and candy. Indeed, *Retail Newsagent* reported:

“It is now true that running a corner shop is statistically more dangerous than joining the police force when it comes to losing one’s life in the course of the working day”.

The Sentencing Council needs to recognise the vulnerability of shop workers to assaults by establishing clear guidance, which does not exist now, to protect retail workers. Retailers rightly feel that their cases are relegated to the realms of victimless crime by the justice system.

We heard from *Crime Reduction Partnership News* that crime and disorder reduction partnerships incur nominal costs to operate—it can cost £350 a year to gain the necessary professional indemnity and public liability insurance coverage for a village or town. In some cases, towns and villages find it hard to raise that sum, and *Crime Reduction Partnership News* reported that if the Government underwrote CDRPs, as they do neighbourhood watch, it would be a huge help. The challenge would normally be developing appropriate insurance models, but such models already exist for neighbourhood watch. The precedent in underwriting neighbourhood watch schemes can realistically be applied as the model for underwriting CDRPs. It would have a huge impact on levels of crime for a relatively negligible cost, so the Government should look into doing so.

The increasing devolution of power to local authorities carries its own problems. Issues exist with a lack of standardisation from one police authority to another in reporting crime. That has an impact on businesses that work nationally or across several local authorities, and the lack of a joined-up approach manifests itself in a difficulty in meaningfully tackling organised crime. When the Localism Bill is enacted, we will all have to be vigilant to ensure that the unintended consequence in our communities is not that victims see bureaucracy getting in the way of a collaborative approach to bringing organised criminals to justice.

Who is most at risk? A recent Federation of Small Businesses report shows that community-based, convenience retailers are significantly more vulnerable than any other category to high-value robberies, with 41% of the total sector losses, and almost double the value is stolen from them as is stolen from supermarkets. That is unsurprising considering that independent businesses are likely to be open at unsociable hours with fewer staff and fewer sophisticated security measures than supermarkets. A discussion needs to be had with police representatives across the country to build a strategy specifically to address the disparity in vulnerability to crime of large and small businesses and how that disparity can be combated.

One huge concern is the under-reporting of crime. Businesses often fail to report crimes as they feel an inadequate amount is done to justify taking the time to respond. Retailers report that crime is often lost in crime reporting figures and there is little practical recourse to bring criminals to justice.

It is not all bad news though, because there is some support available to victims of crime provided by both the private and the public sectors. In the case of the former, there are instances of industry providing solutions in the spirit of the big society, such as Facewatch. That initiative is designed to help victims of low-level crime and create an online partnership between premises, such as bars and shops, and the police. Using Facewatch, a victim can not only get an instant crime reference number from the premises, but can also call CPP card protection, which will arrange for the cancellation and reissue all of their cards for free, even if they are visitors to the UK, with just one call.

I referred to the reluctance of businesses that have been victims of crime to report it, and that is not just anecdotal. Victim Support, which does tremendous work supporting victims of crime on behalf of the Ministry of Justice, concedes that it has trouble connecting with

victims, and the way in which crime is recorded often lets victims fall through the support net. For example, if a shopkeeper lives above their shop and a crime is committed in the premises below, it is recorded as a business crime, whether or not the retailer has been assaulted, but the premises is also their home, and in any other circumstance the victim's details would be passed to Victim Support to give the appropriate advice and assistance. That is but one concrete example that demonstrates that more needs to be done to bring police representatives, organisations such as Victim Support and business representatives together to discuss how police reporting can change for the better, so that existing resources can be adequately utilised.

Unfortunately, victims of crime have few statutory rights within the criminal justice system, and what rights they have are under threat. Victims of crime have the right to receive a basic level of service from each criminal justice agency under the code of practice for victims of crime. Everything victims are entitled to under the code is pretty basic—the sort of things that one would assume victims would receive automatically from the criminal justice system. Unfortunately, the code is under threat as part of a Ministry of Justice review of support for victims and witnesses. The Government have already removed the duty on local criminal justice boards to report on their compliance with the code, which means that no one is monitoring compliance with it or holding agencies to account where they fail to comply. There is a danger that the Government will downgrade the code or abolish it altogether, which would mean that victims of crime would have no statutory right to receive a decent level of service from the criminal justice system. Abolishing the code would be a serious retrograde step and would turn back the clock on victims' rights.

The issue is not only about how we deal with crime and its victims, but about the perception of crime, which is paramount. It has a huge detrimental effect on the confidence of people who enter or remain in the independent business sector. Following the murders of Gurmail Singh and Jashbhai Patel in Huddersfield last year, a survey of retailers' perceptions of crime by the National Federation of Retail Newsagents gathered some startling results: 51% of respondents stated that they expected crime to increase; a staggering 31% were unsure as to whether their business could even survive the next two to three years; and 57% thought that the police could do more to deter crime. However, the report demonstrated a high level of contact with neighbourhood policing units, which is a positive indication of the big society at work.

I draw attention to the work of Baroness Newlove, the Government's champion for active safer communities, and her report, "Our vision for safe and active communities". She says:

"The report calls for a change of culture on the part of communities, no longer seeing crime and ASB in their neighbourhoods as 'someone else's problem'; and on the side of services, going beyond simply asking communities what their problems are, to seeing them as equal partners in dealing with them."

My hope for the newly formed all-party group is that it becomes the bridge that fosters the necessary dialogue that business is so desperately calling for. I welcome every colleague present to come along to our next meeting to discuss the experiences in their own constituencies.

Tom Brake: There will be a statement later today about the national crime agency, which will have, among other things, a command that will look at economic crime. What expectations, if any, does the hon. Gentleman have of how that may be able assist the businesses that he is talking about?

Mike Weatherley: Businesses, as I have been explaining, have a real problem with crime, but the justice system does not seem to address that in the same way as it recognises individuals. I look forward to the statement and will review it with interest to see how it can assist.

I will close my remarks with three key questions to the Minister. First, what are the Government's plans to re-evaluate the manifestly unjust policy whereby police treat victims of vehicle theft as if they had been irresponsible in abandoning their cars by charging them parking and release fees? Secondly, what measures do the Government propose to put in place to mitigate the impact of reduced provision of services to victims of crime, with particular reference to Victim Support's recent appeal to the Department for transitional funding to oversee the period of restructuring to ensure that services are not drastically or adversely affected? Thirdly, will the Minister attend and perhaps address an upcoming meeting of the all-party group to discuss how the Government could support victims of crime in non-domestic cases, where support is even more lacking?

3.31 pm

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): I begin with an apology to you, Mr Scott, and to the Minister and the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Robert Ffello). I may not be able to stay until the very end of the debate, because I have to meet some constituents. I apologise for that discourtesy. I will keep my remarks brief, because some excellent points have been made. I commend the hon. Member for St Ives (Andrew George) for securing this debate, which deserves as much time as possible, so that the Minister can address the points that have been made.

I want to focus on a few areas that may not have been brought out by the debate so far. One of the main areas that we should surely focus on is how we prevent people from being victims in the first place—how we prevent future victims of crime. Different things are important to victims: prevention from being one in the first place, and if someone is a victim of crime, they want the person responsible to be detected, punished properly for the crime that they have committed and not go on to commit further offences. I am worried that, on most, if not all those issues, the Government are in danger of heading in the wrong direction.

On preventing people from being the victims of crime, one of the things that I am most concerned about is what happens when people are released from prison before the end of their sentence. I might not be present to hear the Minister's closing remarks, but I hope that he will be good enough to tell the Chamber how many people are victims of crimes committed by people let out early from prison before the end of the sentence that was actually handed down. We now know that people are, at the very most, released automatically halfway through their sentence and that some are even let out before that. It would be interesting for the public to know how many crimes are committed by people

[Philip Davies]

who have been released from prison at a time when most people would consider that they should still be in prison serving the full sentence handed down by the court.

It is perfectly reasonable that the police cannot prevent crimes when people who are unknown to them commit them for the first time. It seems, however, that our criminal justice system is creating so many unnecessary victims of crime by releasing people early from their prison sentence, only to see them go on to commit further offences. If we want to stop people being victims of crime, we should focus on that first.

What about the things that people want when they are the victims of the crime? Presumably, the first thing they want is for their crime to be detected by the police. Two of the best tools that the police have for detecting crimes are CCTV and the DNA database. An enormous number of crimes are solved by using CCTV footage, technology and the DNA database.

We have also heard recently that the Government are concerned about preventing victims from having to go through the trauma of giving evidence in court. That was supposedly the genesis of the idea to give people a 50% discount on their sentence if they pleaded guilty early. I say to the Minister that I do not believe that the reason for giving a 50% discount to people who plead guilty early had anything to do with trying to prevent victims from having to give evidence in court. It was simply a way of having fewer people sent to prison or fewer people in prison at any one time. That was the motivation. The view that it was a benefit to victims was a positive bit of spin to put on it.

If we want to prevent victims of crime from having to go through the trauma of giving evidence in court, one would have thought that the Government would be anxious to use the benefits of CCTV and DNA. CCTV gives an unbiased account of what happened for a court to see, devoid of anybody's spin, recollection bias or mistake. Often, when CCTV is viewed by defendants and their solicitors, it leads to a change of plea from not guilty to guilty. That certainly happens when defendants were drunk or on drugs at the time of committing a crime. It not only saves courts time and money, but prevents witnesses from having to go through the trauma and stress of giving evidence in court. The Government, however, appear to be trying to make it as difficult as possible for the police to use CCTV. They are trying to introduce extra regulation for the use of CCTV. If the victim is our top priority, surely the Government will rethink that and make it easier for the police to use CCTV evidence.

CCTV actually prevented Richard Whelan's girlfriend from having to testify against his murderer, Anthony Joseph, who brutally stabbed Richard on a bus while he was attempting to defend his girlfriend. The attack was caught on camera and Joseph was jailed.

DNA is also one of the main ways in which the police can find the perpetrator of a crime, yet the Government are hellbent on taking people off the DNA database, and that will presumably make it harder for crimes to be detected. In fact, there have been 150,000 cases in which a DNA sample has been taken from the crime scene but there has been no match on the DNA database. Obviously, if everybody was on a DNA database, all those crimes

would be solved at a stroke. Will the Minister explain why the Government are going out of their way to try to make it as difficult as possible for the police to use such technology to find the perpetrators of crime in the first place? I am sure that victims of crime do not understand it, and neither do I.

What I want to know most of all is why so many repeat offenders are not sent to prison, because that is the one thing that creates more and more victims of crime. Last year, 3,000 burglars and 4,500 violent offenders with 15 or more previous convictions were not sent to prison. If somebody goes before a court with more than 100 previous convictions behind them, they are still likely not to be sent to prison. Those are the things that really irritate the victims of crime.

My final point is about the role of the Crown Prosecution Service. I think that the hon. Member for St Ives touched on the issue—he certainly implied it—of the CPS undercharging people by charging them for a lesser offence that they did not commit, rather than prosecuting them for the more serious crime that they did commit. That is one thing that particularly infuriates victims.

The calibre of the CPS is also an issue, and I will end with a tale of what I think is the most depressing day that I have ever spent, sitting in Bingley magistrates court watching the day's proceedings. I saw CPS lawyers reading cases for the first time—they clearly had not read them beforehand—while the defence solicitor was briefed up to the nines. On one occasion, the CPS lawyer did not have the file in front of him and prosecuted the case from the file handed over to him by the defence solicitor. This is British justice in 2011. We should be ashamed of ourselves. If the victim of that crime had turned up, they would have been horrified to see what was going on. The Government really need to get a grip and put the victim—not the criminal, as happens now—at the heart of the justice system.

3.39 pm

Robert Ffello (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship for the first time in this Chamber, Mr Scott. I congratulate the hon. Member for St Ives (Andrew George) on securing today's debate on an extremely important issue that has troubled him for more than a decade. Even though it is some 15 years since Claire was murdered, I should like to take the opportunity to express my condolences to her family for the ongoing pain that I am sure still results from her death.

The hon. Gentleman made a number of very good points. Certainly, his concern is not lost that, in circumstances such as those that he described, rather than the scales of justice being blind, they are weighted against the deceased. Indeed, how can it be correct that a murderer remains in all circumstances the next of kin? I find it incredible and horrifying that, where a prima facie case exists, those rights are still in existence and are not suspended. The point made that the criminal justice boards no longer need to file certain reports is also very worrying.

The relevance of today's debate is heightened even more in the light of the Government's review into the criminal injuries compensation scheme and the role of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority. In the time available, I should like to bring to the discussion

the issue of financial support for the victims of crime and the wide-ranging financial consequences that a crime can have on victims and victims' families.

The impact of crime affects each person differently and can have various wide-ranging emotional, physical and financial implications. As we have heard, organisations such as Victim Support play a fantastic role in providing victims and witnesses of crime with both practical support and varying forms of emotional support. The valuable support and advice that Victim Support and others provide victims with should not be understated. Victim Support contacts more than 1.5 million victims of crime each year, but it and other voluntary organisations cannot provide the financial support and compensation required to help victims recover from the financial impact that crime can have on them and their families. The effects of crime can take many forms and, as I said, crime impacts on each individual differently. Victims can become isolated and suffer from anxiety, depression and amnesia. They are scarred and can become scared or reluctant to leave the house.

Victims of crime can also find it difficult to take pleasure in activities and social events that they previously enjoyed. That can have a damaging effect on a person's family and social life and can therefore have a harmful effect on their relationships with family and friends. Many victims of crime develop anxiety or depression, which can lead to dependency on alcohol, tobacco or even precipitate drug use. Although crime rates have fallen significantly in recent years, one in five people are still likely to be a victim of a form of crime. Of course, for those people who are victims, the overall decrease in crime does not make their own experience as a victim any less traumatic. Given the wide-ranging emotional and physical impact that crime can have, it is imperative that financial support is provided to cover its direct financial impact—for example, as we have heard, the costs of counselling and other remedies such as emotional support therapy and health costs for any rehabilitation.

The commissioner for victims and witnesses, Louise Casey, recently revealed ahead of the publication of her policy review that families bereaved through murder, manslaughter or culpable road death face costs of an average of around £37,000. That includes costs for trials, legal fees, court proceedings, counselling and loss of earnings. Figures from a specific survey of 36 bereaved families show that legal costs range from between £280 and £150,000, with the majority of families meeting the costs themselves and only one family receiving legal aid. The survey found that the total estimated costs incurred for the 36 families were £1.3 million, which rises to a higher figure if loss of earnings is included. The annual figure of costs incurred is around £37,000 or, indeed, £113,000 if loss of earnings is included. Counselling costs for those surveyed averaged around £2,500, and 35 out of 36 of the families surveyed experienced loss of earnings.

The majority of victims of crime were unable to work, in some cases because of post-traumatic stress disorder. Some people lost their jobs; some had to leave work; and some got unpaid leave from their employer. Bereaved families also have the costs of child care to think about when a parent or guardian is murdered. One example of how a bereaved family can suffer a loss of earnings is provided by the situation of Barry Mizen, whose son Jimmy was tragically attacked and killed in a

horrific attack in London, with which all hon. Members will be familiar. Barry Mizen was a self-employed shop owner. He had to shut his shop in the wake of his son's murder and therefore had no money coming in for a substantial period.

Freedom of information requests made by the *Daily Mirror* show that the average amount of compensation received by the families of the 12 people shot by Derrick Bird, the gunman who murdered 12 people in Cumbria, was around £12,250. The figures highlighting the costs incurred by victims and victims' families put into context the financial compensation awarded and shows how it would be, to say the very least, regrettable—indeed, it would be a severe blow to victims—if the Secretary of State for Justice approves cutting the Government's payment awarded to victims and victims' families, as is feared will happen. That would be highly regrettable and, as we have heard, says much about the Government's attitude towards the victims of crime, particularly when they have still not implemented the compensation scheme proposed in the Crime and Security Act 2010, which had cross-party support.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East (Gregg McClymont) said, although British victims of terrorist attacks in the UK are eligible for compensation under the criminal injuries compensation scheme, that does not extend to the victims of overseas terror. Hon. Members will also be aware that travel insurers in the vast majority of cases do not pay out to victims of overseas terror attacks. The victims of overseas terrorist attacks are all still to be compensated by the Government—for example, Will Pike who was paralysed in the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack, the victims of the Bali bombings and the victims of the 2005 Sharm el Sheikh bombings.

It cannot be right that, when the rights of prisoners and criminals appear to be enhanced all the time and the Lord Chancellor constantly has to defend his position, British victims of terrorist atrocities overseas are still waiting for compensation promised to them by the Government. If a terrorist attack should happen somewhere in the world tomorrow—heaven forbid—UK citizens and their families would be ineligible to receive Government compensation. The Government must re-evaluate how they treat victims of crime both here and abroad. If they cut the financial support offered to the victims of crime and do not compensate the victims of terrorist attacks abroad, it will have a devastating effect on the well-being of both victims and victims' families, as well as sending the message that helping the victims of crime is not viewed as important by the Government.

I should like to take a moment to comment on a few of the speeches that have been made so far today. Hon. Members from all parties have made very good contributions. In the few moments remaining, I shall mention the speech of the hon. Member for Shipley (Philip Davies). I find it extremely worrying when I agree with much of what he says. I am not sure whether I find it more worrying than he does—I suspect he finds it more worrying than I do. The use of closed circuit television and the DNA database is extremely important. When we were in government, we were great advocates of those systems, and it is surprising that the Government do not seem to be continuing with that. On the 50% discounted sentence, perhaps sometimes through gritted

[Robert Ffello]

teeth the 33% discount is there, but the push to make it 50% seems very strange indeed. Victims will see an extremely worrying trend.

Overall, the Government must finally put the victims of crime at the heart of their justice policy. They cannot prevaricate any longer; they must take action to do so. The rights and well-being of victims and victims' families should always come before those of the criminal. Sadly, that is something we are not seeing and have not seen for a while.

3.48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Mr Crispin Blunt): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for St Ives (Andrew George) on securing this timely debate about the wider topic of support for the victims of crime and the narrow case he raised. He is a doughty champion of his constituents and for a decade he has worked on their behalf on the case he mentioned. We should respect the determination with which he represents his constituents.

I begin by making it absolutely clear that the Government are committed to placing victims and their families at the front and centre of the criminal justice system. I view my remit as the Minister responsible for victims and for the wider issue of offender management through the prism of victims. Let us consider the system changes we are trying to deliver around, for example, work in prisons. What are they for? They are to generate the resources for offenders to compensate their victims and to create more resources to assist the victims of crime. One proposal in the Green Paper is to make it a duty for sentencers to consider a compensation order as the first point of departure in their sentencing. Hon. Members will have to wait until we formally respond to the consultation and introduce the legislation, but I do not see anyone demurring from strengthening that duty. That is the direction of policy—to ensure that victims are our consideration.

The future victims of crime, as my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Philip Davies) made clear, are absolutely at the centre of concern. That is why we are advocating a rehabilitation revolution and a complete step change in how offenders are dealt with and managed by our system. If we fail to effectively rehabilitate them while they are in our system, they will go out and reoffend again, and we have to address the dreadful reoffending rates. I suspect that he and I are in the same place on that. The Government face the constraint, of course, of the legacy of the financial position we received from our predecessors.

We are committed to ensuring that criminal justice agencies work to help families through the process of the investigation and trial, and afterwards. We are committed to providing families with a voice in the criminal justice system. We are committed to providing them with the support and the help that they need to deal with the consequences of crime. It is deeply unfortunate that the case raised by my hon. Friend the Member for St Ives was mishandled. I understand the pain that such a traumatic experience can cause for bereaved families, but I accept that as much as I might understand the pain, it is beyond the power of any Government or

Minister to repair that trauma. All Governments, however, will want to do their reasonable best to continue to improve the service to victims.

Support to victims and their families has improved dramatically since the case described by my hon. Friend. He referred to the work of Joanne Bryce, which, over a prolonged period, has contributed significantly to that improvement. Many of the things that she identified in association with the case have led to direct improvements, which I will cover if I have time. Constantly improving the system will continue.

During the debate, my hon. Friends made some suggestions that I will want to look at. My hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) suggested that there should be a positive duty to explain the absence of a victim impact statement to the parole board hearing. I undertake to look at that extremely good suggestion.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mike Weatherley) drew attention to an anomaly concerning retailers who live above their premises, the recording of crime and the sort of support triggered by victim support in cases of assault. We will constantly look at such suggestions, with the objective of improving the system.

I want to be clear to the Chamber that the law is on the side of the victim and the victim's family. In the case of homicide, there are safeguards against the offender benefiting from the crime. Under the rules of forfeiture, any person found guilty of murder is automatically disqualified from inheriting property from their victim. In the case of manslaughter, they are disqualified unless a specific court order is granted in their favour. The bereaved family can make an application to the court to ensure that the killer is not responsible for the administration of the victim's estate, under section 116 of the Senior Courts Act 1981. I understand fully that people who have just suffered such a tragic loss are likely to find the process confusing or complicated. That is one reason why the improvements in support are so important, and why, since October 2009, the Ministry of Justice has supported an advice helpline to provide legal advice to relatives who have been bereaved by homicide, and advice on associated personal and social issues.

Andrew George: That is an encouraging reply. Will the Minister clarify whether those rights were in place at the time of the trial that I referred to today? If so, do victims now get a level of support and advice, through those procedures, to ensure that their rights can be enforced and that the perpetrators of homicide are not entitled to determine the outcome of the estate of victims, as happened in the case I raised today?

Mr Blunt: That is the case. The right to apply to the court is in the Senior Courts Act 1981, so the right was in place. As my hon. Friend pointed out, however, the family were in ignorance of it. In the spirit of constantly trying to improve the service we provide victims, there is now an advice line for bereaved people in such situations to draw their attention to their rights under the law.

Since the mid-1990s, there has been a great deal of work to improve the experience of victims and their families in the criminal justice system. Criminal justice agencies are more victim-focused and more readily able to take account of victims' wishes and needs at every stage of the justice process. The courage of victims in

coming forward to report crime and giving evidence is central to a strong, fair criminal justice system. Coming forward can sometimes be daunting for victims, especially those who are vulnerable or intimidated. It is therefore right that there are protections for victims in the system and that there are services to which they are entitled and safeguards against further victimisation. We are not complacent, however. There is more work to do and I am currently reviewing the support that victims are given at each stage of the process—investigation, prosecution, trial and beyond.

In 2006, the police and the Crown Prosecution Service worked together to introduce witness care units in every police force area in England and Wales. Witness care units are dedicated teams that keep victims and witnesses updated and informed about developments in a case from a suspect being arrested to an offender being sentenced. They provide victims with vital information on bail conditions, court dates and outcomes. In the same year, the code of practice for victims of crime was introduced. It sets out the services that criminal justice agencies must deliver for victims of crime. It specifies how victims should be kept updated, how often the police and other agencies should contact them, and ensures that the criminal justice system as a whole recognises the central role of victims in the delivery of justice.

I am conscious, Mr Scott, that I will not be able to do justice to the debate in the time that I have available. I hope that hon. Members will forgive me.

Other individual agencies have their own initiatives to help to ensure that victims are kept informed and engaged and, above all, kept safe. The police provide bereaved families with specialist support and a single point of contact through nominating a family liaison officer—a specially trained police officer who will explain the criminal justice process to the family, and act as their first point of reference for any questions. I should point out that in 2008-09, the last year for which we have figures, victim satisfaction with the police was 83%.

The CPS has introduced the victim focus scheme for bereaved relatives. Under the scheme, the prosecutor will write to the bereaved family through the family liaison officer, and offer to meet them to explain the role of the CPS, the court process, the charges faced by the defendant and the role of the victim personal statement. If I have time, I will say more about victim personal statements in a moment.

Under the victim focus scheme, prosecutors will meet bereaved families again if a defendant is convicted, in order to answer further questions. Meeting relatives when there has been an acquittal, which can be equally traumatic, is also being piloted.

The National Offender Management Service operates the victim contact scheme. Victims are eligible when an offender is sentenced to 12 months or more in custody for a violent or sexual crime. The scheme makes sure that victims of serious crime are kept informed if there are developments or changes in the offender's sentence, and that they have an opportunity to submit evidence to parole board hearings and request licence conditions.

Throughout the criminal justice process, there is support for victims that did not exist in the 1990s. Criminal justice agencies have embedded consideration for the welfare of victims in their ways of working and in their internal procedures. A good example of how that works across the full range of victim contact with the system is the victim personal statement, which was introduced in 2001. It is the determination of this Administration to ensure that the victim personal statement will count for more than it does now. Governments of either colour will want to continue to improve support to victims of crime.

I am conscious, Mr Scott, that I have not been able to respond as fully as I would like, but there is much more to come from this Administration regarding support for victims of crime, making sure that offenders are the ones who will be held accountable; the burden of dealing with victims of crime will fall more on them. Victims will be receiving appropriate support from the state as well.

Single Payment Scheme

4 pm

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): It is an honour to serve for the first time under your chairmanship, Mr Scott.

I will keep my remarks shorter than normal, because several of my hon. Friends wish to intervene and comment on the subject, which is important. It is a great pleasure to see the Minister, who is such a doughty champion for agriculture.

I am pleased that we have the opportunity today to debate this important subject, which is vital not only to farmers in my constituency and throughout the country but to ensure that food is on the table of every person at an affordable price. Food production has long been taken for granted in this country and elsewhere in the world, at least since the green revolution. Until recently, it has not been the subject of much political debate in Europe, but it is no coincidence that this year President Sarkozy has made food a top priority at the G20, which is particularly appropriate for a Frenchman.

Recent headlines from around the world highlight the importance of food production: “Devastating food shortage said to be looming in Kenya”—all these headlines are from the past week or two—“Tanzanians debate rising food prices”, “Drought affects rice production in two central China provinces” and “Regional bank warns Caribbean of impact of rising food prices”. At last, we are waking up to the importance of food security, and it is about time, too.

In our own country, according to the Office for National Statistics, the population is expected to reach 65 million by 2018 and 70 million by 2028. With 7 million more people to feed in the UK alone over the next 15 years, we must act now to ensure that we can meet our needs sustainably. We cannot consider our own needs alone. Another 2 billion will be added to the world’s population in the next 40 years, yet uncultivated land is perhaps as little as 10% to 12% of what is currently cultivated, leaving little room for manoeuvre. That presents a huge challenge, which will only be met by better yielding crops, irrigation, fertiliser and so on. It also brings opportunities for the UK.

The UK has a competitive advantage in food production. We have a temperate climate, excellent yields, efficient farmers, high standards and a strong food manufacturing industry.

Neil Carmichael (Stroud) (Con): I completely agree with my hon. Friend that we need to focus on food production, which it is appropriate to discuss in the light of reform of the common agricultural policy. We need to focus on our profitability and the production of food, as well as, correctly, on protecting the environment. We have to strike the right balance. Does he agree?

Jeremy Lefroy: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend, and I will come on to that in a moment.

The strong food manufacturing industry is the largest manufacturing sector in the country and a vital customer for our raw materials. My own county of Staffordshire, along with Gloucestershire, Devon and many other counties represented in the Chamber today, views agriculture and food production as a business of the future and not

of the past. Whereas other counties have sold off much of their farm estate, Staffordshire has largely retained its own, and continues to invest in it.

I have to declare a local interest, as about half of the county-owned farms—some 50—are in my constituency. They provide a start for the many young people who wish to farm but do not have the land or capital to do so. South Staffordshire college recognises the need for training young people on the land, and I welcome its application to establish a land-based academy at Rodbaston in my constituency, along the lines of the excellent JCB academy for technical subjects in nearby Rocester.

Last year, UK food and non-alcoholic drink exports topped £10 billion for the first time. If ever we needed a reminder of the importance of Ireland to our economy, it lies in the fact that Ireland is our No. 1 customer, followed by France, the Netherlands and Germany. Our recovery depends substantially on export growth, and agriculture is making a strong contribution. We also import £31 billion a year in food and non-alcoholic drinks, leaving plenty of room to increase market share at home. Food is also of increasing importance to the cost of living, in particular for those on low incomes. As with fuel, the more we produce ourselves, the less we depend on sources of supply over which we have no control on price, quantity and, I must say, quality.

Given the apparently rosy outlook for agriculture, why am I concerned about the single payment scheme or direct payments to farmers? Surely agriculture can survive on its own, without support. I have no doubt that it will do, eventually, but that day has not yet come.

Julian Sturdy (York Outer) (Con): If my hon. Friend can see a future without subsidy, can he outline how that would happen in a global context? It is one thing for the European Union to withdraw subsidy to agricultural food production, but that can only happen if the rest of the world follows suit. It would be unfair for European farmers to be disadvantaged by an American system that subsidises its farms.

Jeremy Lefroy: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point, and I entirely agree with him. I will come on to how I see the future and how we can eventually get to a stage at which no subsidy is required. However, that day has not yet come. As the National Farmers Union has stated:

“while we are looking forward to the day that farmers no longer need state support, this is unlikely to be within the next few years and it is vital that we maintain and develop the industry now.”

Mel Stride (Central Devon) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this important debate. On subsidies, does he agree that hill farmers in particular represent a special case, given their incomes relative to those of lowland farmers? If we are to encourage young people, to whom he has referred, to get involved in farming in such a context, it is important that we do more.

Jeremy Lefroy: I entirely agree. That is a particular concern in my hon. Friend’s constituency in Devon. I do not have hill farmers in my constituency—I do not have enough hills—but in nearby Staffordshire Moorlands we do. If I understand the statistics correctly, hill farmers have suffered the greatest decline in income in recent

years—the decline is greater than for any other form of farming. The problem with the single payment applies in particular to smaller farms in the livestock sector. It has been estimated that in 2009 59% of all farms would have been loss-making without their single payment; in the livestock sector the figure was even higher at 87%.

Last week, I had the privilege of attending the Staffordshire county show in my constituency. At the same show, some years ago, I met the Minister for the first time—he kindly came along and showed his support for Staffordshire farmers, as he does for farmers up and down the country, which all of us welcome. Talking to farmers at the show, many of whom have smallish holdings, it was quite clear that without the single payment they would eventually go out of business.

The single payment is essential for the short-term sustainability of agriculture. In the longer term, one might argue that farmers should look to diversify their income so as to reduce and eventually eliminate the need for support, and that that continuing support somehow makes them put off that evil day—or that day. However, no hon. Members who have farmers in their constituency agree with that. Farmers are constantly looking at ways of diversifying their income away from food production. They are taking matters into their own hands, and they do not want to rely on subsidy, in the same way that any other private business man or woman does not.

In any case, the single payment is not simply a subsidy. The payment recognises the vital public functions carried out by farmers: the management of the land in a way that provides an attractive and diverse landscape for those who live in the countryside as well as for visitors; and sustainable production, which meets the highest standards of food safety, traceability and animal welfare.

Roger Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire) (LD): My hon. Friend makes an important point, but does he not agree that the direct single payment is also a buffer against volatile commodity prices? While commodity prices except for milk are reasonably buoyant at the moment, there could come a time when they are in decline, which would be difficult for farmers to sustain.

Jeremy Lefroy: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. He speaks with vast experience from his own Brecon and Radnorshire constituency which is one of the largest, if not the largest, in England and Wales. I ask the Government to recognise the importance of maintaining direct payments to farmers at the heart of the common agricultural policy after 2013. I recognise the importance of environmental management, but it is vital that the primary need to produce high-quality, safe food is kept firmly in mind. Schemes must be flexible and practical to operate for smaller farmers, as well as large landowners.

Julian Sturdy: I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this important debate. He has touched on food security, and I agree entirely with him on that. He has said that farming is going through a rosy patch at the moment, and that is certainly so in arable farming, but not in livestock farming. Does he believe that, despite the need for subsidies, certainly in the short term, supermarkets will play a key role in driving up incomes for farmers and how they are dealt with in future?

Jeremy Lefroy: I agree that livestock farmers have been going through a difficult time for many years. Arable farmers, particularly on the eastern side of the country, are seeing better incomes, but that is not so for all farmers. I will address his comment in a moment.

We must ensure that markets work more efficiently, so that there is less need for support. Increasing demand from Britain and around the world will do much of the heavy lifting in the long term, as it raises prices.

Andrew Griffiths (Burton) (Con): As my hon. Friend's neighbour, I know that Staffordshire farmers appreciate his work to raise their profile and their issues. We have heard about the problems for arable farmers and livestock farmers, but we have not yet mentioned the terrible situation of dairy farmers, which has been an ongoing problem for many years, driven particularly by the supermarkets forcing down the price of milk as a loss leader to tempt people. Does my hon. Friend agree that we desperately need to do something to support our dairy farmers if we are to have a sustainable industry going forward?

Jeremy Lefroy: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. That is why the Bill that proposes a supermarket ombudsman is welcome, but we need that as soon as possible, because in some parts of the dairy industry, despite recent small improvements in prices, there is a crisis, with people going out of business every week.

Neil Carmichael: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is surprising that only Government Members are here today to support this debate?

Jeremy Lefroy: I thank my hon. Friend, but I will not comment on what he has said. This is an extremely important matter, and I am sure that many hon. Members who would have loved to be here are not in their seats because they are otherwise detained.

I shall conclude, because I know that at least one other hon. Member wants to speak, and I must rightly give him time. The discussions about the future of the CAP after 2013 are critical for Britain. If the outcome is right, British agriculture will thrive and deliver high-quality, fairly priced food to the British people and to the world. There will be increasing employment in rural areas, with increasing exports and a narrowing of the trade gap. We will also ensure our own food security and that of those to whom we are net exporters of cereals, as we are in many years. Essential to getting the CAP right, in my view and that of many others, is the maintenance of direct payment to farmers, which keeps so many of them in business through the ups and downs of farm-gate prices.

4.13 pm

Rory Stewart (Penrith and The Border) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy) on securing this debate and on all his work for farmers in Staffordshire and more generally throughout Britain. I shall speak briefly, and begin by saying that the issue is enormously important, as my hon. Friend has emphasised. Not only does it make all the difference to lifestyles, to communities and to preserving farms through price volatility, but it is a good long-term bet in terms of food security.

4.14 pm

Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.

4.28 pm

On resuming—

Rory Stewart: I have little to add to the brilliant exposition by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford of why single farm payments are so vital to everybody. We see that every day in Cumbria, where such payments are vital for the support of our hill farms; in some areas, about 93% of farms would go bust if they did not receive the single farm payment. The entire agricultural economy depends on those payments and, as my hon. Friend suggested, they stretch into every area including the governance of agricultural colleges. The fight in my constituency is to protect Newton Rigg, our agricultural college, from having its assets stripped in a takeover.

I do not need to emphasise the problems faced by all farmers. There is no need to talk today about the horrors of the Rural Payments Agency, but all strength to the arm of the Minister for the steps that he has taken to sort it out. The system is totally unacceptable and debilitating for so many of our farmers.

Mel Stride: On the RPA, farmers in my constituency constantly complain about bureaucracy and red tape. Does my hon. Friend welcome Richard Macdonald's recent review on cutting red tape and its 200 recommendations, and will he urge the Government—as I will—to take up those recommendations with some vigour?

Rory Stewart: Absolutely. The second area connected with red tape is, of course, the effects of these environmental schemes. Whether we are talking about cross-compliance or stewardship schemes, we exist in a world often of craziness, of indigestible tufts of grass emerging, of self-seeding oak plantations that never self-seed and of floodplains that never flood, because of a lack of local flexibility, so I again congratulate the Minister on pushing for more local flexibility. However, the short point that I wish to make is about our diplomatic initiative.

The really big game in the end is not the red tape; it is ensuring that we get 2013 right, that we team up with the right partners in Europe, that we are there with the Germans, that we understand the French position and that we are winning that diplomatic fight. That will not be done just by the NFU or by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; it will be done by the Foreign Office. We must invest in our embassies. We must invest in ensuring that the European countries are not ahead of us in that game—in ensuring that we get the best deal possible for British farmers through diplomatic enterprise in Europe.

Mr William Cash (Stone) (Con): I endorse what I have heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Rory Stewart). I also very much approve of the line that my right hon. Friend the Minister has been taking on agriculture. We must ensure that we get the kind of farming that is needed. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy) on his approach to the matter. To add one other note, I want to ask my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border whether he thinks that it is important that the badger population is kept properly under control, because that is vital in areas such as my own.

Rory Stewart: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. It is vital that we deal with tuberculosis. We have just had our first incident in Penrith and The Border—a shocking incident. Much of it seems to be about the movement of cows from areas that are already TB-infected. That infection then can get into the badger population. Any measures, including proper control of badgers, must be taken. TB in our cows is completely unacceptable.

4.32 pm

The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Mr James Paice): I am delighted to speak under your chairmanship for what I think is the first time, Mr Scott, and to have the opportunity to respond to the debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy). I am sorry that it has been only a brief and an interrupted debate, because the issues that he and other hon. Friends have raised are central to a huge part of Britain's rural economy. The debate comes at a time when, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford said, a range of issues are before us. There is no doubt that there is an emerging global challenge as to how we will feed the world in the future.

The Foresight report produced a few weeks ago by the Government's chief scientist, Sir John Beddington, considered all the challenges and how we can deal with them. It went through the statistics relating to population growth in the UK and the world that my hon. Friend referred to in his excellent speech. We are talking about something approaching a 50% increase in the world's population by 2050. The report identified hunger and environmental degradation as key problems that we face.

Last week, DEFRA published the national ecosystem assessment, which began for the first time a full analysis of the environmental challenges that we face and how that feeds through to our natural capital and ultimately to our ability to exploit that natural capital for the production of food.

For all the reasons that have been given, we should all be able to agree that a do-nothing approach is not an acceptable option. There will be far more people in the world. Many of them will be much more wealthy. In the emerging economies, people are demanding better and more extensive diets, often involving more animal protein. Competition for water, energy and land will increase as economies grow. All that is compounded by the impact of climate change. Water will be a particular issue, but some of the projections show that in addition a lot of current global arable land could be taken out of production. When we remember that one third of all the world's arable production land is within 1 metre of sea level, we realise just how little sea levels have to change before we face serious problems.

In the meantime, we already have the price volatility to which a number of hon. Members have referred. I am delighted to say that the French Government have seized on that as a key issue during their presidency of the G20, which, as hon. Members probably know, meets in a couple of weeks' time. We are wholly behind the French Government in their efforts to find ways of reducing the risks of international food price volatility.

There is no option but to change. Equally, there is no option but for every country to do its bit. For the last 13 years or at least for the first 11 or 12 of them, we had

a Government who basically said that British food production did not matter and we could import it all. It is fair to say that in the last year or so, they changed tack, but far too late—a lot of damage had already been done. Our self-sufficiency—the proportion of the food that we consumed that was produced domestically—had fallen by some 10%, which is horrendous. We have moved on from the days when we worried about self-sufficiency in terms of every egg, every apple and every piece of wheat, because trade is so much more important and our modern diet is so much more international. However, the position does mean—my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford referred to the trade deficit and so on—that there is huge potential for our food and farming industries, which after all are part of the same industry, to do a great deal more for our economy.

There are issues to do with research. I am thinking of the development of precision farming for better use of resources, the phrase “sustainable intensification” and the concept of producing more from less. All those things are relevant, but my hon. Friend focused, as I will now, on the single farm payment and CAP reform. There is no doubt that that gives us a great opportunity, but it has to be seen against the background that my hon. Friend and I have described. There are those who advocate a return to the coupled payments that existed until six or seven years ago. Although production needs to increase, I do not believe that turning the clock back and simply linking payments to the production is the best way to encourage efficiency, leaving aside the fact that that would be outside the World Trade Organisation agreements.

There might be slight dissent among my hon. Friends and me about the single farm payment. The Government believe that the CAP should provide a framework that enables farmers to raise their competitiveness and produce food, while rewarding them for their role as stewards of the environment. My hon. Friend referred to the single farm payment as doing some of that work in rewarding farmers to care for the environment. He also mentioned a number of other issues. If we look at it in those terms—of course, cross-compliance exists—it is an extremely blunt instrument. It does not focus on any form of outcome. That is why the Government take the view that reward for public goods, whether environmental or otherwise, is better achieved through what is currently pillar 2—the rural development programme for England—rather than being achieved much more bluntly and less effectively through the single farm payment.

The reform that we seek of the CAP must involve a twin-track approach. It must build the competitiveness of the industry—the ability of the industry to respond to the challenges that my hon. Friend and I have described in relation to both domestic production and increased exports—but also reduce its reliance on subsidies over time to ensure that it can better deliver the food and environmental goods that we need. The competitiveness issue is at the heart of our efforts on CAP reform. We want to be able to focus more of our resources on assisting competitiveness, which is why we believe that pillar 2—the rural development programme money—is the more effective way. As a result of the abolition of regional development agencies, we are bringing that money back in-house as of July this year, so that we can focus it more effectively on industry competitiveness.

I need to deal next with what I hope was not behind my hon. Friend's speech but which is clearly a myth in some circles. It is that the Government are somehow calling for the abolition of the single farm payment. We are not, and I cannot over-emphasise the fact. The Government recognise, as my hon. Friend said, that the single farm payment is critical for today's farmers. The figures that he gave were correct, and I would not dream of countering them. However, the background that my hon. Friend sketched out, and to which I have added, provides us with the opportunity to develop a trajectory for beginning to phase out the single farm payment.

The NFU is right to say that farmers cannot live without it today. However, although it is reasonable to say that over time—I do not mean over the next seven years, but over a longer trajectory—we should be looking at how to phase out that direct form of support against the background of world shortages that will inevitably lead to higher prices. That is how we want to achieve it.

I share entirely my hon. Friend's view that the industry needs to be more highly regarded and to have a higher reputation both here and abroad, not only because of its ability to produce our food but because it is an important part of our economy. Food manufacturing is the biggest sector of our manufacturing industry, and farmers also act as carers and managers of our natural environment, rather than assailants of it, as they were sometimes painted in the past. I emphasise that we are not calling for the scrapping of the single farm payment tomorrow, nor over the next seven years of this CAP period, but we do want genuine and far-sighted reform.

The Commission has published its early proposals. After much discussion and consultation, it will produce regulations later in the year, so we do not yet know what will happen. For the first time 26 member states are now involved, and for the first time the European Parliament is a co-decision maker, so the crystal ball is extremely murky on what will happen. However, I have absolutely no doubt that the single farm payment will be continued. Whether it is a straightforward payment, whether it will include the Commission's proposal for a green element, whether there will be further cost compliance, whether the payment could be construed as simply paying for something that is already being done or whether it will provide real added value for the taxpayer, I do not know.

I turn quickly to some of the other issues raised during the debate. They were all relevant. My hon. Friend the Member for Central Devon (Mel Stride)—I think that it was him—mentioned dairy farming. Only yesterday, we spent an hour and a half in this Chamber debating that subject, so I do not wish to repeat myself other than to emphasise that the Government are fully persuaded of the crisis affecting the dairy industry. There is obviously a limit to what we can do. We cannot force up the price of milk; but as has been said, we shall introduce a supermarket adjudicator as soon as we can.

Hill farming was mentioned by my hon. Friends the Members for Central Devon and for Penrith and The Border (Rory Stewart). The payment is most important in those areas. Indeed, it is important to our whole livestock industry. Again, however, we believe that the right way to support it is through the use of pillar 2 payments, as targeted support for the benefits that hill farms provide the nation. Those farms are important to

[Mr James Paice]

the social structure of rural communities in our uplands, but there are other factors. They store carbon and water in their peat and are marvellous centres of biodiversity, and the ecosystems assessment to which I referred provides us with the tools to recognise that fact.

Finally, on the question of TB, all that I can say is that the Government intend to make a full announcement on the matter before the House rises for the summer recess.

Machine-to-Machine Communication

4.44 pm

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): It is a pleasure and an honour to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Scott.

I believe I have the privilege of being the first Member to raise the matter of machine-to-machine communication in Parliament. Interestingly, the internet was first mentioned in the House in February 1990 by Emma Nicholson, a Conservative MP. At that time, only 3 million people worldwide had access to the internet, mainly academics and the military, three-quarters of them living in the United States. Twenty-one years later, there are an estimated 2 billion regular internet users, only 13% of whom live in the US and 44% of whom are Asian. Those figures will grow.

The internet has revolutionised our world. Machine-to-machine communication is the next stage in the internet revolution. Having connected people, we shall move on to connecting machines and things.

Rory Stewart (Penrith and The Border) (Con): The hon. Lady speaks of having connected people. May I remind her that 30% of people in this country do not have good access even to a 2 megabit connection? Currently, for only 90% of the time for 95% of people is there decent access to mobile communications. Without infrastructure investment in good fixed and mobile broadband, it will be very difficult to deliver the things that the hon. Lady so rightly mentions.

Chi Onwurah: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. He is absolutely right. He does well to remind us that although we shall be connecting machines, we have not yet connected everybody. Given the limits that have been set on mobile spectrum availability, he would not want to share it with trillions of devices, as I shall explain.

Machine-to-machine communications enable the internet of things. Ericsson estimates that by 2020, 50 billion things will be connected to the internet. Other analysts put the number of connected devices in the trillions. What will these devices be doing? Some will be doing what they already do; there will BlackBerrys and iPads, but we will also see, for example, lamp-posts with sensors that detect the level of light and save energy by turning themselves off. We will see smart fridges telling our chosen supermarket that more vegetables are needed. We will see water heaters monitoring the water temperature and deciding that it could be a little less hot for a few minutes because we are stuck in traffic and the national grid is overstretched. We may even see cholesterol monitors embedded in our bodies telling the doctor that it is time for another check-up.

As a self-confessed technophile, I see the internet of things helping to take the dull and the difficult out of our lives so that we can get on with what human beings do best—whatever that may be.

Mr Andrew Smith (Oxford East) (Lab): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way, and I commend her for raising this enormously important subject in Parliament for the first time. Does she agree that the development of machine-to-machine communication raises profound questions about security and privacy? Firm and effective

standards on both will be needed if industry and the wider public are to embrace this revolution, which will clearly be of advantage.

Chi Onwurah: I thank the right hon. Gentleman. He is right that machine-to-machine communication raises a number of important questions about the way we live our lives, which I shall talk about later. We should be aware across Government of what the issues are, so that we give ourselves an advantage in addressing them.

The question today is whether the Government are doing all they can to ensure the UK economy will benefit from this trillion-pound market of the future? Why is spectrum not being made available, as it was recently in the US, so that UK companies can get on with innovating in this hugely important area and ensuring we reap all the rewards? I hope that the Minister will tell us how the Government aim to ensure that the UK benefits from machine-to-machine communication, because we are in danger of being left behind.

In some areas, the UK leads in machine-to-machine communication; it is otherwise known as M2M, which sounds rather like a pop group. Ofcom, my previous employer, has worked hard to ensure that spectrum is available for machine-to-machine communication. M2M can be divided into three broad areas: near field, home and personal, and wide area. I shall describe each in turn.

Near field means near or short-distance communications. Probably the best example is the Oyster card system. Every morning, at Westminster station, I see commuters holding various purses, wallets, gym cards and, occasionally, parts of their body up to the readers. There is no direct contact with the Oyster card. The reader operates it using radio frequency identification—RFID—over very short distances. Oyster saves us the time and trouble of carrying money, queuing and purchasing tickets for every journey. A few months ago, my local transport authority, Nexus, launched the north-east's very own Oyster-type system called Pop. We will all be "Popping" about the north-east without having to wait at ticket machines.

We can increasingly expect to see RFID used in many other applications. Oyster has already been extended to support contactless payments for small purchases. In 2008, the St Louis-based Somark Innovations tested an RFID tattoo on cows to monitor stock movements, and RFID devices are being implanted in salmon, so that we can track how they are responding to changes in the environment.

Exciting innovations are possible in the area. In 2005, Ofcom deliberately chose to make spectrum in the 865-868 MHz range available for RFID applications on a licence-exempt basis. Licence exempt means that companies do not have to pay to use it, which means that small companies can think of exciting new ideas without having to pay out huge amounts to buy spectrum. That is why innovative businesses can try out new applications, and we can expect to see UK companies playing a big part in the RFID revolution. Therefore, when it comes to near-field communications, the UK is good to go.

The next area of machine-to-machine communication is home and personal, which is still over short distances, but more than a few millimetres. It enables personal

area networks, which are networks around the human body, as well as home networking.

We all now think that it is a basic human right to be able to browse the internet from the garden thanks to wi-fi. There are other protocols that enable communications between devices in the home and in the office. For example, many of us use Bluetooth headsets, which wirelessly enable us to go hands free. There is also a protocol with the lovely name of ZigBee, which has been developed to enable wireless lamps. Increasingly, it might also be used by our fridge to tell our smart meter how much electricity it is using and whether it would be okay to turn the freezer off for a few milliseconds so that we do not have to bring on another gas power station every time "EastEnders" finishes.

ZigBee, wi-fi and Bluetooth all operate in licence-exempt spectrum. There are challenges in home and personal networking. In some cities, people are finding that the wi-fi is often congested. Interestingly, that is not because there are too many people uploading photos on Facebook. It is caused by people using wi-fi to transmit satellite or cable programming around their home, so that can be a disadvantage of licence-exempt spectrum. Some new application can come along and Hoover up all the bandwidth. None the less, in general, we have a home environment with innovative applications competing to improve our lives.

Unfortunately that is not the case for wide area communication, which is everything from down the street to across the world. Mobile broadband, smart meters and the global positioning system are forms of wide area communication. Wide area applications are really where the huge innovative potential is. Smart cities need wide area machine-to-machine communication. I want to live in a world where the traffic lights on the Tyne bridge going into Newcastle can respond to traffic conditions on other bridges in the city so that we avoid gridlock. I would like to know exactly when the Number 10 bus will get to the bottom of Kenton lane.

It would be progress indeed if people with chronic illnesses could lead more independent lives because their condition was constantly monitored, and help was immediately on hand through telemedicine applications. I want a smart national electricity grid, where sensors in turbines on wind farms in the North sea calculate our energy production moment by moment and change the level of usage in homes across the country as a result. That is the obvious big win. Every form of energy production now has big costs and risks associated with it. We have the technical complexity, cost and unpredictability of wind and solar power; the emissions associated with coal and gas power stations and the potential dangers and long-term costs of nuclear power.

We need to ensure that we are using as little energy as possible. Machines use a hell of a lot of energy—whether in industrial processes, all the kettles switching on every time a soap ends, electric cars and transport or the giant server farms around the world that support cloud computing.

By using machine-to-machine communications to reduce the amount of energy being used, we reduce the number of power stations we have to build. To a certain extent, the Department of Energy and Climate Change is aware of that. It acknowledges the importance of smart meters and ultimately of smart energy grids.

[*Chi Onwurah*]

My concern is that in this area, unlike in the others I have spoken of, we have no suitable licence-exempt spectrum and no well developed plans to bring it about. One reason for that is the very success of mobile telecommunications, which are everywhere—though not so strongly in the constituency of the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Rory Stewart). Everyone has a mobile phone; many people have two. Given that, why would we possibly want more wide area communication? Have we not got enough? The answer is no, and I hope that the Minister will be good enough to acknowledge the reason. In fact, I hope that he will acknowledge all my points, but on this one, I specifically expect a response.

The Minister is not a machine. He does not look like a machine. He does not carry out his duties like a machine and he certainly does not communicate like a machine. Why then should he think that machines communicate in the same way as he does? Machines do not get annoyed when there is a busy tone. They do not become upset by congestion, or infuriated by delay.

Putting billions of machines on to mobile networks designed for people is an incredible waste of valuable infrastructure. That is why we need spectrum, which allows machines to communicate with each other. We need some of that spectrum to be licence exempt so that we have innovation.

Will the Minister tell me what assessment he has made of the potential economic benefits of machine-to-machine communications? Does he agree that it is important that there should be licence-exempt spectrum to support them? Does he agree that we urgently need clarity from Ofcom about when spectrum will be made available?

The Minister may say that it is not for the Government or Ofcom to determine the use spectrum should be put to, but for the market. He has said that before in response to questions that I have tabled, but the market cannot determine the use spectrum should be put to if it is not made available.

Rory Stewart: Given the enormous importance of these machine-to-machine communications, surely the hon. Lady agrees that we should not exclude large parts of the country and millions of people from accessing all the incredible benefits that she has listed. Surely, it is about not just making spectrum available to machines but making it available to people in those areas of the country, otherwise we will have real social exclusion.

Chi Onwurah: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. Once again I agree with him; access to the internet will be an important part of enabling humans to reap the benefits of M2M communications. He is absolutely right that discussion of M2M communications is part of a wider argument about ensuring that the benefits of technology are available to all our citizens.

The Minister may claim that Ofcom should not intervene to support particular technologies but, as I have already suggested, I argue that M2M communication is not one technology but a huge market—in fact, it is a range of markets—and that the purchase of spectrum is a huge barrier to entry by small innovative firms. The Minister may also say that he does not have a stream of people coming to see him to ask for this spectrum, but the small innovative firms that I talk to do not have that kind of access to Departments.

Personal and near-field communications have licence-exempt spectrum in which to innovate, so why is there none for wide range applications? I yield to no one—not even the Minister—in my praise of Ofcom. Under the Communications Act 2002, Ofcom is required to encourage investment and innovation, and specifically to use spectrum for that purpose, so I would like the Minister to tell us and Ofcom about the importance that he places on that requirement to encourage innovation, especially given the cross-party consensus that innovation will help to secure the recovery. Will the requirement to encourage innovation be retained and indeed strengthened in the new communications Bill, which is currently being drafted?

I am sure that the Minister shares my view that M2M communication is a very important area and I look forward to hearing how he will encourage the innovation and the economic benefits that it will bring.

5.1 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport (Mr Edward Vaizey): I am grateful to you, Mr Scott, for giving me the opportunity to speak. This is the first time that I have served under your chairmanship, and it is a great and significant honour to do so.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central (Chi Onwurah) for securing this debate. She knows, from remarks that I have made about her before in the House, that I am not surprised that she is the first MP to raise this important issue. She has referred to the last innovative MP, Emma Nicholson, who raised the issue of the internet for the first time in Parliament. I only hope that the career of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central does not follow that of Ms Nicholson and that she does not end up as a member of the Liberal Democrat party. I say that with all due respect to the coalition, of which I am a full and supportive member.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central is an expert in the House on this issue—she had a distinguished career in Ofcom. I mean it as a compliment when I say that this debate has perhaps been more like a seminar than the type of rambunctious debate that we are used to in this Chamber.

The hon. Lady has discussed machine-to-machine communications, or M2M. As she has rightly said, M2M sounds almost like a pop band, perhaps one that was competing in the Eurovision song contest. We also talk about M2M as “the internet of things”. It is an incredibly important subject and in some ways it is the “new new thing”, if I can put it that way, of the internet. It is something that people are now starting to talk about. As she elaborated on in her excellent speech, the possibilities of the internet of things are almost limitless, and they will transform how we live our lives. However, as both the right hon. Member for Oxford East (Mr Smith) and my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Rory Stewart) have rightly said, the internet of things will also bring complex social issues that will attract the interest of politicians, notably privacy issues but also other important issues such as social exclusion.

Today the hon. Lady has shown that she has another string to her bow. She managed to secure this debate, and we know how difficult it is to secure a debate in Westminster Hall, let alone a particular timing for a

debate. However, she has secured this debate on M2M on IPV6 world day. For those MPs who do not know what IPV6 is, it is internet protocol version 6. Effectively, sitting behind the internet addresses that we all use is a string of digits, like a telephone number. At the moment, we use internet protocol version 4, or IPV4, and we are about to run out of IPV4 addresses. I do not want anyone to panic about that for a moment, but this autumn the wholesale sale of internet addresses in Europe will come to an end and in the next two years we will experience a shortage. Consequently we need to move to IPV6, which is a longer string of digits.

I held a seminar this morning with key figures in the UK who are involved in this transformation to IPV6. One of them described the transformation to me in a very clear way, by saying that moving from IPV4 to IPV6 in terms of increased capacity is like moving from a golf ball to the sun. We might not need all the capacity that the sun would bring, but we will certainly need significantly greater capacity. Given that IPV4 only has 4.3 billion internet addresses, the increase in capacity in the future will be driven by the internet of things. As the hon. Lady has pointed out, that will include things such as smart homes, smart metres and connected cars. For example, I learned today something that is pretty obvious once you are told it, namely that every new car that is sold has its own internet address, to allow it to communicate with computers. There will also be e-health, smart cities and many other variations of things.

As the hon. Lady indicated, a number of companies have made predictions about the number of internet addresses that we are going to need. Ericsson has said that we will need 50 billion internet addresses by 2020 to cope with the internet of things. Some people talk about trillions of devices or connections. The debate is very fast-moving, and nobody can be certain what will happen. To be frank, predictions are fairly pointless, except to say that we will need a lot more internet addresses.

I want to use the opportunity that this debate provides briefly to speak out to those watching, particularly companies and businesses, and ask them to start preparing their websites and information systems for IPV6. Although that change is not an immediate issue for them, they will need to be on top of it in the next few years. In fact, the slogan that I came up with this morning, which I thought was rather neat, was, "Don't panic, but do start to prepare".

The hon. Lady has asked me whether I have estimated the economic value of the internet of things. I have not done so, and as far as I am aware Ofcom has not done so, too. However, as one might imagine, various estimates are knocking about. Some people have estimated that the value of the internet of things is about €200 billion a year. Again, however, I say with some caution—given that we are, as it were, in the "known unknown" territory—that it is impossible to put a realistic value on the internet of things. As she has indicated, however, virtually any device that business or consumers use will be internet-enabled in the coming years. For example, the most immediate example that right hon. and hon. Members will probably be aware of is the idea of smart metering, which the hon. Lady has discussed at length. Other examples include radio frequency identification, which relates to the near-field issues that she has discussed.

The thrust of the hon. Lady's speech was about whether or not we should make spectrum available, particularly for entrepreneurs to take advantage of the growing internet of things. My hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border has rightly reminded us of the need to set in place proper infrastructure for the internet of people. Both the hon. Lady and my hon. Friend will be fully aware of the Government's plans to support broadband roll-out and that we have set aside about £500 million for that programme. Our objective is to bring superfast broadband to 90% of homes and businesses, and a minimum of 2 megabits per second broadband to all other premises, by the end of 2015. My hon. Friend is also making firm representations about the forthcoming spectrum auction and the need to increase coverage in that respect. As the hon. Lady has indicated, wireless will also be an important part of M2M communications, and, as she knows, we are well on track to get that spectrum auction up and running at the beginning of next year.

As the hon. Lady has said, spectrum is absolutely vital for the future of the internet of things, and it is incredibly important that we make as much spectrum available as possible. As I am sure that she knows, we have committed to releasing a significant amount of public spectrum to the private sector. In March, just after the Budget, we published our detailed plans to release 500 MHz of public sector spectrum below 5 GHz by 2020. That will be a complex task, bringing together a number of Government Departments. We must also ensure that the spectrum that we make available is internationally compatible and that we make it available with the minimum of disruption to the public sector, be it transport, security or defence.

As the hon. Lady has predicted, although I believe that much of this spectrum will be suitable for M2M communications, it is not for me, nor indeed, in my view, for Ofcom, to decide how best to use both the spectrum and the infrastructure available to meet the demands for communications. That is for the market to decide. She is right to point out that the United States is making advances in this area, but I think that we are keeping pace.

The hon. Lady is well aware of the duties of Ofcom and of its light-touch approach to regulation, and those duties include encouraging investment and innovation in relevant markets. In addition, the European Union's radio spectrum policy programme, which we debated at the Telecoms Council last week and which is currently generally under discussion, also includes the principle of promoting innovation in telecoms. Ofcom is the independent regulator charged with managing spectrum in the UK, using licences when users want rights and unlicensed spectrum when rights are not needed. The use of wi-fi is a very good example of successful unlicensed spectrum use.

The hon. Lady made it very clear in her speech that Ofcom has made spectrum available for M2M use, such as that which allows intelligent transport systems to operate without licence in a European harmonised band, aiding the development of those systems. Ofcom is also considering whether the 872-+876 MHz spectrum paired with the 917-921 MHz one might be suitable for M2M communications, and it is working with the European Commission and European regulators to see whether such services could operate without interference to adjacent

[*Mr Edward Vaizey*]

bands. We also have, of course, the so-called white space spectrum, which might be suitable for machine-to-machine communication.

Ofcom frequently consults on spectrum matters. I absolutely take the hon. Lady's point that a lot of the small entrepreneurial businesses that could make use of this spectrum are not necessarily in a position to lobby Ofcom, but I assure her that there are many organisations out there that bring their thoughts about spectrum availability and how it can be used to the table. I hope that this debate will also highlight the fact that this is a very live issue and that it is perfectly possible to contact me or the hon. Lady, or indeed Ofcom, to make points. In my experience as a Minister, small and entrepreneurial businesses are often the ones that come forward with radical and interesting thoughts, so I encourage businesses engaged in this issue to make their views known not only to me but to Ofcom.

It is absolutely right that we should be ahead of the curve, aware of what is coming and looking beyond the horizon regarding how this spectrum could be used, but as well as first-mover advantage there is potentially

first-mover disadvantage with spectrum. We, as the United Kingdom, have to align ourselves with our European partners, and being the first to make a band available for unlicensed spectrum use could end up being costly, if decisions are then made to harmonise different bands. I do not want to give the hon. Lady the impression that we are complacent; we are absolutely not—this is a very live issue. I do not, however, want to be in the position of rushing forward with decisions that we later regret. Our planned release in 2020 of the 500 MHz is a very good example of that, because we are pushing ahead our plans but are very conscious of the fact that we have to keep in step with our European partners, while at the same time pushing European member states to move on spectrum decisions.

I am confident that Ofcom's approach to innovation and to spectrum management will continue to take account of its duties and will be both proportional and appropriate. It is important to recognise that machine-to-machine—

5.14 pm

Sitting adjourned without Question put (Standing Order No. 10(11)).

Written Ministerial Statements

Wednesday 8 June 2011

BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS

National Minimum Wage

The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (Vince Cable): The Government have today written to the Low Pay Commission setting out the remit for its 2012 report.

The Government support the national minimum wage (NMW) and have asked the Low Pay Commission (LPC) to evaluate and make recommendations in the areas set out below, taking account of the economic and labour market context, including pensions reform.

Specifically, I have asked the Low Pay Commission to:

1. Monitor, evaluate and review the levels of each of the different minimum wage rates, with particular reference to previously identified groups and sectors, and make recommendations for October 2012.
2. Review the labour market position of young people, including those in apprenticeships and internships.
3. Consider whether NMW regulations can be made even simpler and easier to administer. This might include the removal, simplification or consolidation of any elements of the NMW.

In addition, as part of the simplification agenda, I have requested that the LPC considers the implications of the proposed abolition of the Agricultural Wages Board for England and Wales, pending the outcomes of legislative process and consultation.

4. Consider the best way to give business greater clarity on future levels of the NMW, including the option of two-year recommendations, and implement the chosen solution as part of the 2012 report. Also, consider whether any of the other recommendations could be introduced more promptly.

Timing

The Low Pay Commission has been asked to report to the Prime Minister and me by the end of February 2012.

Copies of the remit have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council: 19 May 2011

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Andrew Stunell): The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council met on 19 May 2011 in Brussels. The United Kingdom was represented by the UK deputy permanent representative to the EU, Andy Lebrecht.

This was a single-issue Council on the subject of Roma integration. On 5 April, the European Commission published a communication on an EU framework for national Roma integration strategies up to 2020. Based

on this, the presidency invited the Council to hold an exchange of views and adopt a set of Council conclusions and an opinion from the Social Protection Committee.

The presidency stressed the importance of member states taking effective action to tackle Roma exclusion, while emphasising the added value of EU-level action. The presidency noted that the situation of the Roma differed considerably between member states and so the conclusions provided latitude to member states to tailor their approaches to national needs by committing them to preparing either national strategies or sets of policy measures. The chair of the Social Protection Committee underlined the Social Protection Committee's willingness to continue work on this issue.

The European Commission emphasised the need to step up efforts against discrimination. They said that strong commitment was needed by all member states, but acknowledged that member states' efforts to promote Roma inclusion should be proportionate to the size and situation of the Roma population on their territory. The Commission also emphasised the link with the EU2020 strategy and underlined the importance of member states' strategies or policy approaches, focusing on the four priority areas identified in the Commission's communication—health, housing, education and employment. They called on member states to submit their strategies or policy approaches by end of 2011. The Commission would then report annually to the European Parliament and Council on progress made.

The UK outlined the fact that in this country we have a strong and well-established legal framework to combat discrimination and hate crime and that this protects all individuals, including Roma, Gypsies and Travellers, from racial and other forms of discrimination, and racially motivated crime. We also acknowledged that the UK's Gypsies and Travellers none the less experience inequalities. We summarised the policy approaches being undertaken in the different parts of the UK to deal with this, including, in England, the ministerial working group on reducing Gypsy and Traveller inequalities, chaired by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

We also acknowledged the importance of co-ordination between member states to tackle organised crime, particularly the issue of human trafficking, which can affect Roma, especially Roma children, and we noted the opportunity that EU funds provide to member states to add value to their policies to improve the situation of Roma and other disadvantaged people.

Other member states welcomed the conclusions and highlighted the need for concerted action to improve the situation of the Roma. Some said they already had national or regional Roma strategies or programmes; others said they tackled Roma issues through mainstreaming into wider social inclusion programmes; while others had specific initiatives designed to address particular issues. Though most member states focused exclusively on socio-economic issues, some also made specific reference to the problem of human trafficking. Several member states, including the UK, highlighted the fact that different member states faced different situations both in terms of the size and situation of their Roma populations. Closing the debate, the presidency noted, among other things, that some member states

had developed national Roma strategies while others were dealing with the issue through general inclusion policies.

Following the debate, the Council adopted conclusions on an EU framework for national Roma integration strategies. It also endorsed the opinion of the Social Protection Committee on an EU framework for national Roma integration strategies. The presidency will now seek endorsement of a Roma presidency progress report at the June European Council.

Local Enterprise Partnerships

The Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government (Greg Clark): I, together with the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr Prisk), would like to inform the House that today we have written to the proposed Humber local enterprise partnership inviting it to put in place governance arrangements.

The Government have moved quickly to recognise the Humber local enterprise partnership proposal, submitted last week, so that they can drive forward their economic ambitions. The Humber local enterprise partnership will focus on strategic opportunities for growth around renewable energy, ports and logistics, chemicals, international trade, strategic transport, infrastructure and innovation and aims to create upwards of 20,000 jobs.

Local enterprise partnerships are a real power shift away from central Government and quangos and towards local communities and the local businesses who really understand the opportunities for, and barriers to, growth in their areas.

This announcement brings the total number of partnerships so far invited to put their governance arrangements in place to 35. Taken together these represent 1.9 million or 95% of all businesses (active enterprises) in England, 22 million employees (employee jobs figures) or 96% of all employees in England, and a population of 49 million or 96% of England's population. We will continue to work with other areas with a view to establishing further local enterprise partnerships across England.

DEFENCE

Military Low Flying 2010-11

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Andrew Robathan): The amount of low-flying training carried out in the UK low-flying system during the training year 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011 was the minimum required for aircrew to reach and maintain their ability to fly at low level. A total of 49,151 hours of low-flying training were conducted across all low-flying areas. In comparative terms, there was an decrease of 8,369 hours, or approximately 14.6% on the previous training year due to the withdrawal of Harrier GR7/9 from service, and the additional operational deployment of Tornado GR4s to Italy as part of the NATO force

conducting operations in Libya. The amount of operational low flying (between 250 feet and 100 feet) by fixed wing aircraft was 248 hours, accounting for 0.5% of all low flying activity.

I have today placed in the Library of the House a document giving detailed statistics of the low-flying training that has taken place in the UK low-flying system for the training year.

"1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011". This statistical appendix may be read in conjunction with the master document "Military Low Flying in the United Kingdom" that is already in the Library of the House.

Additional copies are available on request from the following address:

Air Staff
Complaints and Enquiries Unit
Ministry of Defence
Level 5 Zone H
Main Building
Whitehall
London
SW1A 2HB

ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

EU Energy Council, Luxembourg: 10 June 2011

The Minister of State, Department of Energy and Climate Change (Charles Hendry): In advance of the forthcoming Energy Council in Luxembourg on 10 June, I am writing to outline the agenda items to be discussed.

The first item on the agenda will be a report on the state of play of the draft regulation on energy market integrity and transparency, on which the presidency is aiming to reach a first reading agreement between the European Parliament and the Council by the end of June. The UK supports the Commission's draft regulation, which will increase market liquidity and confidence and enhance competition across the EU. We have made good progress in the negotiations and have found reasonable solutions to those areas which gave us concern.

The Council will then adopt conclusions on a Commission communication on an energy efficiency action plan. We broadly welcome the conclusions and expect them to be adopted without discussion.

The presidency will report on the debate that took place on the Energy Roadmap for 2050 at the Informal Energy Council in May in advance of the communication that the Commission is planning to issue in the autumn. There will also be a report on the state of play of the risk and safety assessment ("stress tests") of nuclear power plants called for at the European Council on 24-25 March, following events in Fukushima. The UK is content with the scope of the test.

The Commission will then update the Council on a number of EU external energy relations issues. The Swedish delegation will present information to the Council on sustainability criteria for biomass and the Polish delegation will outline priorities for their forthcoming presidency.

Over lunch Ministers will discuss a Commission report on the investments that are likely to be needed for energy infrastructure in Europe. The UK agrees that measures must be taken to remove obstacles to infrastructure investment but that planning regimes are issues for member states to decide.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Justice and Home Affairs (Pre-Council Statement)

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mrs Theresa May): The Justice and Home Affairs Council is due to be held on 9 and 10 June in Luxembourg. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Justice, the Scottish Cabinet Secretary of Justice, Kenny MacAskill and I intend to attend on behalf of the United Kingdom. As the provisional agenda stands, the following items will be discussed:

The Council will begin in Mixed Committee with Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland (non-EU Schengen states). The Commission will give an update on the roll out of the central VIS (Visa Information System). The UK is not bound by the VIS regulation because it does not participate in the common visa element of the Schengen acquis.

Next there will be a presentation by the Commission on amendments to Regulation (EC) No 539/2001, which lists third country nationals who must possess visas to cross the external borders of the Schengen area and those exempt from this requirement. The amendments include provisions for a "safeguard clause" allowing the temporary suspension of existing visa waivers. The UK is not bound by this regulation as we do not participate in the migration aspects of the Schengen acquis.

The Council will seek a general approach on elements of the amending Frontex regulation. This amending regulation builds on an evaluation of the first five years of Frontex' performance and is intended to extend the remit of Frontex in areas that will allow it to be more operationally effective in future. The presidency remains optimistic that they will reach agreement of this co-decision measure before the end of June. The UK is excluded from the regulation.

There will be an update on the Commission-led project to implement the central element of the second generation Schengen Information System (SIS II); the UK will reiterate support for the continuation of the current SIS II project.

The Council will be asked to adopt draft Council conclusions on the readiness of Bulgaria and Romania to join Schengen. The conclusions confirm that evaluation visits have been completed and that both countries have met or exceeded the agreed Schengen criteria following a series of peer evaluations. The UK has actively participated in discussions within the Schengen Evaluation Committee and helped Bulgaria and Romania to meet the required standards. Bulgaria and Romania will join once a Council decision has been passed; this is not foreseen until at least the autumn.

The presidency will seek a general approach on the regulation creating an IT agency to manage existing IT systems. The UK supports conclusion of the regulation having secured amendments to ensure our participation.

The Council will discuss EU-Western Balkans JHA relations in relation to the post-visa liberalisation monitoring mechanism. Since 19 December 2009, the citizens of Serbia, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and since 15 December 2010 Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina enjoy visa-free travel to the EU member states if they hold a biometric passport. The follow-up mechanism set up at the beginning of 2011 covers border management, document security, combating organised crime, and fundamental rights, as well as the effective implementation of readmission agreements. The mechanism allows the Commission to engage with the countries concerned, under the framework of the stabilisation and association process, in a dialogue for the assessment of the consistent implementation of all reforms launched under the visa liberalisation roadmap. The UK does not participate in these elements of Schengen or the common EU visa policy.

Following Mixed Committee the main Council will begin with the Commission expected to present amended proposals to recast the asylum reception conditions directive and asylum procedures directive. The UK takes part in the existing directives but did not opt in to the original proposals to replace them that were brought forward in 2008 and 2009. Those proposals were strongly criticised by member states because of the significant additional regulation to which they would subject their asylum systems, and because they would grant asylum seekers additional unnecessary entitlements that would attract false claims for asylum. The Commission is therefore amending them in order to make agreement more likely.

Next the presidency will update the Council on progress of negotiations on three legal migration directives which the UK has not opted into. The first measure would establish common rules for the admission of third country nationals onto the territory of the EU where they are seeking admission on the basis of an intra-company transfer and make provision for intra-EU movement of such personnel. The second measure would establish common rules for the admission of third country nationals onto the territory of the EU where they are seeking admission for the purpose of seasonal work. The third measure would establish a single procedure for the issuance of a residence permit to, and a common set of rights for, third country nationals admitted onto the territory of the EU for the purpose of work.

Council conclusions have been proposed on borders, migration and asylum; these will be discussed in the context of recent Commission communications on migration and on a dialogue for migration, mobility and security with the southern Mediterranean, as well as the second annual report on the implementation of the migration pact. The proposed Council conclusions are intended to prepare for the European Council on 24 June, which will focus on migration with particular reference to the developing situation in the middle east and north Africa.

There will also be a discussion on Council conclusions regarding the EU's strategy on readmission. These conclusions follow the recent evaluation by the Commission on the operation and effectiveness of readmission agreements currently in force. The UK welcomes the Commission evaluation and supports a number of recommendations made in it.

The EU counter-terrorism co-ordinator (EU CTC) will present his six-monthly discussion paper on EU CT strategy. The discussion paper aims to provide a stock-take of the current CT threat and proposes specific policy initiatives under the following headings: prevent, transport security, research and CBRN. The UK will promote the importance of co-ordinating internal and external CT activity. The Commission will also present its air cargo security progress report on the implementation of the EU action plan of 30 November 2011. There will be a vote on implementing the new EU cargo security regime at the Transport Regulatory Committee on 8 June. The UK supports the proposals in the EU action plan.

Next the Council will be asked to adopt draft Council conclusions on establishing priorities in the fight against organised crime over the next two years. The UK supports the priorities identified in the conclusions which have been drawn from Europol's organised crime threat assessment. There will also be a presentation of complementary approaches and actions to prevent and combat organised crime: A collection of good practice examples from EU member states. This practical approach to tackling organised crime is supported by the UK.

The justice day will commence with the Council seeking a general approach on the directive on combating attacks against information systems. The directive seeks to repeal and replace the current framework decision on combating attacks on information systems and bring member states' legislation up to date with technical developments and threats in this area. The UK has opted in to the directive which remains under parliamentary scrutiny in the House of Commons.

Next the Council will discuss the European Investigation Order (EIO). The EIO is draft directive aimed at streamlining the process of mutual legal assistance between participating EU countries. The UK has opted in. The presidency is seeking to agree a partial general approach to articles 1-18. While we believe that there have been significant improvements to the original draft of the EIO we continue to have a concern in particular about the handling of coercive measures in article 10. The EIO also remains subject to parliamentary scrutiny.

The presidency will also seek political compromise on the main issues on the European certificate of succession. This measure aims to establish common rules and procedures relating to cross-border inheritance matters. The UK did not opt-in to the measure, but is playing an active part in negotiations.

The presidency had planned to seek agreement on a regulation on the possibility of attributing legal value to the electronic version of the Official Journal. However a number of member states, including the UK, have placed scrutiny reservations on the text and it is clear that political agreement will not be possible at this Council. Therefore we expect this item to be removed from the agenda.

The Council will then agree a resolution on the roadmap for strengthening the rights of victims. The roadmap is a statement of political intent, and sets out the basis for future legislative measures. The UK hope to be able to agree to this resolution.

There will be a progress report on e-justice provided by the presidency. The aim of e-justice is to promote the use of IT in the justice area—in particular through the provision of information.

The presidency will give a state of play report on EU accession to the European Convention of Human Rights. The accession by the EU will mean that the EU and its institutions are directly bound by the convention. The negotiating mandate was agreed at the JHA Council on 4 June 2010.

The Commission will make a presentation about the victims package which they published on 18 May. The package included two draft legislative instruments: a draft directive to replace the 2001 Council framework decision on the standing of victims in criminal proceedings (2001/220/JHA) and a proposal for a regulation on mutual recognition of protection measures in civil matters. The Commission also published a communication setting out further work that it intends to undertake in this area.

It is anticipated that the Commission will also present an EU anti-corruption package. One of the expected documents is likely to include consideration of the modalities of EU accession to the Council of Europe Group of States against Corruption (GRECO).

The presidency will also agree Council conclusions on the memory of the crimes committed by the totalitarian regimes in Europe. The draft conclusions reaffirm the importance raising awareness of the crimes committed by the totalitarian regimes in Europe and promoting a shared memory of them; and encourage member states and the Commission to promote their memory in various ways.

The Council is also expected to adopt Council conclusions on the ninth Eurojust annual report (calendar year 2010).

The Commission will present its approach to future work towards protecting EU public money against all forms of criminal conduct, including fraud. Its communication focuses on an integrated policy to protect EU financial interest by criminal law and by administrative investigations, including effective and equivalent legal action in member states and strengthening the institutional framework at European level. The Government are determined to see action taken to tackle fraud more effectively in relation to EU funds. For example, they broadly supports the aim of strengthening OLAF's operational efficiency and improving its governance. However, this communication covers a wide array of policy proposals, which the Government will need to scrutinise closely in forthcoming working level discussions.

There will be an information point on the Missing Children Europe conference 25-26 May 2011 and under AOB there will be a presentation on the conference of Ministers of the Western Balkans countries requested by Slovenia and a presentation of the project "Police Equal Performance" requested by Austria.

TRANSPORT

NATS (Government Share Ownership)

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr Philip Hammond): Today I am publishing a call for evidence to support my decision making in whether to sell all, part or none of the Government's 49% shareholding in NATS—formerly National Air Traffic Services.

It was announced in the Budget March 2011 that the Government "intends to realise value from its shareholding in NATS, subject to considering the views of key interested parties".

This commitment reflects the Government's policy that assets held in the public sector, where there is no policy requirement to do so, tie up state resources that could deliver better value for money for the public if used elsewhere. We are seeking evidence through this process from key interested parties including the regulator, employees of NATS and the wider aviation industry, to establish whether or not there is a policy requirement to retain a shareholding in NATS.

NATS provides strategically important services to the UK and as such, I want to ensure that the overall aviation policy objectives of safety, security, economic regulation, civil/military co-operation, environment and supporting the Single European Sky programme are not compromised by any decisions we take over future share ownership. The call for evidence document outlines the controls and protections that exist in NATS' operating environment independent of the Government's shareholding and seeks evidence from consultees on what, if any, protections would be required on top of these to allow the delivery of these objectives.

The call for evidence will be open from today until 6 July and we aim to publish the results shortly after the closing date. The evidence collected will support my final decision about whether to sell Government shares in NATS.

Ship-to-Ship Transfers

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mike Penning): I wish to inform the House of a further development concerning the Government's legislation to regulate ship-to-ship transfers of oil carried as cargo.

As I explained in my written ministerial statement on 30 March 2011, *Official Report*, column 26WS amending regulations have been drafted, and work is in train to ensure that these amending regulations take account of representations made—including representations arising from an extension, over the period 9 February to 10 March 2011, of the review of the Merchant Shipping (Ship-to-Ship Transfers) Regulations 2010 for the benefit of Suffolk residents and bodies.

The conclusion that I drew from the main review which was carried out in July-September 2010 was that the provisions prohibiting all ship-to-ship transfers outside harbour authority areas will be replaced by provisions restricting ship-to-ship transfers outside harbour authority areas to a single designated area within the UK territorial sea and establishing a system of permits issued by the MCA, giving effect at the same time to the new chapter 8 of annex I to the MARPOL convention.

Having taken account of all the representations made, both in the main review and in the extension of the review in February and March, I have again come to the conclusion that this is the appropriate course of action and that the designated area for ship-to-ship transfers (other than in harbour authority waters) shall be the waters off the Suffolk coast where ship-to-ship transfers are already carried out.

The recognition of these waters off the Suffolk coast as a suitable area for carrying out ship-to-ship transfers is based on the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's and the industry's actual experience of the successful use of these waters for ship-to-ship transfer operations over a number of years without pollution of the seas and coasts. The MCA will continue to monitor such operations closely to ensure they are carried out to the highest possible safety standards.

I shall place an addition to the analytical table previously provided in December 2010, which summarises the points of substance made in the written representations and the meetings held with interested parties during the period of the extension of the review in February and March, in the Libraries of both Houses and on the Department's website.

As I also indicated in my written ministerial statement on 30 March, the amended Merchant Shipping (Ship-to-Ship Transfers) Regulations 2010 are intended to come into force on 1 October 2011. In common with other new domestic secondary legislation, these regulations will contain provisions setting an automatic expiry date and requiring them to be reviewed in a specified number of years.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 7 June 2011

[Continued from Column 234W]

HOME DEPARTMENT

Alcoholic Drinks: Prices

Mr Brady: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what powers are available to local authorities to introduce a local minimum unit price for alcoholic drinks. [56699]

James Brokenshire [*holding answer 23 May 2011*]: Local authorities could consider using powers in the Licensing Act 2003 or Local Government Act 1972 to introduce in their areas a local minimum unit price for alcoholic drinks. However, we continue to have reservations about the legality of such an approach. In each case, a local authority will need to ensure that their decision complies with all relevant EU and domestic law.

Earlier this year the Government announced their intention to ban the sale of alcohol below the cost of duty plus VAT. The ban is an important step to tackle the worst instances of deep discounting. It is intended to be in place by the end of the year.

Animal Experiments: Dogs

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many dogs of each breed were imported for use in laboratory experiments in (a) 2008, (b) 2009, (c) 2010 and (d) 2011 to date. [56135]

Lynne Featherstone: The Home Office does not record the information requested. Table 1 of the published annual "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals Great Britain" records the number of scientific procedures by species and primary purpose; table 1a records the number of animals used by species and primary purpose; and table 2 records the number of scientific procedures conducted by source of animals listed in schedule 2 to the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, including dogs. Annual statistics for 2008 and 2009 are the most recent currently available. Annual statistics for 2010 will be published later in 2011.

The annual publication "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals Great Britain" is available via the Library of the House and on the Home Office website.

Arrest Warrants

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many requests for surrender under the European Arrest Warrant the Serious Organised Crime Agency has received from each other requesting authority in each of the last five years. [57641]

Damian Green: The Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) and Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (for Scotland) are the designated authorities in the UK responsible for processing European Arrest Warrants (EAWs).

It is not possible to provide a breakdown of the number of requests received by each requesting member state prior to April 2009 due to the way that data was recorded prior to this date.

The following table shows the EAW requests from each requesting member state for the financial year 2009-10.

The data for the financial year 2010-11 is currently being verified and will be published in the SOCA annual report in July 2011.

Country	Total
Austria	30
Belgium	90
Bulgaria	42
Cyprus	8
Czech Republic	120
Denmark	3
Estonia	6
Finland	6
France	106
Germany	235
Greece	22
Hungary	72
Ireland	43
Italy	100
Latvia	55
Lithuania	183
Luxembourg	2
Malta	3
The Netherlands	112
Poland	2,403
Portugal	23
Romania	197
Slovakia	54
Slovenia	7
Spain	167
Sweden	11
Total	4,100

Arrest Warrants: Romania

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many European arrest warrants have been issued for the surrender to the UK of suspects in Romania in each of the last five years; and how many such warrants (a) have been (i) executed and (ii) refused by the Romanian authorities and (b) are awaiting a reply. [57602]

Damian Green: The Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) and Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (for Scotland) are the designated authorities in the UK responsible for processing European Arrest Warrants (EAWs).

Between Romania joining the EU in January 2007 and April 2009, it is not possible to provide a breakdown of the number of EAW requests issued to each member state due to the way that data was recorded prior to this date.

For the financial year 2009-10 the UK issued three EAW requests to Romania.

(i) In the same time period two individuals were surrendered to the UK from Romania under an EAW.

(ii) None of the warrants issued were refused by the Romanian authorities.

(iii) A person subject to an EAW is not always surrendered in the same year in which the request is made. Until the individual is arrested and the requesting member state informed there is no requirement for the recipient member state or states to reply to the warrant.

The data for the financial year 2010-11 is currently being verified and will be published in the SOCA annual report in July 2011.

Asylum: Africa

Martin Horwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when she plans to publish a new (a) operational guidance and (b) country of origin report for each country in Africa; and if she will make a statement; [57662]

(2) for what reasons the (a) operational guidance and (b) country of origin report for the Democratic Republic of Congo has not been updated since December 2008; and if she will make a statement; [57663]

(3) when she expects to update the (a) operational guidance and (b) country of origin report for the Democratic Republic of Congo; and if she will make a statement; [57664]

(4) on what dates the (a) operational guidance and (b) country of origin reports were updated for each country in Africa in the last 10 years; and if she will make a statement. [57665]

Damian Green: Operational guidance notes are currently published on a flexible rolling programme on a six or nine-monthly basis and focus on the top asylum intake countries. Production of operational guidance notes outside the top 20 asylum intake countries is prioritised according to changes in country situation, case law or other external factors as they arise. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has generally been outside the top 20 asylum producing countries since 2008. The next operational guidance note for the DRC is scheduled for publication by 31 July.

The last Country of Origin (COI) report on the Democratic Republic of Congo was published in June 2009. COI reports are generally produced on the 20 countries generating the most asylum applications in the UK or where there is particular operational need. As stated above the DRC has generally been outside of the top 20 countries since 2008. The next COI report on the DRC is scheduled to be published in July 2011.

A table detailing the forthcoming dates for publication of operational guidance notes and COI reports for African countries and the dates of updates over the last 10 years has been placed in the House Library.

Asylum: Appeals

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the average waiting time is for an unsuccessful application for asylum to be heard at a first tier tribunal. [57261]

Damian Green: The average waiting time for an unsuccessful application for asylum to be heard at a first tier tribunal is 74 calendar days.

All figures quoted are provisional, based on management information and are not subject to the detailed checks that apply for National Statistics and may be subject to change.

Birth Certificates: Data Protection

Nicky Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment she has made of the risks associated with unrestricted access to birth certificates. [57984]

Damian Green: Current legislation provides that in order to obtain a certified copy of a birth register entry an applicant must supply sufficient information to enable the entry to be identified from the relevant index and to pay the statutory fee.

A specific assessment of the risks associated with this access framework has not been made.

Crime

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment her Department has made of the potential links between social and geographic mobility and rates of (a) homicide and (b) other crime. [57134]

Nick Herbert: There is not a simple link between changes in social and geographic mobility and rates of homicide and crime. It is not possible to disentangle changes in social and geographic mobility from other factors that may have contributed to changes in rates of homicide and crime.

Crime: West Midlands

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if she will assess the effects of crimemapping on levels of crime (a) in the west midlands and (b) nationally since May 2010. [56956]

Nick Herbert [*holding answer 24 May 2011*]: Greater transparency is at the heart of the Government's commitment to open up and allow the public to hold it, and local services, to account.

This is why, from January 2011, the Government have empowered communities to hold the police to account and transform the way in which local police and communities work together to tackle crime and antisocial behaviour issues.

Since its launch, the Police.uk website has received over 415 million hits, demonstrating the significant public appetite for such truly local information.

No assessment has yet been made of the direct effect of crimemapping on levels of crime in the west midlands or nationally.

Departmental Honours

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many entry clearance officers her Department successfully nominated for the award of an honour in each of the last 10 years. [57596]

Damian Green: We do not hold information prior to the Queen's birthday 2008 honours round and cannot therefore provide numbers of entry clearance officers who have received an honour in the preceding years. However, since the Queen's birthday 2008 round, our records indicate that no entry clearance officers have been nominated or have received an honour.

Departmental Manpower

Mr Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if she will make it her policy to publish monthly information on changes in the numbers of her Department's employees categorised by (a) seniority, (b) voluntary redundancy, (c) natural wastage and (d) involuntary redundancy. [57608]

Damian Green: I can confirm information on changes in the number of the Department's employees is published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) as part of its Annual Civil Service Employment Survey (ACSES). Published ACSES data is available on the ONS website, at the following address:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=2899>

The latest available data, as at 31 March 2010, can be found under "Civil Service 2010 Tables" in table 9 (giving information on the whole civil service) and table 40 (giving information on the Home Office and its agencies).

ONS collects data from across the civil service on reason for leaving (for those employees who left the civil service in the 12 months up to the survey date, usually 31 March each year). ONS is currently working closely with Departments to improve the quality of information that is supplied. However, this is an annual survey and there are currently no plans to change the frequency of collection.

The Home Office is fully committed to meeting the Government's transparency agenda and is actively considering ways to make more of its key HR data more readily available. However, the Department has clear obligations to its employees to ensure that personal data is not released, and that it is not published at a level that could lead to the inappropriate identification of individual employees. In addition, and in line with the Statistics Authority code of practice, the Department has a responsibility to ensure that any data released is reliable and of a good quality, and any change in reporting frequency and content needs to be agreed with ONS and the chief statistician.

Departmental Pensions

Steve Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of her Department's budget she expects to be spent on staff pensions in each of the next five years. [54567]

Damian Green: The Home Office budget does not include expenditure for paying civil service pensions.

The Cabinet Office leads on civil service pensions, which are funded centrally under the Principal Civil Service pension scheme. The Home Office pays a monthly (employers) contribution, which is credited to this scheme.

Departmental Public Expenditure

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations she has received on the rate of change of her Department's budget in each year of the comprehensive spending review period. [57162]

Damian Green: The Home Office has received representations from a range of stakeholders on the implications of the spending review settlement. These have tended to focus on particular areas of spend rather than the rate of change of the whole departmental budget.

John Glen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what mechanisms her Department has put in place to monitor its spending; and what estimate she has made of the cost of these mechanisms. [57234]

Damian Green: The Home Office arrangements for financial management and reporting seek to ensure adherence to the statutory and regulatory frameworks for the management of Home Office funds agreed by Treasury and approved by Parliament.

The Home Office Board allocates resources, manages finances and assets in line with the corporate strategy, and provides challenge to business activity against strategic priorities.

Supporting the board in this role, the Home Office finance function operates a formal cycle of in-year—monthly, quarterly and mid year—reviews of our expenditure, with monthly reporting to the board and to Treasury on outturn and forecasts. A formal process of business performance reviews is also operated through the Permanent Secretary's Operating Reviews, in areas of major spend additional approval and scrutiny arrangements are exercised. These cover major investment and procurement decisions, controls over work force budgets, and approval of grant streams.

Home Office financial results are reported to Parliament annually in the Home Office Annual Resource Accounts. These arrangements are subject to independent review by our internal audit function and by the National Audit Office (NAO).

The most recent improvements put in place to monitor Home departmental spending, following NAO review, can be found in the Statement of Internal Control in the published Home Office Resource Accounts. The Resource Accounts for 2009-10 were published in July 2010, and those for 2010-11 are still being prepared and are due to be published in July 2011:

<http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/hc1011/hc01/0193/0193.pdf>

The monitoring of expenditure is not only the responsibility of the Home Office finance function but of every member of staff with delegated budgetary responsibility. As such there has been no official estimate of the cost of all mechanisms to monitor spend, and to do so could be achieved only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Research

Mr Ruffley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many and what proportion of reports produced by her Department's Research,

Development and Statistics Directorate in each year since 2008 have been published; and what the title is of each unpublished report. [53393]

Damian Green: The Home Office seeks to publish research and statistics reports when they are complete, in line with the Government's commitments to transparency in Government. National Statistics are produced and released in accordance with our obligations in the Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007 and the associated Code of Practice for Official Statistics under the management of a Chief Statistician who reports to the National Statistician with respect to all professional matters. Social research reports are published in line with the Government Social Research Unit publication protocol except:

(i) in the case where the Home Office Chief Scientific Advisor decides not to publish in a Home Office series on the grounds of inadequate scientific quality following peer review, or

(ii) on public interest grounds for example security concerns, where an unclassified summary document may be published with a classified version available where it is appropriate to do so, or

(iii) for operational reasons where, in some cases, the Department may decide to publish only a summary of research and allow the more detailed research to be made available separately by, for instance allowing the contractors to publish.

The number and percentage of completed research and statistics reports available on the research and statistics pages of the Home Office website (formerly Research, Development and Statistics pages) are shown in the following table.

Number of completed reports published on the research and statistics pages of the Home Office website (formerly Research, Development and Statistics)

	<i>Number of research and statistics reports published</i>	<i>Percentage of reports published of total completed reports</i>
2008	31	89
2009	40	95
2010	62	97
2011 (to date as at 26 May 2011)	27	—

Note:

This excludes Country of Origin reports that were included on the research and statistics pages on the website from 2008 to 2010. There were 78 such reports in 2008, 58 in 2009 and 45 in 2010.

For the period 2008 to 2010, the following nine research reports were produced but not published by the Home Office. The list does not include some other reports produced in 2009 and 2010, for reasons of national security.

2008

(i) Independent Domestic Violence Advisors: A Process Evaluation (The report available on the Cardiff University website)

(ii) Exploring the service and support needs of male, lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgendered and black and other minority ethnic victims of domestic and sexual violence (subject to final clearance, this report is to be published by University of Bristol)

(iii) Organised crime: revenues, economic and social costs, and criminal assets available for seizure (This has been released under the Freedom of Information Act)

(iv) Modelling High Impact but Low Probability Events

2009

(v) Visa Decision Research, including Survey of Entry Clearance Officers and Managers and case-file analysis

(vi) Quantifying Domestic Violence: A Review of Police Recording Processes across Wales

2010

(vii) Evaluation for the West Midlands Partnership Peer Support Programme

(viii) Evidence review of Organised Crime

2011

(ix) DNA retention policy: results of analysis relating to the protections of the 'Scottish model'

In addition to these the following 12 reports have been completed but the publications arrangements have not yet been finalised at the time of the question:

(i) Khat—social harms and legislation: a literature review

(ii) The factors involved in the movement away from violent extremism and promising practices from youth gangs and religious cults

(iii) Understanding vulnerability and resilience in individuals to the influence of violent extremism

(iv) Al-Qaeda influenced radicalisation—an approach using Situational Action Theory

(v) Teaching methods that help build resilience to violent extremism

(vi) Deaf Integration Project by Royal Association for the Deaf: Process and impact assessment

(vii) An Evaluation of the Trans-national Resettlement Project: UK and Ireland

(viii) Evaluation of phase 1 of the Alcohol Arrest Referral pilots (to be finalised once the evaluation of the phase two pilots also complete)

(ix) The role of the third sector: a research mapping exercise

(x) An evidence assessment of the literature on the routes of human trafficking in the UK

(xi) Marriage related migration to the UK

(xii) Crime costs of a quality-adjusted life year

Deportation: Asylum

Philip Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (a) failed asylum seekers and (b) foreign national prisoners have sought to challenge a deportation decision under the provisions of the European convention on human rights since 1998.

[54545]

Damian Green: The information is as follows:

(a) In relation to failed asylum seekers, deportation has been taken to mean removals, as deportations are a specific subset of removals which are enforced either following a criminal conviction or when it is judged that a person's removal from the United Kingdom is conducive to the public good. Information regarding challenges to the removal of failed asylum seekers would require a case by case search of individual records and is not held centrally.

(b) Information regarding challenges to the deportation of foreign national prisoners would also require a case by case search of individual records and assessment of grounds for appeal. This information is not held centrally by the UK Border Agency.

Rule 39 of the European convention on human rights permits an application for interim relief from someone who domestically has exhausted their appeal rights. According to internal management information, approximately 180 foreign national prisoners liable for deportation applied rule 39 to their deportation decision between the period January 2008 to December 2010. However, rule 39 does not become a barrier to deportation until the European Court issue a rule 39 indication.

Please note these figures are based on internal management information and should be treated as provisional and subject to change. They have not been quality assured under National Statistics protocols and may not agree with published figures. Data before 2008 is not available.

Deportation: Zimbabwe

Pete Wishart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions the UK Border Agency has appealed rulings by an immigration court in respect of individuals facing removal to Zimbabwe in each of the last two years. [57879]

Damian Green: The number of appeals submitted by the UK Border Agency against rulings made by an immigration court in respect of individuals facing removal to Zimbabwe was 2,639 for financial year 2009-10, and 1,630 for financial year 2010-11.

Figures include cases where the UK Border Agency has sought permission to appeal a decision made at an immigration tribunal. Data are based on the date permission to appeal was sought.

Figures include both asylum, temporary and permanent migration case.

All figures quoted are internal management information only and are subject to change. This information has not been quality assured under National Statistics protocols.

Entry Clearances: Jordan

Kate Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps the UK Border Agency is taking to deal with outstanding visa cases from Jordan. [56629]

Damian Green: From January to April this year, the Amman visa section has seen a significant increase in applications compared to the same period last year. In addition, unforeseen staff shortages and visa process improvements to the section, following the chief inspector's review of the Amman operation in October 2010, have placed further pressure on staff resources. These have resulted in Amman not meeting published customer service standards. The UK Border Agency has provided additional staff in Amman to deal with legacy cases and put in place process improvements. The UK Border Agency is committed to providing an efficient visa service to all its customers, and anticipates that the Amman visa section will meet its customer service standards by the end of July.

Entry Clearances: Overseas Students

Jonathan Lord: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate she has made of the contribution to the UK economy arising from the issuing of Tier 4 student visas. [57050]

Damian Green: Changes to the student visa route were announced on 22 March. An Impact Assessment has been prepared and will be published shortly.

Jonathan Lord: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many colleges or schools in the UK (a) holding and (b) not holding the Highly Trusted Sponsor rating for Tier 4 student visas were recorded as having allowed a violation of the terms of Tier 4 visas in each of the last three years. [57051]

Damian Green: The information required is not centrally recorded in the format requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. All Tier 4 sponsors are regularly visited to monitor their compliance with their Tier 4 sponsor obligations. Those sponsors found to have violated their obligations may be downgraded to a B rating with an action plan or have their licence suspended which may also lead to revocation.

Mrs Ellman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate she has made of the effects of the implementation of requirements for students to meet level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages on the number of prospective students with university offers who may have such offers withdrawn. [58062]

Damian Green: Changes to the student route were announced on 22 March following a public consultation. Amendments to the Immigration Rules were laid on 31 March, coming into force on 21 April. These amendments introduced some changes to the requirements in English language proficiency needed to obtain a student visa.

The new rules do not apply to Certificates of Acceptance of Studies issued before 21 April. The new rules contain a number of important flexibilities for students at universities, and should not prevent genuine students from taking up their offers.

Firearms: Licensing

Mr Ellwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if she will take steps to even the balance of renewals of firearm and shotgun certificates which occur over a five year period. [57293]

Nick Herbert: The Government will be responding shortly to the report of the Home Affairs Select Committee on Firearms Control which contains a recommendation on steps which might be taken to balance out the peaks and troughs of the renewal process.

Firearms: Young Offenders

Cathy Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people under the age of 18 years were reported to the police for alleged illegal use of airguns in each constituent part of the UK in each of the last five years. [57727]

Nick Herbert: The information requested is not collected centrally. The age of persons reported to the police in England and Wales for alleged illegal use of firearms cannot be identified from the police recorded crime statistics collected by the Home Office. The collection of police recorded data for Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for the devolved Administrations.

Forensic Science Service

Adam Afriyie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of the proposed closure of the Forensic Science Service on the quality and impartiality of forensic science used in the criminal justice system. [58135]

James Brokenshire: The Association of Chief Police Officers has been clear that the forensics market can cope with the managed wind-down of the Forensic Science Service (FSS). Private companies already provide approximately 35% of forensics services to the Criminal Justice System. The market is overseen by an independent Forensic Science Regulator to ensure services are impartial and quality standards are maintained.

The evidential value and integrity of forensic exhibits is tested under the intense scrutiny of the courts from the point of collection, through analysis and to interpretation and reporting. Each step in the process must be able to withstand these critical reviews. Forensic science laboratories across the UK work to demanding quality standards and are accredited against BS/EN ISO 17025 (general requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories) by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service. This is the core standard adopted by the Forensic Science Regulator for forensic science laboratory functions and is a requirement of police contracts with private laboratories. The Regulator has made it clear that the standards must apply regardless of where and by whom the capture, analysis and interpretation of science evidence takes place.

Frontex

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Frontex activities the UK has supported in each of the last five years; and what these activities consisted of. [57507]

Damian Green: In 2010, the UK supported 30 Frontex activities alongside other EU states. In 2009, the UK supported 21 Frontex activities alongside other EU states. In 2008, the UK supported 28 Frontex activities alongside other EU states. In 2007, the UK supported 27 Frontex activities alongside other EU states. In 2006, the UK supported 22 Frontex activities alongside other EU states.

The supporting information for these activities are provided in the Library of the House.

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Frontex activities the UK supports; and what these activities consist of. [57508]

Damian Green: In 2011, the UK has committed to support 26 Frontex activities alongside other EU states. In detail, these comprise of:

Joint operations

Poseidon Land, which targets illegal migration on the land borders from Turkey to Greece.

Neptune, which targets illegal migration on the land borders from the Western Balkans to Slovenia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece.

Air border operations Hammer, Hubble, Mizar and Meteor. These form part of the Pulsar Programme, which aims to disrupt illegal migration from third country hubs into the EU.

Poseidon Sea, which targets irregular migration by sea from Turkey to Greece.

Pilot Projects

Argonaut, to update the handbook for the "Management of massive transit of passengers at the EU external borders" in view of European Football Championships cup and the Olympics in 2012.

Protection, to agree a best practice guide for EU border guards dealing with minors, asylum seekers and witness protection.

Vega, to compile a handbook on best practices for the detection and interception of facilitators using airports for human smuggling and trafficking.

Big Dipper, to explore the possibility of EU airline liaison officer activities in a selected third country hub (following amendments to the Frontex regulation going through EU co-decision procedure).

Attica, to increase the Greek authorities capabilities to return third country nationals with no right of stay in the EU.

Joint return activities to third countries

Take the lead on up to two joint return operations to third countries.

Participate in up to six joint return operations to third countries.

Participate in core country group meetings.

Frontex Risk Analysis Unit

Quarterly Frontex risk analysis network meetings.

Bi-annual tactical meetings.

Tailored risk analysis projects.

Analytical training.

Provide bi-monthly intelligence reports and statistics.

Training

Maintain a Partnership Academy at Gatwick, hosting Frontex training activities.

Support false document expert groups and workshops.

Develop Frontex common core curriculum training.

Develop Frontex high and mid-level curriculum training.

Provide human rights and English terminology training.

Develop human trafficking training.

Research and development

Participate in the implementation of the border checks programme.

Participate in the development of the European Surveillance System (Eurosur).

Develop a report on Advance Passenger Information for the European Commission to inform the review of the API directive.

Participation in Frontex management board meetings

Maintaining a seconded national expert at Frontex headquarters in Warsaw, as special adviser to the executive director on external relations.

Attending European Patrol Network meetings.

Illegal Immigrants

Mr Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what recent estimate has been made of the number of people who remain in the UK for (a) one to five and (b) more than five years beyond the length of stay permitted by their visa; [57565]

(2) what recent estimate has been made of the number of asylum seekers who remain in the UK (a) between one and five and (b) more than five years after having had their application turned down; and how many such asylum seekers appealed (i) once and (ii) twice and were unsuccessful. [57566]

Damian Green: The UK Border Agency is not able to provide the information requested. It is not possible to accurately quantify the number of individuals currently in the UK in breach of immigration controls, as some deliberately evade immigration control in order to remain in the country illegally.

The e-Borders system enables checks to be made on individuals arriving or exiting the country at a majority of the points of entry to the UK but is not yet fully rolled out. e-Borders is currently tracking around 55% of inbound and 60% of outbound passenger movements to and from the UK. This equates to approximately 126 million passengers a year on over 2,800 routes, and includes over 90% of non-EU aviation passengers. The Government are committed to ensuring that the number of UK ports undertaking exit checks is increased to ensure a more complete travel history is recorded on passengers: This will enable provision of the information requested to be developed as e-Borders is progressively rolled out.

Immigration: UK Border Agency

Paul Uppal: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what dates she expects the UK Border Agency to complete its work on immigration legacy cases. [55491]

Damian Green: The “legacy” case load dates back to July 2006. The UK Border Agency has completed its review of all the outstanding “legacy” cases. A small unit has been set up to continue concluding those cases that have been reviewed but not concluded. They will also monitor the controlled archive and take forward any cases that come to light.

Members: Correspondence

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Minister of State for Policing and Criminal Justice plans to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Torbay of 3 September 2010 on consultation on the change in indexation of public service pensions. [51180]

Nick Herbert: I wrote to my hon. Friend on 24 May 2011.

Sir Gerald Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when she plans to reply to the letter from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton of 12 April 2011 with regard to Miss K Nwozuzu. [57385]

Damian Green: I wrote to the right hon. Member in respect of Miss K Nwozuzu on 16 May.

Sir Gerald Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when she plans to respond to the letter from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton of 21 March 2011 with regard to Mrs L Kirkwood. [57386]

Damian Green: I wrote to the right hon. Member on 12 April 2011.

Migration

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment she has made of the economic effects of migration over the last 15 years. [56674]

Damian Green [*holding answer 23 May 2011*]: I have recently commissioned the Migration Advisory Committee to research the labour market, social and public service impacts of non-EEA migration; to advise on the use of such evidence in cost-benefit analyses of migration policy decisions and to report in November 2011.

Police

Bridget Phillipson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which local authority areas fall within the boundaries of each police authority area. [57425]

Nick Herbert: The following table sets out which local authority areas fall within each police authority.

<i>Force</i>	<i>Top Tier</i>	<i>Lower Tier</i>	<i>Council type</i>
Avon and Somerset	Bristol		Unitary
	Somerset		County
		Mendip	District
		Sedgemoor	District
		South Gloucestershire	District
		South Somerset	District
		Taunton Deane	District
		West Somerset	District
		South Gloucestershire	Unitary
		Bath and North East Somerset	Unitary
	North Somerset	Unitary	
Bedfordshire	Luton		Unitary
	Bedford		Unitary
	Central Bedfordshire		Unitary
Cambridgeshire	Cambridgeshire		County
		Cambridge	District
		East Cambridgeshire	District
		Fenland	District
		Huntingdonshire	District
		South Cambridgeshire	District
		Peterborough	Unitary
Cheshire	Cheshire West and Chester		Unitary
	Cheshire East		Unitary
	Halton		Unitary
	Warrington		Unitary
Cleveland	Redcar and Cleveland		Unitary
	Hartlepool		Unitary
	Middlesbrough		Unitary
	Stockton		Unitary
Cumbria	Cumbria		County

<i>Force</i>	<i>Top Tier</i>	<i>Lower Tier</i>	<i>Council type</i>	<i>Force</i>	<i>Top Tier</i>	<i>Lower Tier</i>	<i>Council type</i>
		Allendale	District			Epping Forest	District
		Barrow in Furness	District			Harlow	District
		Carlisle	District			Maldon	District
		Copeland	District			Rochford	District
		Eden	District			Tendring	District
		South Lakeland	District			Uttlesford	District
Derbyshire	Derbyshire		County		Southend		Unitary
		Amber Valley	District		Thurrock		Unitary
		Bolsover	District	Gloucestershire	Gloucestershire		County
		Chesterfield	District			Cheltenham	District
		Derbyshire Dales	District			Colswold	District
		Erewash	District			Forest of Dean	District
		High Peak	District			Gloucester	District
		North East Derbyshire	District			Stroud	District
		South Derbyshire	District			Tewkesbury	District
	Derby		Unitary	Greater Manchester	Bolton		Metropolitan
Devon and Cornwall	Devon		County		Rochdale		Metropolitan
		East Devon	District		Wigan		Metropolitan
		Exeter	District		Trafford		Metropolitan
		Mid Devon	District		Stafford		Metropolitan
		North Devon	District		Stockport		Metropolitan
		South Hams	District		Oldham		Metropolitan
		Teignbridge	District		Bury		Metropolitan
		Torridge	District		Tameside		Metropolitan
		West Devon	District	Gwent	Manchester		Metropolitan
	Cornwall		Unitary		Newport		Welsh
	Torbay		Unitary		Caerphilly		Welsh
	Scilly		Sui Generis		Gwent		Welsh
	Plymouth		Unitary		Torfaen		Welsh
Dorset	Dorset		County	Hampshire	Hampshire		County
		Christchurch	District			Basingstoke and Deane	District
		East Dorset	District			East Hampshire	District
		North Dorset	District			Eastleigh	District
		Purbeck	District			Fareham	District
		West Dorset	District			Gosport	District
		Weymouth and Portland	District			Hart	District
	Poole		Unitary			Havant	District
	Bournemouth		Unitary			New Forest	District
Durham	Darlington		Unitary			Rushmoor	District
	Co Durham		Unitary			Test Valley	District
Oyled-Powys	Carmarthenshire		Welsh			Winchester	District
	Ceredigion		Welsh		Portsmouth		Unitary
	Pembrokeshire		Welsh		Southampton		Unitary
	Powys		Welsh		Isle of Wight		Unitary
Essex	Essex		County	Hertfordshire	Hertfordshire		County
		Basildon	District			Broxbourne	District
		Braintree	District			Dacorum	District
		Brentwood	District			East Hertfordshire	District
		Castle Point	District			Hertsmere	District
		Chelmsford	District			North Hertfordshire	District
		Colchester	District				

<i>Force</i>	<i>Top Tier</i>	<i>Lower Tier</i>	<i>Council type</i>	<i>Force</i>	<i>Top Tier</i>	<i>Lower Tier</i>	<i>Council type</i>
		St Albans	District			East Lindsey	District
		Stevenage	District			Lincoln	District
		Three Rivers	District			North Kesteven	District
		Watford	District			South Holland	District
		Welwyn and Hatfield	District			South Kesteven	District
Humberside	Hull		Unitary	Merseyside	Liverpool		Metropolitan
	East Yorkshire		Unitary		Sefton		Metropolitan
	North Lincolnshire		Unitary		Wirral		Metropolitan
	North East Lincolnshire		Unitary		Knowsley		Metropolitan
Kent	Medway		Unitary		St Helens		Metropolitan
	Kent		County	Norfolk	Norfolk		bounty
		Ashford	District			Breckland	District
		Canterbury	District			Broadland	District
		Dartford and Gravesham	District			Great Yarmouth	District
		Dover	District			Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	District
		Maidstone	District			North Norfolk	District
		Medway	District			Norwich	District
		Sevenoaks	District			South Norfolk	District
		Shepway	District	North Wales	Gwynedd		Welsh
		Swale	District		Isle of Anglesey		Welsh
		Thanet	District		Conwy		Welsh
		Tonbridge and Mailing	District		Denbighshire		Welsh
		Tunbridge Wells	District		Flintshire		Welsh
Lancashire	Lancashire		County		Wrexham		Wetsh
		Burnley	District	North Yorkshire	North Yorkshire		County
		Chorley	District			Craven	District
		Fylde	District			Hambleton	District
		Hyndeburn	District			Harrogate	District
		Lancaster	District			Richmondshire	District
		Pendle	District			Ryedale	District
		Preston	District			Scarborough	District
		Ribble valley	District			Selby	District
		Rossendale	District		York		Unitary
		South Ribble	District	Northamptonshire	Northamptonshire		County
		West Lancashire	District			Corby	District
		Wyre	District			Daventry	District
	Blackpool		Unitary			East Northamptonshire	District
	Blackburn		Unitary			Kettering	District
Leicestershire	Leicestershire		County			Northampton	District
		Blaby	District			South Northamptonshire	District
		Charnwood	District			Wellingborough	District
		Harborough	District	Northumbria	Northumberland		Unitary
		Hinckley and Bosworth	District		Newcastle		Metropolitan
		Melton	District		N Tyneside		Metropolitan
		North West Leicestershire	District		S Tyneside		Metropolitan
		Oadby and Wigston	District		Gateshead		Metropolitan
	Leicester		Unitary		Sunderland		Metropolitan
	Rutland		Unitary	Nottinghamshire	Nottinghamshire		County
Lincolnshire	Lincolnshire		County			Bassetlaw	District
		Boston	District			Mansfield	District

<i>Force</i>	<i>Top Tier</i>	<i>Lower Tier</i>	<i>Council type</i>	<i>Force</i>	<i>Top Tier</i>	<i>Lower Tier</i>	<i>Council type</i>
		Newark and Sherwood	District			Chichester	District
		Ashfield	District			Worthing	District
		Broxtowe	District			Horsham	District
		Rushcliffe	District			Mid Sussex	District
		Gedling	District			Adur	District
	Nottingham		Unitary			Crawley	District
South Wales	Bridgend		Welsh		E Sussex		County
	Cardiff		Welsh			Rotherham	District
	Merthyr Tydfil		Welsh			Hastings	District
	Port Talbot		Welsh			Wealden	District
	Rhondda Cynon Taf		Welsh			Lewes	District
	Swansea		Welsh		Brighton		Unitary
	Glamorgan		Welsh	Thames Valley	West Berkshire		UrtHarv
South Yorkshire	Sheffield		Metropolitan		Wokingham		Unitary
	Rotherham		Metropolitan		Slough		Unitary
	Don easier		Metropolitan		Windsor and Maidenhead		Unitary
	Barnsley		Metropolitan		Reading		Unitary
Staffordshire	Staffordshire		County		Bracknell Forest		Unitary
		Tamworth	District		Oxons		County
		Lichfield	District			Oxford	District
		Cannock Chase	District			Vale of White Horse	District
		South Staffordshire	District			West Oxfordshire	District
		Stafford	District			Cherwell	District
		Newcastle-under-Lyme	District			South Oxfordshire	District
		Staffordshire Moorlands	District		Buckinghamshire		County
		East Staffordshire	District			Aylesbury Vale	District
	Stoke		Unitary			South Bucks	District
Suffolk	Suffolk		County			Chiltern	District
		Ipswich	District			Wycombe	District
		Suffolk Coastal	District		Mill on Keynes		Unitary
		Waveney	District	Warwickshire	Warwickshire		County
		Mid Suffolk	District			North Warwickshire	District
		St Edmundsbury	District			Nuneaton and Bedworth	District
		Forest Heath	District			Rugby	District
		Babergh	District			Stratford upon Avon	District
Surrey	Surrey		County			Warwick	District
		Spelt home	District				
		Runnmede	District	West Mercia	Shropshire		Unitary
		Surrey Heath	District		Telford		Unitary
		Woking	District		Herefordshire		Unitary
		Elmbridge	District		Worcestershire		County
		Guildford	District			Worcester	District
		Waverley	District			Mavern Hills	District
		Mole Valley	District			Wyre Forest	District
		Epsom and Ewell	District			Bromsgrove	District
		Reigate and Banstead	District			Redditch	District
		Tandridge	District	Wesl Midlands	Wolverhampton		District
Sussex	W Sussex		County		Birmingham		Metropolitan
		Arun	District		Walsall		Metropolitan

<i>Force</i>	<i>Top Tier</i>	<i>Lower Tier</i>	<i>Council type</i>
	Sandwell		Metropolitan
	Solihull		Metropolitan
	Coventry		Metropolitan
	Dudley		Metropolitan
West Yorkshire	Leeds		Metropolitan
	Wakefield		Metropolitan
	Kirklees		Metropolitan
	Calderdale		Metropolitan
	Bradford		Metropolitan
Wiltshire	Wiltshire		Unitary
	Swindon		Unitary

Police: Accountability

Jonathan Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether she has received a request from (a) the Welsh Government and (b) the Secretary of State for Wales to meet to discuss the role of elected police commissioners in Wales between 6 May and 20 May 2011. [57469]

Nick Herbert: No, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), has not received a request from (a) Members of the Welsh Government or (b) the Secretary of State for Wales between 6 May and 20 May 2011 to meet to discuss the role of elected police commissioners in Wales.

Police: Complaints

Caroline Dinenge: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if she will bring forward proposals to enable the Independent Police Complaints Commission to consider a broader range of complaints against the police; [57578]

(2) if she will bring forward proposals to ensure greater independent oversight of police handling of complaints. [57577]

Nick Herbert: The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill contains a range of proposals designed to make improvements to the police complaints system. The underlying principles are that complaints should be dealt with at the appropriate level and that the system should focus more on improving the service the public receives rather than simply apportioning blame.

The Chief Officer of the force concerned will be responsible for dealing with low level complaints which are suitable to be dealt with by the local force and which do not amount to an allegation which would justify criminal or disciplinary proceedings. Complainants will have a right of appeal to the Chief Officer if they feel their concerns have not been adequately addressed at the local level. Police and Crime Commissioners will be given a new power to direct Chief Officers to take action where there is failure to deal with a complaint appropriately and the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) will retain its power to 'call in' any case.

The Bill will change the definition of the conduct that can be the subject of a complaint, making it clear that decisions, as well as acts, omissions and statements are included. In cases where a complaint reveals that the performance of a police officer is unsatisfactory, the IPCC will have the power to recommend and direct that unsatisfactory performance proceedings are brought against an officer. This provides the IPCC with the same power as they currently have in respect of misconduct matters.

Police: North Wales

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if she will assess the effects of reductions in expenditure by local government on the effectiveness of police co-operation with local authorities in North Wales. [57161]

Nick Herbert: Decisions about how local agencies co-operate are the responsibility of community safety partnerships at local level. These partnerships consult with their communities in order to formulate crime reduction plans to address priority issues and make the best use of collective local resources. The effectiveness of agency co-operation can be challenged through the overview and scrutiny arrangements provided by local authority crime and disorder committees.

Police: Surveillance

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what (a) EU and (b) international laws undercover police officers are subject when operating outside the UK. [57421]

James Brokenshire: UK police officers operating outside the UK do so with regard to the domestic laws of the country in which they are operating. A request to the overseas authority to deploy an undercover officer is usually brokered through a network of police liaison officers who provide assurance on both the appropriateness of the request and validity of the host nation authority.

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if she will publish the guidelines issued by her Department for undercover police officers operating outside the UK. [57423]

James Brokenshire: Guidance is contained in Chapter 4 of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 statutory code of practice on the use of covert human intelligence sources. A copy is available in the House Library.

Serious Organised Crime Agency: Manpower

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many employees of the Serious Organised Crime Agency are in receipt of a police pension. [57509]

Nick Herbert: As of 24 May 2011, 94 SOCA employees are in receipt of a police pension.

Trade Unions

Mr Raab: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff of (a) her Department, (b) the Criminal Records Bureau, (c) the Identity and Passport Service and (d) the UK Border Agency are entitled to work (i) full-time as trade union representatives and (ii) part-time on trade union activities; how many such staff are paid more than £25,900 annually; and what the cost to the public purse of employing such staff on such duties was in the latest period for which figures are available. [56444]

Damian Green: The 23,939 staff in Home Office headquarters (HOHQ) and the UK Border Agency (UKBA) (a and d) are supported by one group of trade union officials. The 3,760 staff in the Identity and Passport Service (IPS) (c) are supported by a separate group of trade union officials, as again are the 631 staff in the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) (b).

Headquarters and the UKBA

There are seven full-time trade union posts.

Due to the low numbers of people concerned and the risk of breaching data protection it would be inappropriate to specify the number of these staff paid over £25,900.

Additionally, during the year 2010-11 there were 414 members of staff in HOHQ and UKBA who were entitled to request ad-hoc time off for trade union activity following election/appointment to a union role.

The actual cost to the public purse of employing staff with the entitlement to work part-time or full-time in their trade union role in the latest period for which figures are available is not centrally recorded and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Based on allocations to all union roles within HOHQ and UKBA the cost of facility time in the year 2010-11 equates to approximately 0.2% of the pay bill.

Identity and Passport Service

There are four full-time trade union posts.

Due to the low numbers of people concerned and the risk of breaching data protection it would be inappropriate to specify the number of staff paid over £25,900.

Additionally, during the year 2010-11 there were 67 members of staff in IPS who were entitled to request ad-hoc time off for trade union activity following election/appointment to a union role.

The actual cost to the public purse of employing staff with the entitlement to work part-time or full-time in their trade union role in the latest period for which figures are available is not centrally recorded and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Based on allocations to all union roles within IPS the cost of facility time in the year 2010-11 equates to approximately 0.2% of the pay bill.

Criminal Records Bureau

There is one full-time union representative and one part-time union representative.

Due to the low numbers of people concerned and the risk of breaching data protection it would be inappropriate to specify the number of staff paid over £25,900.

Additionally, there is a number of staff who work on a facility time basis, as and when required.

The actual cost to the public purse of employing staff with the entitlement to work part-time or full-time in their trade union role in the latest period for which figures are available is not centrally recorded and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Based on allocations to all union roles within CRB the cost of facility time in the year 2010-11 equates to approximately 0.2% of the pay bill.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Access to Work Programme

Mr Slaughter: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has for the future (a) level of funding and (b) eligibility criteria of the Access to Work programme. [25213]

Maria Miller: The Government will continue to review welfare to work programmes to ensure the support they provide remains appropriate, effective and offers value for money. We are committed to ensuring disabled people are given the right support they need to get a job and remain in employment.

One of our key priorities is to ensure equality in the labour market for those with disability-related barriers to work, Access to Work can help with this. In 2009-10 Access to Work was funded to help 37,300 disabled people to stay in employment and we are on course to help even more in 2010-11.

There are currently no plans to change the eligibility criteria for Access to Work.

In December 2010, I asked Liz Sayce, chief executive of Radar, to lead a review of specialist disability employment programmes, including Access to Work. The review is a practical example of both our absolute determination to get employment support for disabled people right and our ongoing commitment to co-producing the changes we need to achieve this. The recommendations of the review will be published in summer 2011.

Autism

Dr Francis: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what his most recent assessment is of the extent to which adults with autism are able to access appropriate services provided by his Department; and if he will make a statement. [49576]

Maria Miller: Jobcentre Plus is constantly reviewing ways that it can improve the customer service experience for all, including disabled people and people with Hidden Impairments such as Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) including: Asperger's syndrome.

In February 2010, in response to several requests from disability organisations, Jobcentre Plus established the Hidden Impairment National Group (HING), which is attended by leading medical professionals, disability specific organisations such as the National Autistic Society, Autism Plus, Addept and representatives with Hidden Impairments that are Jobcentre Plus service users. The main aim of the group is to improve the skills and knowledge of Jobcentre Plus staff by developing

practical support tools to help them deliver an effective customer service experience at all stages of the individuals journey.

Jobcentre Plus provides appropriate and flexible support to ensure customers, regardless of their disabilities, are informed about and can access its services. The majority of Jobcentre Plus customers currently make their claims over the telephone to a contact centre. They are asked a range of questions to identify the most appropriate benefits available to them and the information is recorded electronically, removing the need for a claim form to be completed.

If a call of this type might prove difficult for a customer with autism, they can consent to a representative giving the information on their behalf. Customers can involve third party support at any stage in the process to access services if they think it is necessary.

Increasingly, customers are opting to apply for jobseeker's allowance online via the "Do it online" section of the Directgov website. This provides the flexibility to access Jobcentre Plus services from their own homes, at a pace that suits them and allows them to be assisted in completing the application by an advocate or representative. Customers can also submit an initial application for employment support allowance via the internet claim service.

Should a customer be unable to use either of the options above, clerical forms can be issued or, where appropriate, a face to face interview at the customer's local Jobcentre Plus office organised.

Our work, with national partners such as the Citizen Advice Bureau at a strategic and operational level, offers a holistic and joined up service for disabled people, including those with autism.

Jobcentre Plus staff have the opportunity to learn more about the autism agenda through the 'Raising the Game on Disability' seminar, which covers a range of pan disability topics, but can also specifically include a session around ASD, to improve the customer service experience for individuals.

Care Homes: Disability

Margaret Curran: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State of 9 March 2011, *Official Report*, columns 236-37WH, on disability living allowance, what steps he plans to take to review the responsibilities of care homes to provide mobility for disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

[49469]

Maria Miller: We announced when the Welfare Reform Bill was introduced that we no longer intend to remove the mobility component of DLA for people in residential care in October 2012.

DWP officials have been reviewing the available evidence and gathering more to inform a final decision on this policy. We will continue to consider the needs of people living in residential care at the same time as all other DLA recipients as we develop the Personal Independence Payment.

In the course of reviewing this policy, I have visited several care homes and spoken to residents, their families and care home staff about how mobility support works in practice on the ground.

Issues affecting care homes have been considered as part of the Law Commission review and are part of the Dilnot review.

Note:

In England the role of the SCSWIS is fulfilled by the Care Quality Commission and in Wales by the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales. In Northern Ireland, the role is carried out by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority.

Child Tax Credit

Mr Bain: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what savings his Department expects to arise from the abolition of the disability element of child tax credit and its replacement with provision under universal credit in (a) 2013-14, (b) 2014-15 and (c) 2015-16.

[53357]

Maria Miller: The disability element of child tax credit is being replaced by additional support for disabled children under universal credit. Any savings will be reinvested in the new structure of additions, which will result in higher levels of support for severely disabled adults and children.

Departmental Manpower

Mr Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make it his policy to publish monthly information on changes in the numbers of his Department's employees categorised by (a) seniority, (b) voluntary redundancy, (c) natural wastage and (d) involuntary redundancy.

[57604]

Chris Grayling: The Government are committed to transparency and the availability of data and are currently exploring options for the more frequent publication of this type of work force management information across the civil service.

The Department for Work and Pensions will continue to publish its work force management information via the Annual Civil Service Employment Survey, pending the outcome of this review.

Departmental Pensions

Steve Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what proportion of his Department's budget he expects to be spent on staff pensions in each of the next five years.

[54571]

Chris Grayling: In the Department's most recent full year accounts, for 2009-10, we reported employer pension contributions of approximately 13% of total staff costs or 5% of the Departmental Expenditure Limit for Resource. This information is available from our resource accounts:

www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/resource-acs-2009-10.pdf

These proportions are unlikely to change much in 2010-11 and 2011-12 but it is difficult to make forecasts beyond that timeframe given the prospective changes to public sector pensions provision, following the recent review by the Independent Public Service Pensions Commission chaired by Lord Hutton.

Departmental Travel

Maria Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much each Executive agency of his Department has spent on travel by (a) private hire vehicles, (b) trains, (c) buses, (d) commercial aircraft and (e) private aircraft since May 2010. [56069]

Chris Grayling: In line with the Government's austerity agenda, the Department for Work and Pensions has taken vigorous action to enhance business travel policy. Overall this has produced savings in the region of 45%, measured against last year's expenditure. The DWP's business travel policy actively discourages travel, unless the alternatives have been examined and exhausted and where travel is deemed appropriate, encourages the use of the most cost-effective modes of transport. The Department has also implemented a total ban on first-class rail travel.

The reduction in expenditure has varied across the Executive agencies as shown in the following tables.

Jobcentre Plus

	May 2010 to March 2011 (£)	May 2009 to March 2010 (£)	% change
Taxi	884,453	1,009,866	-12.42
Car Hire	850,800	1,229,736	-30.81
Trains	2,473,716	5,424,431	-54.40
Buses (including coaches)	232,055	356,462	-34.90
Commercial Aircraft	270,440	722,768	-62.58
Private Aircraft	0	0	0.00
Total	4,711,464	8,743,263	-46.11

Pension, Disability and Carers Service

	May 2010 to March 2011 (£)	May 2009 to March 2010 (£)	% change
Taxi	123,444	231,248	-46.62
Car Hire	269,307	306,202	-12.05
Trains	977,030	2,478,281	-60.58
Buses (including coaches)	73,964	88,301	-16.24
Commercial Aircraft	196,180	538,575	-63.57
Private Aircraft	0	0	0.00
Total	1,639,925	3,642,607	-54.98

Corporate and shared services

	May 2010 to March 2011 (£)	May 2009 to March 2010 (£)	% change
Taxi	279,037	495,863	-43.73
Car Hire	898,477	1,015,493	-11.52
Trains	4,728,769	9,690,079	-51.20
Buses (including coaches)	32,623	46,338	-29.60
Commercial Aircraft	341,500	809,759	-57.83
Private Aircraft	0	0	0.00
Total	6,280,406	12,057,532	-47.91

The total expenditure set out above needs to be seen in the context of a Department with over 100,000 staff based in over 900 locations throughout Great Britain.

The above expenditure also includes elements of the cost of provision of transport, to meet the Departments' obligations, under the Disability Discrimination Act.

It should be noted that in order for the DWP to provide the full scope of services, in line with its key objectives, a certain degree of business travel is required, for example, trainers will travel to multiple sites; fraud investigation staff will conduct surveillance exercises; Jobcentre Plus and Pension, Disability and Carers Service staff carry out outreach activity outside of the Government estate, all in the course of their duties. The use of official cars and taxis by civil servants, including special advisers, is governed by the requirements of the Civil Service Management Code.

Maria Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much has been spent on travel in respect of (a) each of his Department's executive agencies and (b) the chief executive of each such agency since May 2010. [56183]

Chris Grayling: In line with the Government's austerity agenda, the Department for Work and Pensions has taken vigorous action to enhance business travel policy. Overall this is projected to produce savings in the region of 40%, measured against last year's expenditure. The DWP's business travel policy actively discourages travel, unless the alternatives have been examined and exhausted and where travel is deemed appropriate, encourages the use of the most cost effective modes of transport.

Measuring the expenditure since May 2010, against a comparable period last year illustrates that the expenditure on travel has fallen significantly by.

Jobcentre Plus

	May 2010 – March 2011 (£)	May 2009 – March 2010 (£)	Percentage change
All travel	14,737,495	22,946,633	-35.77
Chief executive	3,587	21,776	-83.48

Pension, Disability and Carers Service

	May 2010 – March 2011 (£)	May 2009 – March 2010 (£)	Percentage change
All travel	5,011,852	7,027,259	-28.68
Chief executive	10,813	21,971	-50.79

The total expenditure set out above needs to be seen in the context of a Department with over 100,000 staff based in over 900 locations throughout Great Britain.

The above expenditure also includes elements of the cost of provision of transport, to meet the Departments' obligations, under the Disability Discrimination Act.

It should be noted that in order for the DWP to provide the full scope of services, in line with its key objectives a certain degree of business travel is required, for example trainers will travel to multiple sites; fraud

investigation staff will conduct surveillance exercises; Job Centre Plus staff carry out Outreach activity outside of the Government estate, all in the course of their duties.

DWP has taken steps to review the business travel policy and gain best value for money where travel is unavoidable. For example the introduction of a ban on first class rail travel has resulted in significant savings.

Disability Living Allowance: Barnsley

Michael Dugher: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of the number of people in Barnsley East constituency who will be affected by the planned changes to disability living allowance. [58047]

Maria Miller: Support in personal independence payment will be focused on those who face the biggest barriers to independent living. The assessment is being developed and at this stage, therefore, an assessment is not available of the impact changes could have on existing disability living allowance, or future recipients. We are working with disabled people and organisations that represent them on the detailed design and delivery of personal independence payment and the outcomes from this work will be reflected in updates to the impact assessment for this change. We have already announced that personal independence payment will be a non-taxable, non means-tested benefit payable to people in and out of work.

The number of recipients of disability living allowance in the Barnsley East parliamentary constituency who are 16 to 64 years old are provided in the following table.

Recipients of disability living allowance in the Barnsley East parliamentary constituency, age 16 to 64, November 2010

	<i>Number</i>
Age 16 to 64	4,950

Notes:

1. Case load figures are rounded to the nearest 10.
2. Data is for the number of people in receipt of an allowance, and excludes people with entitlement where the payment has been suspended, for example, if they are in hospital.
3. These figures are published at:
<http://83.244.183.180/100pc/tabtool.html>

Source:

Department for Work and Pensions, Information Directorate, 100% WPLS.

Disability Premium: Shared Housing

Stephen Gilbert: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what proportion of single local housing allowance claimants aged between 25 and 34 years who are in receipt of a disability premium are considered unable to move into shared accommodation; [57672]

(2) what estimate he has made of the cost to the Discretionary Housing Payments budget of supporting individuals aged between 25 and 34 who are affected by the extension of the Shared Accommodation Rate and are unable to move into shared accommodation due to a disability in the comprehensive spending review period. [57673]

Steve Webb: As is currently the case for claimants aged under 25, it is not for the Department to set criteria under which claimants in receipt of the disability premium would be considered unable to move in to shared accommodation.

Claimants who receive the severe disability premium will continue to be exempt from the shared accommodation rate, as will those who have an overnight carer, so it remains the case that people with the most severe disabilities will not be expected to move into shared accommodation.

Some claimants who receive a disability premium will become entitled to only the shared accommodation rate for housing benefit from January 2012. In our equality impact assessment published on 9 May, it was estimated that once those who are entitled to the severe disability premium are excluded, 18% of single local housing allowance claimants without dependent children in the 25 to 34 age group receive a disability premium.

Local authorities are best placed to judge whether a claimant's disability or other circumstances mean that shared accommodation is inappropriate, and to make use of discretionary housing payments if necessary. No estimate has been made of the cost to the discretionary housing payment budget.

Employment and Support Allowance

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will estimate the cost to the Exchequer of excluding from the 365 day period of eligibility for contributory employment and support allowance any days occurring before the relevant sections of the Welfare Reform Act 2011 are expected to come into force in each of the next five financial years. [57660]

Chris Grayling: As part of the Welfare Reform Bill we have set out our intention to introduce a time limit of one year for those claiming contributory Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and who are placed in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG). The intention is that introduction of the time limit in April 2012 will have an immediate effect on people who are currently claiming contributory ESA as well as new claims after that date. In total the policy is expected to generate annual benefit savings of around £400 million in 2012-13 rising to £1.1 billion by 2014-15.

If the proposal were to change so that the one year time limit would be calculated from date of implementation for new and existing claims for contributory ESA in the WRAG, this would reduce the expected benefit savings.

The following table shows the expected change in the annual savings, if this change to the policy were made. It shows that all the expected savings in 2012-13 would be eliminated. That is, there would be a cost to the Exchequer of around £420 million in 2012-13. However, there would be no impact on the expected savings from 2013-14 onwards, as subsequent years will remain unchanged since they represent all cases eligible for time limiting, including those that would have become eligible in earlier years.

	<i>2012-13</i>	<i>2013-14</i>	<i>2014-15</i>	<i>2015-16</i>	<i>2016-17</i>
Estimated savings from current policy (£ million)	420	780	1,090	1,330	1,380
Change to estimated savings (£ million)	-420	0	0	0	0

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Percentage change from current policy	-100	0	0	0	0
Change in the total numbers affected by time limiting	-200,000	0	0	0	0

Figures are in cash terms, and are for Great Britain. They are rounded to the nearest £10 million or 10,000 claimants.

Employment and Support Allowance

Vernon Coaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many employment and support allowance appeals were submitted by people whose (a) allowance had been stopped and (b) application had been refused in (i) 2009-10 and (ii) the latest period for which figures are available. [57319]

Chris Grayling: The Department holds data covering employment and support allowance (ESA) appeals where the outcome is known and so does not cover appeals that are still ongoing. Detailed information on the reason an ESA appeal was made is not recorded centrally, however it can be inferred that where an appeal outcome is recorded on a claim that was found fit for work at the work capability assessment (WCA), the appeal is against this decision. Due to the time it takes for appeals to be submitted to the Tribunals Service and heard, it is likely that there are more appeals that have not yet been heard.

For new ESA claims starting between April 2009 and February 2010 (the latest data available), 235,400 were found fit for work at the initial work capability assessment (WCA). Of these, 80,200 had had an appeal heard against this decision by February 2011.

The Department regularly publishes information on employment and support allowance and the initial work capability assessment. The latest report was published in April 2011 and can be found at the following link. Table 3 covers information on appeals heard.

http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/esa_wca/index.php?page=esa_wca_arc

Note:

All figures have been rounded to the nearest 100.

Sources:

Data on the outcome of the WCA are sourced from Atos Healthcare, data on appeals are sourced from the Tribunals Service.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what proportion of contributory employment and support allowance recipients in the work-related activity group in steady state and without additional time limits would be expected to receive the benefit for less than one year. [57431]

Maria Miller: It is estimated that in steady state, around 25% of all claimants of contributory employment and support allowance (ESA) who are assessed to be in the work related activity group at initial assessment, will leave ESA within one year, so before the proposed time limit is applied. This does not include people who leave ESA before they are assessed using the work capability assessment and are therefore not assigned to the work related activity group or support group.

For those who leave contributory ESA as a result of the time limit, it is estimated that around 60%, or approximately 400,000 people, are expected to be fully or partially compensated by income-related ESA, so will retain entitlement to ESA.

This information is consistent with the modelling underlying the Budget 2011 forecasts. It does not include claims from former incapacity benefit cases as these will all have duration of one year or more from 2015-16 onwards. The modelling is subject to change as more information becomes available on ESA claims with longer durations.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will estimate the cost to the Exchequer of restoring eligibility to 365 days of contributory employment and support allowance to each claimant leaving the support group in each of the next five financial years. [57656]

Chris Grayling: As part of the Welfare Reform Bill we have set out our intention to introduce a time limit of one year for those claiming contributory employment and support allowance (ESA) and who are placed in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG). This is expected to generate annual benefit savings of £400 million in 2012-13 rising to £1.1 billion by 2014-15.

If the proposal were to change to allow claimants receiving contributory employment and support allowance (ESA) and who move in and out of the Support Group, to start a fresh 365 day period each time they move back to the Work Related Activity Group, this would change the estimated benefit savings.

In this case, the financial effect of the change is difficult to model, partly because there are so few cases that move from the WRAG to the Support Group and back to the WRAG.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will estimate the cost to the Exchequer of excluding from the 365 day period of eligibility for contributory employment and support allowance any days that the claimant spends in the assessment phase in each of the next five financial years. [57661]

Chris Grayling: As part of the Welfare Reform Bill we have set out our intention to introduce a time limit of one year for those claiming contributory employment and support allowance (ESA) and who are placed in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG). The intention is that time spent in the assessment phase will count towards the 365 day period of the time limit. In total the policy is expected to generate annual benefit savings of £400 million in 2012-13 rising to £1.1 billion by 2014-15.

If the proposal were to change so that the time limit period is extended by the length of time it takes for each person to undergo a work capability assessment to determine entitlement to ESA, this would reduce the expected benefit savings.

The following table shows the expected change in the annual savings if the time spent in the assessment phase were excluded from the period of the time limit. It shows estimated overall costs to the Exchequer of around £200 million by 2014-15.

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Estimated savings from current policy (£ million)	420	780	1,090	1,330	1,380
Change to estimated savings (£ million)	-150	-20	-20	-20	-10
% change from current policy	-36	-2	-1	-1	-1
Change in the total numbers affected by time limiting	-80,000	-10,000	-10,000	-10,000	-10,000

Note:

Figures are in cash terms, and are for Great Britain. They are rounded to the nearest £10 million or 10,000 claimants.

Employment and Support Allowance: Winchester

Mr Brine: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many (a) claimants received both contributory and income-related employment and support allowance, (b) applicants were refused employment and support allowance following assessment and (c) employment and support appeals were lodged by applicants in Winchester constituency in each quarter in the last three years. [57315]

Chris Grayling: The number of people receiving both contributory and income-related employment and support allowance (ESA) in the Winchester constituency is provided in Table 1. This information can be found using the "Tabulation Tool" on the departmental website at:

<http://83.244.183.180/100pc/tabtool.html>

Note that ESA was introduced in October 2008, so quarterly data are available from November 2008 onwards.

Table 1: Caseload receiving both contributory and income related ESA in Winchester constituency

Quarter	Caseload
2010	
November	30
August	20
May	20
February	30
2009	
November	30
August	30
May	20
February	20
2008	
November	0

Table 2 presents data on the number of ESA claims (of all payment types) in the Winchester local authority area found fit for work at the initial work capability assessment (WCA) whose claims started in the periods shown. Information is not available for parliamentary constituencies so data are presented for the Winchester local authority area. Data on new claims for ESA are available for claims starting up to August 2010.

The table also presents data on the number of appeals that have been heard by the Tribunals Service as at February 2011. Data on appeals are available for claims starting up to February 2010. Due to the time it takes

for appeals to be submitted to the Tribunals Service and heard, it is likely that there are more appeals that have not yet been heard.

Table 2: Numbers of claims starting in the period shown found fit for work where an appeal has been heard by the Tribunals Service for the Winchester local authority area

Quarter	Fit for work	Appeals
2010		
August	40	—
May	50	—
February	30	0
2009		
November	40	20
August	40	20
May	40	20
February	40	20
2008		
November	10	10

The Department regularly publishes information on employment and support allowance and the initial work capability assessment. The latest report was published in April 2011 and can be found at the following link:

http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/esa_wca/index.php?page=esa_wca_arc

Caseload data are taken from the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study. Data on the outcome of the WCA are sourced from departmental administrative data and Atos Healthcare. Data on appeals are sourced from the Tribunals Service. All figures have been rounded to the nearest 10.

Employment: Young People

Graeme Morrice: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what recent assessment his Department has made of the cost-effectiveness of the Community Task Force element of the Young Person's Guarantee. [57258]

Chris Grayling: No assessment of the cost-effectiveness of the Community Task Force element of the Young Person's Guarantee has yet been made.

The Department is planning to assess the feasibility of conducting an impact assessment of the Community Task Force later this year.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr Ruffley: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the average duration of an incapacity benefit claim was in each year since 1997. [53388]

Maria Miller: Most recent figures show that more than 2 million people are in receipt of incapacity benefit (IB) and more than 1.4 million people have been in receipt of IB for over five years.

Since October 2008 incapacity benefit has been replaced by employment support allowance (ESA) for all new claimants. We are currently reassessing existing IB recipients for ESA—full roll-out of national reassessment began on 4 April 2011.

Table 1: Incapacity benefit/severe disablement allowance claimants by duration of current claim: Great Britain and abroad, August 1997 to August 2010

As at August:	All cases	Duration of current claim						Unknown duration
		Up to three months	Three months up to six months	Six months up to one year	One year and up to two years	Two years and up to five years	Five years and over	
1997	2,838,700	184,900	157,500	233,800	348,800	n/a	n/a	1,913,700
1998	2,769,000	156,800	128,800	206,600	357,500	n/a	n/a	1,919,300
1999	2,732,500	165,600	140,060	206,140	309,600	n/a	n/a	1,911,100
2000	2,756,510	168,080	134,640	195,830	315,720	735,590	1,206,650	*
2001	2,805,450	156,030	134,680	204,300	301,440	717,200	1,291,810	*
2002	2,811,430	154,360	147,720	186,790	291,270	655,930	1,375,360	*
2003	2,819,050	152,610	125,490	184,510	296,980	638,300	1,421,150	*
2004	2,817,010	147,070	123,370	179,760	276,150	630,330	1,460,330	*
2005	2,767,740	136,210	113,260	163,460	260,060	612,010	1,482,740	*
2006	2,724,980	133,250	107,550	155,570	243,260	582,710	1,502,640	*
2007	2,683,160	139,570	113,100	162,840	231,010	532,010	1,504,630	*
2008	2,632,000	140,980	107,710	156,280	238,080	497,440	1,491,500	*
2009	2,299,580	9,590	11,190	65,470	241,860	490,920	1,480,540	*
2010	2,082,570	5,950	6,280	12,980	65,760	508,240	1,483,360	*

Table 2: Employment and support allowance claimants by duration of current claim: Great Britain and abroad, August 2009 and August 2010

As at August:	All cases	Duration of current claim						Unknown duration
		Up to three months	Three months up to six months	Six months up to one year	One year and up to two years	Two years and up to five years	Five years and over	
2009	374,440	151,320	119,920	103,200	n/a	n/a	n/a	*
2010	563,980	151,400	112,060	146,290	154,230	n/a	n/a	*

n/a = Not applicable or not available.

* = Nil or negligible.

Notes:

1. Incapacity benefit was introduced in April 1995. The start dates of claims transferred from invalidity benefit are not reliable, therefore breakdowns of longer durations are not available until August 2000.

2. Figures from 5% samples have been updated using 100% WPLS totals.

3. Figures from 5% samples have been rounded to the nearest 100 and 100% figures to the nearest 10. Some additional disclosure has been applied.

4. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

5. From 6 April 2001, no new claims to severe disablement allowance were accepted. In addition, incapacity benefit was replaced by employment and support allowance (ESA) for new claims from 27 October 2008.

6. Data is available on the Department's tabulation tool at:

<http://83.244.183.180/100pc/tabtool.html>

Source:

100% Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study (WPLS) (from August 1999)

DWP Information Directorate 5% samples (before August 1999)

Dame Anne Begg: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many applicants for incapacity benefit withdrew their application before a final decision had been made in the five years prior to the introduction of the employment and support allowance. [56688]

Maria Miller: This information requested is not available for incapacity benefit claimants prior to the introduction of employment and support allowance (ESA).

The data systems the Department uses to monitor and publish information on the work capability assessment for ESA claims were not in place until the latter half of 2008, just before ESA was introduced in October 2008. We cannot produce equivalent information on the number of incapacity benefit claims which ceased before assessment was complete in the five years prior to the introduction of ESA.

Incapacity Benefit: Medical Examinations

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many and what proportion of incapacity benefit reassessments were conducted by

home visit in each assessment centre area in the latest period for which figures are available. [57046]

Chris Grayling: Between 15 March 2011 and 19 May 2011 incapacity benefit reassessments were undertaken by domiciliary visits in the following assessment centre areas:

Of the 617 exams completed in Scotland, 14 (2.27%) domiciliary visits were made.

Of the 556 exams completed in Manchester, 10 (1.77%) domiciliary visits were made.

Of the 28 exams completed in Wales, one (3.57%) domiciliary visit has been made.

No domiciliary visits were undertaken for incapacity benefit reassessment in any other area of the country.

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will publish the criteria for the conduct of incapacity benefit reassessment home visits. [57047]

Chris Grayling: I believe that this question is seeking details of the criteria used to determine whether an incapacity benefit reassessment home visit is appropriate. This answer is based on that assumption.

Prior to a medical appointment, ATOS Healthcare undertake a “pre-board” assessment of the customer questionnaire (ESA50). This will determine, in the first instance whether or not the customer should be assessed by a Health Care Professional (HCP). Where an assessment is necessary, the HCP will consider, based on the ESA50, whether the customer should attend a medical assessment or whether a home visit is appropriate.

In making this determination the HCP will use their professional judgment to consider the customer’s medical condition and other further medical evidence available to them. This can result in one of the following courses of action:

home visit is agreed;

HCP requests further information from the customer’s GP to inform the decision; or

home visit is declined and an appointment is made for the customer to attend a medical assessment.

In the event of a home visit being declined the customer may contact the ATOS Healthcare Virtual Contact Centre to ask that this be reconsidered. ATOS Healthcare will inform the customer that they should provide evidence from their GP to substantiate their case for a home visit. This further evidence is assessed by the ATOS Healthcare HCP and if appropriate a home visit is arranged.

Incapacity Benefit: Oxford West and Abingdon

Nicola Blackwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people in Oxford West and Abingdon constituency have been in receipt of incapacity benefits for more than (a) six months, (b) 12 months, (c) 18 months, (d) two years, (e) three years and (f) five years. [47957]

Maria Miller: The information requested is as follows:

Incapacity benefit (IB)/severe disablement allowance (SDA) and employment and support allowance (ESA) claimants in Oxford West and Abingdon parliamentary constituency by duration on benefit—August 2010

	IB/SDA	ESA
Total	1,570	480
Up to 6 months	10	230
Over 6 months to 12 months	10	140
Over 12 months to 18 months	10	80
Over 18 months to 2 years	40	40
Over 2 years to 3 years	200	n/a
Over 3 years to 5 years	270	n/a
Over 5 years	1,040	n/a

n/a = not applicable

Notes:

1. Caseload figures are rounded to the nearest 10.
2. Totals may not sum due to rounding.
3. Constituencies used are for the Westminster Parliament 2010.
4. Incapacity benefit was replaced by employment support allowance (ESA) from October 2008.

Source:

DWP Information Directorate: Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study

Incapacity Benefit: Peterborough

Mr Stewart Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many individuals in Peterborough city council area were claiming incapacity benefit as a result of being diagnosed with a mental health condition in each year since 2001; and if he will make a statement. [57414]

Maria Miller: The information requested is as follows:

Number of incapacity benefit (IB)/severe disablement allowance (SDA) and employment and support allowance (ESA) claimants in Peterborough local authority: November 2001 to November 2010

Date	IB/SDA		ESA	
	Total claimants	Claimants with mental and behavioural disorders	Total claimants	Claimants with mental and behavioural disorders
November 2001	6,650	2,110	n/a	n/a
November 2002	6,800	2,210	n/a	n/a
November 2003	6,810	2,280	n/a	n/a
November 2004	7,020	2,420	n/a	n/a
November 2005	6,990	2,460	n/a	n/a
November 2006	7,030	2,570	n/a	n/a
November 2007	7,320	2,780	n/a	n/a
November 2008	7,370	2,840	160	n/a
November 2009	6,500	2,580	1,460	n/a
November 2010	5,960	2,380	2,110	730

n/a = not available

Notes:

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10/
 2. To qualify for incapacity benefit (IB), claimants have to undertake a medical assessment of incapacity for work called a personal capability assessment. Under the employment and support allowance regime, new claimants have to undergo the work capability assessment. From April 2011 incapacity benefit recipients have begun also to undertake this assessment. The medical condition recorded on the claim form does not itself confer entitlement to incapacity benefit or employment and support allowance. So, for example, a decision on entitlement for a customer claiming IB or ESA on the basis of mental and behavioural disorders would be based on their ability to carry out the range of activities assessed by the personal/work capability assessment.
 3. Data include people in receipt of benefit and also those who fail the contributions conditions but receive a national insurance credit, i.e. ‘credits only cases’.
 4. Incapacity benefit was replaced by employment support allowance (ESA) from October 2008.
 5. Data by medical condition for ESA is only available from 2010.
 6. Data are published on www.nomisweb.co.uk
- Source:
DWP Information Directorate 100% WPLS.

Industrial Health and Safety

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what guidance the Health and Safety Executive issues to employers on temperatures in the workplace above 30 degrees in order to limit the long- and short-term physical and psychological effects of such temperatures on workers. [58165]

Chris Grayling: Guidance on the HSE website covers situations of high temperature where heat stress may occur. The guidance does not specify a specific temperature at which control measures should be put into place.

Industrial Health and Safety: Scotland

Graeme Morrice: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of the effects of reductions in the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) budget on the number of HSE inspectors working in Scotland over the comprehensive spending review period. [58058]

Chris Grayling: At 1 April 2011, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) had 173¹ full-time equivalent (FTE) inspectors based in Scotland, who work either for all or part of their time in Scotland or its offshore waters. By 31 March 2012, the number is forecast to be 183¹ FTE inspectors, subject to the outcome of approved recruitment and natural turnover. The net increase reflects the planned increase in inspectors regulating offshore oil and gas.

The HSE also has other specialist inspectors who, although based elsewhere in Great Britain, work across national boundaries, including in Scotland. Their effort is not usually planned or accounted for on a nation-by-nation basis and they are not included in the numbers above.

My statement of 21 March 2011, "Good Health and Safety, Good for Everyone" announced a number of changes to the health and safety system in Great Britain. HSE is still undertaking the necessary planning and work to implement these changes and projections of staff numbers beyond 2012-13 are not available at present.

¹ The figures are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Industrial Injuries

Mr Crausby: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of the number of people with illnesses (a) caused or (b) exacerbated by exposure to high temperatures in the course of their employment. [57939]

Chris Grayling: There is insufficient evidence to allow a reliable estimate to be made. HSE carried out a survey into high workplace temperatures in 2009, to which 2,933 responses were submitted. This offered no evidence of significant numbers of illnesses caused or exacerbated by exposure to high temperatures in the course of their employment. At the time of this survey, HSE contacted the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council, as they monitor scientific reports and publications about occupational diseases. They reported that no research or evidence on the effect of heat at work on certain occupations has been brought to their attention.

Means-Tested Benefits: Peterborough

Mr Stewart Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many children in each electoral ward of the Peterborough City Council area lived in households in receipt of means-tested benefits in the latest period for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement. [57413]

Maria Miller: There were 8,620 children aged 15 and under in Peterborough at May 2010 who were living in households where a parent or guardian was claiming income support, jobseeker's allowance, income-based employment and support allowance or pension credit. The breakdown by electoral ward of the Peterborough city council area is in the table.

Ward name	Total children aged 15 and under
Barnack	30
Bretton North	650
Bretton South	225
Central	615
Dogsthorpe	715
East	765
Eye and Thorney	150
Fletton	415
Glington and Wittering	75
Newborough	65
North	380
Northborough	30
Orton Longueville	875
Orton Waterville	295
Orton with Hampton	650
Park	385
Paston	640
Ravensthorpe	575
Stanground Central	325
Stanground East	135
Walton	185
Werrington North	225
Werrington South	85
West	130

Source:

DWP Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study 100% data and HMRC Child Benefit administrative data. Total may not sum due to rounding.

Pensioners: Bexleyheath

Mr Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what recent estimate he has made of the number of pensioners in Bexleyheath and Crayford who have received (a) winter fuel allowance and (b) free television licences in the last 12 months. [57158]

Steve Webb: Winter fuel payment information is available in the document winter fuel payment recipients 2009-10 by parliamentary constituencies and gender. This is available in the Commons Library and on the internet at:

<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=wfp>

The information on free television licences for people aged 75 or over is not held by Government. Department for Culture, Media and Sport have policy responsibility for free TV licences. However I understand that free TV licences are issued by TV Licensing as agents for the BBC. The BBC does not collate information on licence holders aged 75 or over by geographical area.

Poverty: Children

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many and what proportion of children were living in poverty in each of the last

30 years; and what estimate he has made of the number and proportion of children likely to be living in poverty in each of the next four years. [56725]

Maria Miller: Estimates of the number and proportion of children living in poverty are published in the Households Below Average Income (HBAI) series. HBAI uses household income adjusted (or 'equivalised') for household size and composition, to provide a proxy for standard of living.

The latest year of data which are available is 2009-10. The following table shows the number and proportion of children with income below 60% of contemporary median income, before housing costs (BHC) in each of the last 30 years.

Modelled tax and benefit reforms announced since Budget 2010 may have a small reduction in child poverty in 2011-12 and 2012-13; however given the uncertainty around these types of estimates, this change may be on the edge of statistical significance.

Number and proportion of children falling below 60% of contemporary median income, before housing costs (BHC)

Publication	Period	Number of children	
		Million	Percentage
FES (UK)	1979	1.8	13
	1981	2.6	19
	1987	2.8	23
	1988 and 1989	3.1	25
	1990 and 1991	3.4	27
	1991 and 1992	3.5	28
	1992 and 1993	3.8	29
	1993-94 to 1994-95	3.6	28
	FRS (GB)	1994-95	3.2
1995-96		3.0	24
1996-97		3.4	27
1997-98		3.4	27
FRS (UK)		1998-99	3.4
	1999-2000	3.4	26
	2000-01	3.1	23
	2001-02	3.0	23
	2002-03	2.9	23
	2003-04	2.9	22
	2004-05	2.7	21
	2005-06	2.8	22
	2006-07	2.9	22
	2007-08	2.9	23
2008-09	2.8	22	
2009-10	2.6	20	

Notes:

1. These statistics are based on Households Below Average Income (HBAI) data sourced from the Family Resources Survey (FRS) and Family Expenditure Survey (FES). The FRS and FES uses disposable household income, adjusted using modified OECD equivalisation factors for household size and composition, as an income measure as a proxy for standard of living.

2. All estimates are based on survey data and are therefore subject to uncertainty. Small differences should be treated with caution as these will be affected by sampling error and variability in non-response.

3. The reference period for Households Below Average Income figures are single financial years.

4. Numbers of children in low-income households have been rounded to the nearest 100,000, while proportions have been rounded to the nearest percentage point.

5. These statistics are based on incomes Before Housing Costs.

6. Relative poverty is defined as children living in households with less than 60% of contemporary median household income.

7. FRS figures are for Great Britain up to 1997/98, and for the United Kingdom from 1998-99, with estimates for Northern Ireland imputed for the years 1998/99 through 2001-02. The reference period for FRS figures is single financial years.

8. FES figures are for the United Kingdom. These are single calendar years for 1979, 1981, and 1987; two combined calendar years from 1988 to 1993 and two financial years combined from 1993-94 to 1994-95.

9. These statistics are publicly available in the Households Below Average Income Report on the DWP website:

<http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=hbai>

Source:

Households Below Average Income, DWP

Remploy: Manpower

Mr Bain: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what financial assistance he plans to provide for the supported employment Remploy factories in each of the next four financial years; [39548]

(2) what estimate he has made of the number of supported employment Remploy factories which will continue to be in operation in (a) Glasgow, (b) Scotland and (c) the UK in each of the next four years. [39549]

Maria Miller: There are two Remploy factories in Glasgow located at Clydebank and Springburn, nine in Scotland and 54 in the UK.

The coalition Government confirmed, despite severe fiscal constraints, as part of the spending review that Remploy's operational budget for the five-year modernisation plan from 2008-09 to 2012-13 remains protected at £555 million.

Remploy are operating in challenging economic conditions and are rebalancing the role of the Employment Services arm of their business and factories to ensure they keep within the funding available. This includes a programme of voluntary redundancies to around 30,000 staff in Remploy factories of which around 2,500 are supported employees. Remploy have received over 700 applications from factory staff including over 500 supported employees. Remploy will not accept any redundancies that impact on factory operations and no factory will close as a result of this.

An independent review of the support the Government provide to disabled people who want to work, including the support provided by Remploy, will be published in the summer.

Retirement: Age

Rachel Reeves: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will estimate the savings to the Exchequer which would result from an increase in the

state pension age from 65 to 66 years between April 2020 and April 2021. [57666]

Steve Webb: Increasing the state pension age from 65 to 66 between April 2020 and April 2021 would result in savings of £21.7 billion (in 2020-21 prices) between 2020-21 and 2025-26. This is significantly less than the savings of £30 billion (in 2020-21 prices) between 2016-17 and 2025-26 resulting from the Pensions Bill 2011 timetable.

Rachel Reeves: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will estimate the savings to the Exchequer which would accrue from implementing the increase in the state pension age to 67 years from 2025. [57668]

Steve Webb: The savings which would accrue from increasing the state pension age gradually to 67 between 2025 and 2027 are £59.3 billion (in 2010-11 prices) between 2025-26 and 2035-36.

Rachel Reeves: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) if he will estimate the number of (a) women and (b) men who would be affected by increasing the state pension age for both men and women from 65 to 66 years between 2020 and 2021 and then increasing it gradually to 67 years by 2025; [57669]

(2) if he will estimate the maximum additional time for a (a) man and (b) women to wait to receive a state pension in the case where the state pension age for both men and women increased from 65 to 66 years between 2020 and 2021 and then increased gradually to 67 years by 2025; [57670]

(3) if he will estimate the savings which would accrue to the Exchequer from increasing the state pension for both men and women from 65 to 66 years between 2020 and 2021 and then gradually to 67 by 2025. [57667]

Steve Webb: Assuming that the increase to 67 would occur gradually between 2023 and 2025, the number of women and men affected by an increase in the State Pension age from 65 to 66 between 2020 and 2021 and then to 67 by 2025 would be 6.4 million and 6.3 million, respectively.

The maximum delay for both men and women compared to the currently legislated timetable in the case where the state pension age for both men and women increased from 65 to 66 between 2020 and 2021 and then increased over two years to 67 by 2025 would be 23 months.

The savings which would accrue from increasing the state pension age from 65 to 66 between 2020 and 2021 and then gradually to 67 between 2023 and 2025 are £32.2 billion (in 2010-11 prices) between 2020-21 and 2025-26, and £58 billion (in 2010-11 prices) between 2026-27 and 2035-36.

This timetable would result in savings of just 2.2 billion (in 2010-11 prices) between 2016-17 and 2020-21. This is significantly lower than the savings of £10.5 billion (in 2010-11 prices) during the same period resulting from the Pensions Bill 2011 timetable.

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate his Department has made of the number of women who will work for

longer before reaching pension age in each of the 10 years following the date of implementation of such changes. [58162]

Steve Webb: The information requested is in the following table. This is an expanded version of the table presented in the equality impact assessment which accompanies the Pensions Bill 2011 (page 40 of annex A), which includes years 2017 and 2019.

Impact on numbers in employment, compared to legislated timetable; women aged 55 to 66

	<i>Number increase</i>
2016	109,648
2017	117,274
2018	120,013
2019	122,848
2020	132,115
2021	125,305
2022	113,936
2023	91,992
2024	71,736
2025	48,713
2026	23,932

The modelling assumes the rises in state pension age beyond 66 remain unchanged.

The announcement of an increase in state pension age is assumed to increase the age at which males would exit the labour market from age 55 onwards; for instance, a 66-year-old man would adopt the exit rate from the labour market currently adopted by a 65-year-old. Women's exit rates are assumed to converge to men's exit rates as a result of state pension age equalisation. This modelling was done by DWP using HM Treasury's cohort employment model.

Separation

Sheila Gilmore: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much he expects to allocate from the annual budget for information and support through the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission to supplement grant funding to relationship support services with respect to family separation in the next four years. [57637]

Maria Miller: As set out in the Government consultation on child maintenance, previous administrations have not before had a co-ordinated Government approach to family support. We are working with Department for Education, Ministry of Justice and devolved Administrations to build evidence of what support works for different families. Then we will be able to make sure resources are being used to best effect.

The Department for Education is investing £30 million in relationship support services over the next four years, including their grant funding to voluntary and community sector organisations to support separating couples. We will be working with the Department for Education to ensure the Government approach is as joined up as possible. DWP currently spends around £5.6 million a year on information and support provided through the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission.

The Government consultation on child maintenance ended on 7 April and we are currently considering the responses received. We plan to publish the Government response to this consultation in July.

Social Fund

Cathy Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what funding his Department provided to social fund (*a*) budgeting loans, (*b*) crisis loans and (*c*) community grants in each of the last five years. [43503]

Steve Webb: HM Treasury allocates funding for the Social Fund. Over the past five years the discretionary fund (which comprises budgeting loans, community care grants and crisis loans) has been allocated new annually managed expenditure funding as follows:

<i>HM Treasury allocated money</i>			
	<i>£ million</i>		
	<i>Annually managed expenditure</i>	<i>Additional annual managed expenditure for loans</i>	<i>Total annual managed expenditure for loans</i>
2010-11	178.2	141.5	319.70
2009-10	178.2	121.9	300.10
2008-09	178.2	40	218.20
2007-08	178.2	50	228.20
2006-07	178.2	120	298.20

<i>Allocation between elements of the discretionary social fund</i>			
	<i>£ million</i>		
	<i>Amount allocated to CCGs</i>	<i>Amount allocated to Contingency reserve</i>	<i>Amount allocated to loans</i>
2010-11	141	1	177.7
2009-10	141	1	158.1
2008-09	141	1	76.2
2007-08	141	1	86.2
2006-07	141	1	156.2

Note:

Additional money was given in 2010-11 and 2009-10 to accommodate increased applications during the recession. Additional money was given in 2008-09, 2007-08 and 2006-07 to accommodate changes to the scheme in 2006-07. This information is taken from previous Social Fund annual reports. Remaining loans are funded through recoveries of existing loans within each year.

Social Security Benefits

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what his estimate is of the cost to the Exchequer of exempting from the total household benefit cap households living in social housing as defined by section 68 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 in each of the next five financial years. [57426]

Chris Grayling: The spending review 2010 announced that from 2013 we will introduce a cap on the total amount of benefit that working-age people can receive so that households on out-of-work benefits will no longer receive more in welfare payments than the average weekly wage for working households. The benefit cap is intended to promote fairness between those in and out

of work and to increase incentives for people to move into work or increase their hours of employment.

On its introduction we estimate that household benefit payments will be capped at around £500 per week for couple and lone parent households and around £350 per week for single adult households.

If the benefit cap were applied as described in the spending review the savings to the Exchequer are estimated to be £225 million in 2013-14 and £270 million in 2014-15.

If households in social housing were exempt from the benefit cap, savings would fall to approximately £70 million in 2013-14 and £80 million in 2014-15. Figures for 2015-16 and beyond are not available.

Analysis of those affected by the benefit cap has been modelled using survey data—as such there is a degree of uncertainty around the results.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what his estimate is of the cost to the Exchequer of exempting from the total household benefit cap households where someone is owed a duty to be supported with interim or temporary accommodation under sections 188, 190, 193 or 200 of the Housing Act 1996 in each of the next five financial years. [57427]

Chris Grayling: The information requested is not available.

The costing model used to estimate the effects of the benefit cap is based on data from the 2008-09 Family Resources Survey (FRS). The FRS does not record information on whether a household is owed a duty to be supported with interim or temporary accommodation under sections 188, 190, 193 or 200 of the Housing Act 1996.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what his estimate is of the additional cost to the Exchequer of exempting from the total household benefit cap households where someone has left work due to redundancy or illness or for other reasons relating to the care of a child in each of the next five financial years. [57430]

Chris Grayling: The information requested is not available.

The costing model used to estimate the effects of the benefit cap is based on data from the 2008-09 Family Resources Survey (FRS). The FRS does not record information on whether an out-of-work member of a household left work due to redundancy or illness or for other reasons relating to the care of a child.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what his estimate is of the cost to the Exchequer of exempting from the total household benefit cap households where no member has received a reasonable offer of a job, within the previous (*a*) one year and (*b*) three years in each of the next five financial years. [57432]

Chris Grayling: The information requested is not available.

The costing model used to estimate the effects of the benefit cap is based on data from the 2008-09 Family Resources Survey (FRS). The FRS does not record information on whether a member of a household has received a reasonable offer of a job within the previous (a) one year and (b) three years.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will estimate (a) the level of the household benefit cap and (b) the cost to the Exchequer of setting the cap at the level of estimated earnings plus any in-work benefits that an average earner might expect to receive in each of the next five financial years. [57658]

Chris Grayling: The spending review 2010 announced that from 2013 the Government will introduce a cap on the total amount of benefit that working-age people can receive so that households on out-of-work benefits will no longer receive more in welfare payments than the average weekly wage for working households.

On its introduction we estimate that household benefit payments will be capped at around £500 per week for couple and lone parent households and around £350 per week for single adult households.

If the benefit cap is applied as announced the savings to the Exchequer are estimated to be £225 million in 2013-14 and £270 million in 2014-15.

We estimate that in 2013-14 the average amount of in-work benefit received by working age households at the average earnings level will be approximately £20 per week.

If household benefit payments are capped £20 per week higher than outlined in the spending review 2010, at £520 per week for couple and lone parent households and at £370 per week for single adult households, savings to the Exchequer would fall to £170 million in 2013-14 and £210 million in 2014-15. Figures for 2015-16 and beyond are not available.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will estimate the cost to the Exchequer of excluding from the amount liable for the total household benefit cap (a) housing benefit, (b) temporary accommodation costs and (c) any amount of universal credit paid in respect of housing costs in each of the next five financial years. [57659]

Chris Grayling: On its introduction we estimate that household benefit payments will be capped at around £500 per week for couple and lone parent households and around £350 per week for single adult households.

If the benefit cap were applied as announced the savings to the Exchequer are estimated to be £225 million in 2013-14, £270 million in 2014-15 and £270 million in 2015-16.

Estimates suggest that excluding (a) housing benefit from the benefit cap would reduce savings to less than £20 million in 2013-14 and 2014-15. Figures are not available for 2015-16 and beyond.

Information on (b) temporary accommodation is not available. The costing model used to estimate the effects of the benefit cap is based on data from the 2008-09 Family Resources Survey (FRS). The FRS

does not record information on whether a household is in temporary accommodation.

Note that estimates above are based on the current benefit system including changes announced in the spending review 2010, but excluding universal credit.

Information on section (c) is not available as the estimated savings from the benefit cap in universal credit will depend upon final detailed design issues regarding the treatment of in-work households.

Ms Buck: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of the additional cost to the public purse of exempting from the total household benefit cap households that live in supported or sheltered accommodation in each of the next five years. [57903]

Chris Grayling: The information requested is not available.

The costing model used to estimate the effects of the benefit cap is based on data from the 2008-09 Family Resources Survey (FRS). The FRS does not record information on whether the household lives in supported or sheltered accommodation.

Ms Buck: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of the additional cost to the public purse of exempting from the total household benefit cap households that have been offered accommodation under the prevention and relief of homelessness powers and duties under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 in each of the next five financial years. [57904]

Chris Grayling: The information requested is not available.

The costing model used to estimate the effects of the benefit cap is based on data from the 2008-09 Family Resources Survey (FRS). The FRS does not record information on whether a member of a household has been offered accommodation under the prevention and relief of homelessness powers and duties under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.

Social Security Benefits: Appeals

Anas Sarwar: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many benefit appeals were awaiting referral to the first-tier tribunal on 23 May 2011. [57681]

Chris Grayling: The information is not available in the form requested. While DWP counts the overall numbers of appeals lodged, a number of these appeals will not be referred to the first-tier tribunal. Appeals lodged with the DWP can lapse if the disputed decision is revised in the customer's favour upon reconsideration, or the customer can decide to withdraw their appeal prior to it being referred and in certain circumstances appeals can be struck out.

The following table provides the latest count of appeals outstanding with DWP. The count is conducted at the end of each month so this data is correct as of 30 April 2011.

Appeals outstanding in DWP

	<i>Number</i>
Bereavement Benefit ¹	70
Disablement Benefit ¹	70
Employment and Support Allowance ¹	29,390
Incapacity Benefit ¹	2,130
Income Support ¹	2,100
Jobseekers Allowance ¹	4,310
Maternity Allowance ¹	40
Social Fund ¹	330
Pension Credit ²	1,760
State Pension ²	240
Winter Fuel ²	80
International Pension Centre (Working Age) ²	30
Disability Living Allowance ¹	9,460
Attendance Allowance ¹	420
Carers Allowance ¹	700
Total	51,130

Note:

Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.

¹ Source—Management Information System Programme (MISP). MISP is the departmental performance management, data capture and reporting tool.

² Source—Pension Service Appeals Team Database

The data is a count of all outstanding decisions in DWP on 30 April 2011 so includes all appeals that will be referred to the First-tier Tribunal and appeals that may be cleared through DWP internal processes. Individuals may appeal against each appealable decision they receive so could have more than one appeal, against decisions for more than one benefit.

The information quoted is internal management information for internal DWP use only and does not form part of the official statistics outputs that are released by the Department in accordance with the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice.

Housing benefit and council tax benefit are administered by individual local authorities. Data on outstanding appeals for these benefits is not held by DWP.

Social Security Benefits: Mental Health

Bob Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of sanctions in the benefits system for people with mental health conditions. [53733]

Maria Miller: The Department keeps sanctions in the benefits system under continual review to ensure effectiveness and appropriateness. Safeguards are in place to ensure vulnerable claimants, such as those with mental health conditions, are not sanctioned inappropriately. Where necessary this includes conducting home visits before a sanction is considered. These safeguards will continue. Support for those in the ESA support group, who have the most severe conditions, will remain unconditional.

The role of sanctions has been reviewed as part of our programme of welfare reform. For the first time, our employment programmes will be truly personalised. Advisers in the Work Programme and Jobcentre Plus will devise tailored plans for each claimant, taking account of their circumstances, including the effects of any mental health condition. We believe that the changes

we are making to conditionality will enable us to better match the requirements on an individual to their particular circumstances. This should benefit those with mental health conditions, particularly conditions that fluctuate.

State Retirement Pensions

Rachel Reeves: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when he expects the proposed flat-rate state pension to come into effect. [52976]

Steve Webb: The consultation paper, 'A State Pension for the 21st Century', consults on two options for reforming the state pension system for future pensioners and how future changes to the state pension age should be managed.

Without wishing to pre-empt the consultation process, we would currently imagine introducing a reformed state pension for new pensioners at some point in the next Parliament.

Unemployed People: Work Experience

Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions which sectors will be covered by his proposed sector-based work academies apart from the hospitality and leisure sectors. [57685]

Chris Grayling: Sector-based work academies will be part of the package of additional support options which Jobcentre Plus can use to help people into work prior to referral to the Work programme. It is intended that sector-based work academies will be a flexible model that can be tailored to meet sector and local needs. Within this model it is expected sector-based work academies will be established in sectors with high volumes of current local vacancies—with participants receiving a guaranteed job interview upon completion of the pre-employment training and work experience placement.

We will look to establish some of the initial sector-based work academies in the retail and hospitality sectors. However, it will be up to Jobcentre Plus, working in partnership with local employers and training providers, to determine the most appropriate offer to meet the need of the local labour market. Therefore the sectors covered by sector-based work academies will not be prescribed.

Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what progress has been made on preparations for the introduction of sector-based work academies in August 2011; and if he will make a statement. [57686]

Chris Grayling: Jobcentre Plus is responsible for the delivery of sector-based work academies and preparations for implementation in England from August 2011 are underway. Jobcentre Plus is working in partnership with Skills Funding Agency at national level, and further education colleges and training providers at local level to ensure that the required training provision is in place from August, and engaging with employers at national and local level to identify suitable work experience placements and job opportunities.

Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has for the geographical distribution of sector-based work academies; and if he will make a statement. [57694]

Chris Grayling: It is intended that sector-based work academies will be a flexible model that can be tailored to meet sector and local needs. As a locally-driven initiative, the geographical distribution of sector-based work academies will depend on the appetite of employers, training providers and claimants across the Jobcentre Plus districts.

Unemployment: Females

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) if he will take steps to prevent women in employment becoming unemployed before they reach the state pension age; [58163]

(2) whether his Department undertook research on the effects of (a) unemployment and (b) planned changes to the pension age on (i) men and (ii) women as part of the Age Positive campaign; and if he will make a statement. [58164]

Steve Webb: The Government's Age Positive initiative provides guidance for employers on the business benefits of retaining older male and female workers up to and beyond state pension age. The Government are working in partnership with key business leaders in the main occupational sectors to drive forward sustained improvement around the recruitment, retention and training of older people and embed effective work force practices that include flexible work and flexible retirement opportunities.

The Age Positive initiative itself does not commission or undertake formal research but has used evidence around age, health and employment from expert business-focused organisations such as the Health and Safety Executive; the Chartered Management Institute; the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development; and DWP commissioned research. DWP commissions a range of evidence which it publishes on its website at:

<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/agepositive.asp>

Evidence on the impact of the state pension age increase is in the impact assessment for the Pensions Bill. DWP Research Report 615 ("50+ back to work evidence review and indicative guide for secondary data analysis" S. Vegeris, et al, 2010) summarises research and evaluation of DWP employment initiatives for older people.

Unemployment: Young People

Jonathan Reynolds: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment his Department has made of long-term trends in youth unemployment. [57993]

Chris Grayling: In line with the Government's economic strategy for recovery from the recession, set out in the Plan for Growth published alongside the Budget, we expect unemployment, including youth unemployment, to fall in the long-term.

To support young people into work we are providing funding for up to 250,000 more apprenticeships over

the next four years and funding for 100,000 work placements over the next two years. On 12 May 2011 the Prime Minister announced an enhanced £60 million package of support for young people, in addition to the investment made at the Budget. The new £60 million package will include:

The launch of a new £30 million Innovation Fund which will help disadvantaged people using social finance models;

Early access to Work Programme places for vulnerable 18-year-old people who are likely to be struggling to make the transition from education to work;

Additional support for 16 and 17-year-old people claiming jobseeker's allowance on the grounds of hardship, including access to work experience and work clubs.

Work Capability Assessment

Yvonne Fovargue: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many and what proportion of Atos assessments took more than 35 days to complete (a) in Makerfield constituency and (b) England in the latest period for which figures are available. [57553]

Chris Grayling: The following information relates to April 2011, the latest period for which figures are available.

The data relate to:

Employment support allowance (ESA), incapacity benefit reassessment (IBR), industrial injuries disablement benefit (IIDB) and service personnel VA war pension cases (SPVA);

Cases where Wigan Medical Examination Centre is the preferred medical examination centre (MEC) on Atos Healthcare's medical services referral system (MSRS).

	April 2011					
	Wigan MEC total cases	Wigan MEC over 35 days	% cleared over 35 days	England total cases	England over 35 days	% cleared over 35 days
ESA outputs ¹	382	161	42.1	36,619	16,204	44.3
Other benefit types						
IBR	15	0	0	1,760	0	0
IIDB	9	0	0	3,193	261	8
SPVA	5	1	20	491	11	2
DLA	2__	2__	2__	3,260	19	0.5

¹ For ESA Atos Healthcare has an actual average clearance target of 35 days (this includes asking the customer to complete an ESA50 questionnaire and sending a reminder as appropriate), and then arranging and conducting an assessment if appropriate. Achievement nationally in April 11 was an average clearance time of 33 days.

² DLA assessments mainly carried out in customer's own home—no data available linking to a MEC.

Written Questions: Government Responses

Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when he plans to respond to question 10614, on access to work, tabled on 17 July 2010 for answer on 21 July 2010. [49711]

Chris Grayling [holding answer 29 March 2011]: I replied to the hon. Member's question on 30 March 2011, *Official Report*, columns 402-03W.

CABINET OFFICE

Bowel Cancer

Frank Dobson: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the five-year survival rate was for (a) male and (b) female bowel cancer patients in each (i) primary care trust, (ii) cancer network and (iii) strategic health authority in the last 12 months for which figures are available. [55819]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Stephen Penneck, dated May 2011:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your recent question asking what the five-year cancer survival rate was for (a) male and (b) female bowel cancer patients in each (i) primary care trust, (ii) cancer network and (iii) strategic health authority in the last 12 months for which figures are available. [55819]

ONS publish five-year cancer survival rates for adults (aged 15-99). Survival is calculated from the date of diagnosis.

Bowel cancer, or colorectal cancer, is cancer of the colon and rectum combined. ONS publications on cancer survival generally present figures for colon cancer rather than colorectal cancer. However, five-year colorectal cancer survival figures for England, for males and females diagnosed during 2004 - 2008 and followed up to the end of 2009, are available on the National Statistics website at:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=14007>

Survival rates for bowel cancer are not available for (i) primary care trusts in England. One year survival rates for all cancers combined are available. For patients diagnosed during 1996-2006 and followed up to the end of 2007, the figures are available on the National Statistics website at:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=15388>

Figures are presented for each of the 11 years from 1996 - 2006, for all adults (persons aged 15 - 99 years), persons aged 55 - 64 years and persons aged 75 - 99 years.

The latest five-year survival figures available for (ii) cancer networks in England, for six common cancers including colon cancer, for patients diagnosed in 1991-2006 and followed up to 2007, are available on the National Statistics website at:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=15387>

The results are divided into three periods: 1991 - 1995, 1996 - 2000 and 2001 - 2006.

The latest five-year survival figures available for (iii) strategic health authorities, for eight common cancers including colon cancer, for patients diagnosed in 2001-2003 and followed up to the end of 2008, are available on the National Statistics website at:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=15379>

Children

Jason McCartney: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) what estimate he has made of the likely change in the number of 0 to 10 year olds in (a) Yorkshire and the Humber and (b) the North East in the next 10 years; [57367]

(2) what the projected birth rate in (a) Yorkshire and the Humber and (b) the North East is in the next 10 years. [57340]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Stephen Penneck:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Questions asking what the projected birth rate in (a) Yorkshire and the Humber and (b) the North East is in the next 10 years [57340], and what estimate he has made of the likely change in the number of 0 to 10 year olds in (a) Yorkshire and the Humber and (b) the North East in the next 10 years. [57367]

Estimates of future population are available as population projections. The most recent subnational population projections are based on the mid-year population estimates for 2008.

The general fertility rate for the next ten years has been calculated using the projected number of births and population.

Projected general fertility rate¹ in Yorkshire and The Humber and the North East, 2010 to 2020

	Yorkshire and The Humber	North East
2010	61.8	59.9
2011	61.9	60.1
2012	62.1	60.3
2013	62.6	60.7
2014	63.2	61.3
2015	63.8	61.8
2016	64.5	62.5
2017	65.0	62.9
2018	65.2	63.0
2019	65.1	62.8
2020	64.7	62.3

¹ Number of live births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44 years old
Source:

Office for National Statistics

Between mid-2010 and mid-2020, the number of children aged between 0 and 10 years old is projected to increase from 668,700 to 751,700 in Yorkshire and The Humber, an increase of 83,000, and from 312,900 to 337,500 in the North East, an increase of 24,600.

The subnational population projections are not forecasts. They are based on demographic trends and indicate what the population of an area is likely to be if recently observed trends in fertility, mortality and migration were to continue.

Civil Servants: Recruitment

Priti Patel: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) how many complaints were received in respect of the vetting group in each of the last five years; [57411]

(2) how many vacant posts in the civil service requiring security clearance through the provisions of the vetting group policy for (a) permanent and (b) contract positions have been advertised in each of the last five years; and how many posts required security clearance to have been already obtained in each such year; [57410]

(3) what reports he has received of recruitment agencies advertising for vacant posts in Government departments or public bodies that have provided incorrect information about the application process in relation to vetting in the last five years. [57412]

Mr Maude: The number of vacancies across the civil service (requiring security clearances or otherwise) is not collected centrally and would be available only at disproportionate cost. The Cabinet Office continues to receive correspondence from MPs and members of the public, and telephone queries, regarding instances of recruitment agencies specifying that an existing security clearance is required to apply for a vacancy. Officials continue to work with the Professional Contractors

Group (PCG) and the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) to address this problem.

In September 2009, after discussions with the PCG, Cabinet Office established an electronic mail box for PCG members (and others) to report instances where the publicly available policy and guidance on vetting appears to have been ignored as part of the recruitment or contracting process. Since June 2010, 241 vacancy details have been forwarded to the mailbox where individuals felt that the recruiter should not have required an existing national security clearance. Officials use this information to inform their ongoing work to address this issue.

Community Matters

Charlotte Leslie: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what representations he has received on the participation of Community Matters in the Office for Civil Society strategic partners programme; and if he will make a statement. [56771]

Mr Hurd: I have received representations from Community Matters, some of its members and others in relation to the Office for Civil Society Strategic Partners programme. Many of these have asked for Community Matters to be reinstated as a Strategic Partner.

While Community Matters will not be reinstated, I have asked my officials to commission the organisation to look at what big society policies and programmes mean for some of the groups it represents. This work will take place this year.

Departmental Billing

Gordon Banks: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) what mechanism his Department has established to ensure its payments are passed through the supply chain to each tier in accordance with the last date for payment defined in the Government's Fair Payment guidance; [55897]

(2) what mechanism his Department has established to ensure that payments made by the Prime Minister's Office are passed through the supply chain to each tier in accordance with the last date for payment defined in the Government's Fair Payment guidance. [55883]

Mr Maude: The Prime Minister's Office is an integral part of the Cabinet Office. The Cabinet Office does not have any contracts to which the Government's Fair Payment Guidance refers.

Departmental Charitable Donations

Chris Ruane: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what steps the Deputy Prime Minister is taking to encourage charitable giving by Ministers in his office. [57133]

Mr Hurd: All Government Ministers have pledged to undertake a 'one day challenge' with a charity or community group of their choice. This is a clear and public commitment by Ministers to give their time to help others. The pledge aims to inspire others to consider how they might be able to support their communities to benefit themselves, as well as their chosen organisations.

Departmental Research

Chris Ruane: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what (a) longitudinal and (b) other (i) research and (ii) collection of data his Department has (A) initiated, (B) terminated and (C) amended in the last 12 months; and what such research and data collection exercises undertaken by the Department have not been amended in that period. [56769]

Mr Hurd: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Government Departments: Procurement

Nicola Blackwood: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what steps he is taking to reduce (a) costs and (b) inefficiency in the Government supply chain. [52846]

Mr Maude: Firstly, we are centralising the procurement of common goods and services. For each category of spend there will be a single supply strategy so we can significantly reduce spend through aggregation, standardisation and rationalisation.

Secondly, since July 2010 I have initiated a series of negotiations with over 50 of its major suppliers. These discussions identified and delivered savings of over £800 million in 2010-11. High level negotiations are being undertaken on a 'once for government' portfolio basis, taking account of other work to achieve savings eg the Major Projects Review, the ICT moratorium, and the curtailment of discretionary spend.

Thirdly, the Cabinet Office has appointed a network of Crown Representatives to manage relationships with major suppliers who hold a portfolio of contracts across central Departments and ensure Government acts as a strategic 'single' client. Crown Representatives will be able to challenge suppliers where there is duplication across these contracts and spot opportunities for synergy and cost removal.

Fourthly, to address inefficiency in the procurement process, which adds to costs for both Government and suppliers, we undertook a Lean review of the procurement process, which has suggested actions to tackle wasteful practices and unnecessary complexity. We are now engaged on an implementation programme to apply lean' thinking and techniques to a number of new projects in central Government procurement in order to test these findings to achieve time and cost savings for the benefit of both bidders and the public purse. We will roll out the new approach once the route is proven.

Tom Greatrex: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what steps he has taken to ensure that 25 per cent. of Government contracts are awarded to small and medium-sized enterprises. [57674]

Mr Maude: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friends the Member for Stroud (Neil Carmichael) and the Member for Bromsgrove (Sajid Javid) on 13 May 2011, *Official Report*, column 1365W.

Tom Greatrex: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of central government procurement processes in

evaluating the ability of small and medium-sized companies to receive an appropriate share of public sector contracts. [57675]

Mr Maude: On 11 February, the Prime Minister and I announced a series of measures to make it easier for SMEs to compete for Government contracts. Details can be found on the Cabinet Office website:

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/news/government-opens-contracts-small-business

In particular, we are seeking to eliminate prequalification questionnaires below a £100,000 threshold and promoting use of the SME-friendly Open Procedure above £100,000, which is being tested on 11 projects. This ensures a more-level playing field for SMEs when bidders are being evaluated.

The Crown Commercial Representative for SMEs, Stephen Allott, is working with Departments to plan to run a series of Product Surgeries, the details of which will be announced soon. Stephen is keen to ensure that the surgeries provide a real opportunity for constructive engagement between innovative SMEs and Government and that all participants see real value in the process.

We will be publishing, in June, central Government Departments' specific action plans detailing how they will increase the amount of their business going to SMEs. These have all been reviewed by their respective Minister or Permanent Secretary.

Mr Ivan Lewis: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office with reference to the Plan for Growth, when he plans to publish a guide to public sector intellectual property procurement policy. [58167]

Mr Maude: We expect to publish the guide to public sector intellectual property procurement policy before the end of September 2011.

Jobseeker's Allowance

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) how many people claiming jobseeker's allowance have a university degree; [57031]

(2) what proportion of those on jobseeker's allowance are under 18-years-old; [57036]

(3) what proportion of those on jobseeker's allowance are under 30-years-old. [57037]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Stephen Penneck, dated May 2011:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Questions asking: what proportion of those currently on Jobseeker's Allowance are under 18 years old, (057036), what proportion of those currently on Jobseeker's Allowance are under 30 years old, (057037) how many of the people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance have a university degree? (057031)

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) compiles the number of claimants of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) from the Jobcentre Plus administrative system.

The proportion of those claiming JSA who were under 18 years old in April 2011 was 0.4%.

The proportion of those claiming JSA who were under 30 years old in April 2011 was 42.7%.

The Jobcentre Plus administrative system does not hold data on educational qualifications. An alternative data source for data relating to benefits is the Annual Population Survey (APS) which also collects information regarding educational qualifications.

From APS the number of people claiming JSA with a degree or equivalent was 128,000 (and the proportion was 10.7%) for the 12 month period October 2009 to September 2010 which is the latest period available.

As with any sample survey, estimates from the APS are subject to a margin of uncertainty.

National and local area estimates for many labour market statistics, including employment, unemployment and claimant count are available on the NOMIS website at:

<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk>

Low Birthweight Babies: Peterborough

Mr Stewart Jackson: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many and what proportion of (a) low and (b) very low weight live births were recorded in the Peterborough city council area in each year since 2001; and if he will make a statement. [57415]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Stephen Penneck, dated May 2011:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking how many and what proportion of (a) low and (b) very low weight live births were recorded in the Peterborough City Council area in each year since 2001 [57415].

Table 1 below shows the number and percentage of all live births which were (a) low birthweight and, (b) very low birthweight in Peterborough Unitary Authority, in 2001 to 2009 (the latest year available).

Information on live births is routinely published by different characteristics of birth and published on the Office for National Statistics website:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=1440k>

Table 1: Number and percentage of low birthweight¹ and very low birthweight² live births, Peterborough Unitary Authority, 2001-09³

	Number/percentage of all births			
	Low birthweight		Very low birthweight	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
2001	161	7.8	34	1.7
2002	185	8.6	22	1.0
2003	179	8.1	41	1.9
2004	199	8.3	23	1.0
2005	175	7.2	32	1.3
2006	204	7.8	29	1.1
2007	213	7.7	24	0.9
2008	240	8.1	37	1.2
2009	238	8.0	40	1.4

¹ Low birthweight is defined as less than 2,500 grams.

² Very low birthweight is defined as less than 1,500 grams.

³ Calculated as a percentage of all births for which a valid birthweight was recorded.

Lung Cancer

Mr Baron: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) what the five-year survival rate for (a) male and (b) female lung cancer patients (i) in each primary care trust, (ii) in each cancer network and (iii) in England was in the last five years for which figures are available;

[57946]

(2) what the (a) one-year and (b) five-year survival rate for lung cancer in people aged (i) 49 years and under, (ii) 50 to 59 years, (iii) 60 to 69 years, (iv) 70 to 79 years and (v) 80 years and over (A) in each primary care trust, (B) in each cancer network and (C) in England was in the last five years for which figures are available. [57947]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Stephen Penneck, dated June 2011:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your recent questions asking:

(1) What the five-year survival rate for (a) male and (b) female lung cancer patients (i) in each primary care trust, (ii) in each cancer network and (iii) in England was in the last five years for which figures are available. [57946]

(2) What the (a) one-year and (b) five-year survival rate for lung cancer in people aged (i) 49 years and under, (ii) 50 to 59 years, (iii) 60 to 69 years, (iv) 70 to 79 years and (v) 80 years and over (A) in each primary care trust, (B) in each cancer network and (C) in England was for the last five years for which figures are available. [57947]

ONS publish one-year and five-year cancer survival rates for adults (aged 15-99). Survival is calculated from the date of diagnosis.

Survival rates for lung cancer are not available for (i) primary care trusts in England. One-year survival rates for all cancers combined are available. For patients diagnosed during 1996-2006

and followed up to the end of 2007, the figures are available on the National Statistics website at:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=15388>

Figures are presented for each of the 11 years from 1996-2006, for all adults (persons aged 15-99 years), persons aged 55-64 years and persons aged 75-99 years.

The latest one-year and five-year survival figures available for (ii) cancer networks in England, for six common cancers including lung cancer, for (a) male and (b) female patients diagnosed in 1991-2006 and followed up to 2007, are available on the National Statistics website at:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=15387>

Figures are presented for three time periods: 1991-1995, 1996-2000 and 2001-2006, for persons aged 15-99 years.

The latest one-year and five-year survival figures available for (iii) England, for 21 common cancers including lung cancer, for (a) male and (b) female patients diagnosed in 2004-2008 and followed up to the end of 2009, are available on the National Statistics website at:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=14007&Pos=6&ColRank=1&Rank=192>

Figures are presented for all adults (persons aged 15-99 years), persons aged 15-39 years, 40-49 years, for each 10-year age group up to 70-79 years, then for 80-99 years.

The latest figures for one-year and five-year survival for lung cancer in England, for males and females, for all ages and by age group, for (a) males and (b) females are presented in Table 1 below, with comparable figures for 2000-2004 with follow up to 2005, 2001-2006 with follow up to 2007, and 2003-2007 with follow up to 2008. Figures released prior to this were published for England and Wales combined.

Table 1: One-year and five-year relative survival (percentage), with 95% confidence intervals, for males and females (aged 15 to 99 years) diagnosed with lung cancer in England, by age group and period of diagnosis^{1, 2, 3, 4}

Sex	Standardisation/age group	%	One-year survival		Five-year survival		
			95%	Confidence intervals	%	95%	Confidence intervals
<i>Patients diagnosed during 2000-04, followed up to 2005:</i>							
Men	Age-standardised	26.1	25.8	26.4	6.5	6.3	6.8
	Unstandardised	25.2	24.9	25.5	6.3	6.1	6.6
	15-39	49	44	54	32	27	37
	40-49	33	31	35	10	9	12
	50-59	32	31	33	9	8	10
	60-69	29	29	30	8	7	8
	70-79	24	23	24	6	5	6
	80-99	16	15	17	2	2	3
Women	Age-standardised ⁴	28.8	28.4	29.2	8.2	7.9	8.6
	Unstandardised	27.3	26.9	27.7	7.8	7.4	8.1
	15-39	52	46	57	37	31	42.
	40-49	39	37	41	13	11	15
	50-59	37	36	38	12	11	13
	60-69	33	32	34	10	10.	11
	70-79	25	25	26	6	6	7
	80-99	16	15	17	2	2	3
<i>Patients diagnosed during 2001-06, followed up to 2007:</i>							
Men	Age-standardised	26.8	26.5	27.1	6.9	6.7	7.1
	Unstandardised	25.8	25.5	26.0	6.7	6.4	6.9
	15-39	50	45	54	32	28	37
	40-49	35	33	37	11	10	12
	50-59	32	31	33	9	9	10

Table 1: One-year and five-year relative survival (percentage), with 95% confidence intervals, for males and females (aged 15 to 99 years) diagnosed with lung cancer in England, by age group and period of diagnosis^{1, 2, 3, 4}

Sex	Standardisation/age group	One-year survival			Five-year survival		
		%	95%	Confidence intervals	%	95%	Confidence intervals
Women	60-69	30	29	31	8	8	9
	70-79	25	24	25	6	5	6
	80-99	16	16	17	2	2	3
	Age-standardised ⁴	29.9	29.6	30.3	8.7	8.5	9.0
	Unstandardised	28.4	28.0	28.7	8.2	7.9	8.5
	15-39	52	47	57	35	30	40
	40-49	42	40	44	15	13	17
	50-59	38	37	39	12	11	13
	60-69	35	34	35	11	10	11
	70-79	26	26	27	7	6	7
80-99	17	16	18	3	2	3	
<i>Patients diagnosed during 2003-07, followed up to 2008:</i>							
Men	Age-standardised	27.7	27.4	28.0	7.3	7.1	7.6
	Unstandardised	26.6	26.3	26.9	7.0	6.8	7.3
	15-39	48	43	53	29	24	35
	40-49	36	34	38	12	10	14
	50-59	33	32	34	10	9	11
	60-69	31	30	31	8	8	9
	70-79	26	25	26	6	6	7
	80-99	17	17	18	3	2	3
Women	Age-standardised ⁴	31.0	30.6	31.4	⁵ —	⁵ —	⁵ —
	Unstandardised	29.3	28.9	29.7	8.7	8.4	9.0
	15-39	53	47	58	⁵ —	⁵ —	⁵ —
	40-49	44	41	46	15	13	17
	50-59	39	38	40	13	12	14
	60-69	36	35	36	11	11	12
	70-79	27	27	28	7	7	8
	80-99	17	17	18	3	3	4
<i>Patients diagnosed during 2004-08, followed up to 2009:</i>							
Men	Age-standardised	28.7	28.4	29	7.8	7.6	8.1
	Unstandardised	27.5	27.2	27.8	7.5	7.2	7.8
	15-39	50	44	55	30	25	36
	40-49	37	35	40	14	12	16
	50-59	34	33	35	10	10	11
	60-69	32	31	32	9	9	10
	70-79	27	26	27	7	6	7
	80-99	18	18	19	3	3	4
Women	Age-standardised ⁴	31.9	31.5	32.3	⁵ —	⁵ —	⁵ —
	Unstandardised	30.1	29.7	30.5	8.7	8.4	9
	15-39	55	49	60	⁵ —	⁵ —	⁵ —
	40-49	44	41	46	16	14	18
	50-59	40	38	41	13	12	14
	60-69	37	36	37	11	10	12
	70-79	28	27	29	7	7	8

Table 1: One-year and five-year relative survival (percentage), with 95% confidence intervals, for males and females (aged 15 to 99 years) diagnosed with lung cancer in England, by age group and period of diagnosis^{1, 2, 3, 4}

Sex	Standardisation age group	One-year survival			Five-year survival		
		%	95%	Confidence intervals	%	95%	Confidence intervals
	80-99	18	18	19	3	3	4

¹ Relative survival is the probability of survival (shown here as a percentage) after correction for other causes of death.

² Because cancer survival varies with age at diagnosis, the summary survival estimates for all ages combined (15-99 years) have been age-standardised, where possible, to control for changes in the age profile of cancer patients over time.

³ Lung cancer is defined by the International Classification of Diseases, tenth revision (ICD-10) codes C33 and C34.

⁴ Confidence intervals are a measure of the statistical precision of an estimate and show the range of uncertainty around the estimated figure. As a general rule, if the confidence interval around one figure overlaps with the interval around another, we cannot say with certainty that there is more than a chance difference between the two figures.

⁵ It is not possible to give an age-standardised figure if there are too few patients in a given age group to provide a reliable survival estimate or if very few patients actually died in one of the intervals of time since diagnosis in which survival was estimated. That may happen because survival is very high (there are very few deaths) or because it is very low (most of the patients died).

Mr Baron: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) what the mortality rate for lung cancer in people aged (a) 49 years and under, (b) 50 to 59 years, (c) 60 to 69 years, (d) 70 to 79 years and (e) 80 years and over (i) in each primary care trust, (ii) in each cancer network and (iii) in England was in the last five years for which figures are available; [57948]

(2) what the mortality rate for (a) male and (b) female patients with lung cancer (i) in each primary care trust, (ii) in each cancer network and (iii) in England was in the last five years for which figures are available. [57949]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Stephen Penneck, dated June 2011:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your recent questions asking:

1. What the mortality rate for lung cancer in people aged (a) 49 years and under, (b) 50 to 59 years, (c) 60 to 69 years, (d) 70 to 79 years and (e) 80 years and over (i) in each primary care trust, (ii) in each cancer network and (iii) in England was in the last five years for which figures are available. (57948)

2. What the mortality rate for (a) male and (b) female patients with lung cancer (i) in each primary care trust, (ii) in each cancer network and (iii) in England was in the last five years for which figures are available. (57949)

Tables 1 and 2 provide the age-standardised mortality rate per 100,000 population, where lung cancer was the underlying cause of death, for people aged (a) 49 years and under, (b) 50 to 59 years, (c) 60 to 69 years, (d) 70 to 79 years and (e) 80 years and over (i) in each primary care organisation (Table 1) and (ii) in each cancer network (Table 2) for 2005 to 2009 combined (the latest years available). Figures for individual years were combined due to small numbers of deaths in each year.

Age-standardised rates are used to allow comparison between populations which may contain different proportions of people of different ages. It is ONS policy not to calculate age-standardised rates where there are less than 10 deaths in a group, as standardised rates based on small numbers of events are susceptible to inaccurate interpretation. Therefore, rates for 12 primary care organisations in Table 1 have not been calculated.

Tables 3 and 4 provide the age-standardised mortality rate per 100,000 population, where lung cancer was the underlying cause of death, for people aged (a) 49 years and under, (b) 50 to 59 years, (c) 60 to 69 years, (d) 70 to 79 years and (e) 80 years and over, (iii) in England, for 2005 to 2009 combined (Table 3) and individual years (Table 4) (the latest years available).

Tables 5 to 9 provide the age-standardised mortality rate per 100,000 population for (a) males and (b) females, where lung cancer was the underlying cause of death, (i) in each primary care

organisation (Tables 5 and 6), (ii) in each cancer network (Tables 7 and 8) and (iii) in England (Table 9), for 2005 to 2009 (the latest years available).

It is not possible from the information given at death registration to state whether the deceased was a patient at the time of death.

Copies of Tables 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8 have been placed in the House of Commons library.

Table 3: Age-standardised mortality rate per 100,000 population, where lung cancer was the underlying cause of death, by age group, England, 2005 to 2009 combined^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5}

Age group	Rate per 100,000 population		
	Rate	Lower limit	Upper limit
49 and under	2	2	2
50-59	41	41	42
60-69	129	128	131
70-79	264	261	266
80 and over	343	340	346

¹ Age-standardised mortality rates per 100,000 population, standardised to the European Standard Population. Age-standardised rates are used to allow comparison between populations which may contain different proportions of people of different ages.

² Confidence intervals are a measure of the statistical precision of an estimate and show the range of uncertainty around the estimated figure. Calculations based on small numbers of events are often subject to random fluctuations. As a general rule, if the confidence interval around one figure overlaps with the interval around another, we cannot say with certainty that there is more than a chance difference between the two figures.

³ Cause of death for lung cancer was defined using the International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision (ICD-10) codes C33-C34.

⁴ Figures for England exclude deaths of non-residents.

⁵ Figures are based on deaths registered in each calendar.

Table 4: Age-standardised mortality rate per 100,000 population, where lung cancer was the underlying cause of death, by age group, England, 2005 to 2009^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5}

Year	Age group	Rate per 100,000 population		
		Rate	Lower limit	Upper limit
2005	49 and under	2	2	2
	50-59	41	40	43
	60-69	130	126	133
	70-79	269	264	274
	80 and over	325	318	333
2006	49 and under	2	2	2

Table 4. Age-standardised mortality rate per 100,000 population, where lung cancer was the underlying cause of death, by age group, England, 2005 to 2009^{1,2,3,4,5}

Year	Age group	Rate per 100,000 population 95% Confidence interval		
		Rate	Lower limit	Upper limit
	50-59	43	41	45
	60-69	132	128	135
	70-79	265	260	270
	80 and over	336	328	343
	2007	49 and under	2	2
	50-59	41	40	43
	60-69	132	129	135
	70-79	260	255	265
	80 and over	347	340	355
	2008	49 and under	2	2
	50-59	42	41	44
	60-69	127	124	130
	70-79	266	261	271
	80 and over	353	345	360
	2009	49 and under	2	2
	50-59	39	38	41
	60-69	126	123	129
	70-79	258	253	264
	80 and over	352	345	360

¹ Age-standardised mortality rates per 100,000 population, standardised to the European Standard Population. Age-standardised rates are used to allow comparison between populations which may contain different proportions of people of different ages.

² Confidence intervals are a measure of the statistical precision of an estimate and show the range of uncertainty around the estimated figure. Calculations based on small numbers of events are often subject to random fluctuations. As a general rule, if the confidence interval around one figure overlaps with the interval around another, we cannot say with certainty that there is more than a chance difference between the two figures.

³ Cause of death for lung cancer was defined using the International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision (ICD-10) codes C33-C34.

⁴ Figures for England exclude deaths of non-residents.

⁵ Figures are based on deaths registered in each calendar.

Table 9. Age-standardised mortality rate per 100,000 population, where lung cancer was the underlying cause of death, by sex, England, 2005 to 2009^{1,2,3,4,5}

Year	Rate	Rate per 100,000 population 95% Confidence interval	
		Lower limit	Upper limit
Males			
2005	51	50	52
2006	51	50	51
2007	49	49	50
2008	49	48	50
2009	48	47	49
Females			
2005	29	28	29
2006	30	29	30
2007	30	29	30
2008	30	30	31
2009	30	29	30

¹ Age-standardised mortality rates per 100,000 population, standardised to the European Standard Population. Age-standardised rates are used to allow comparison between populations which may contain different proportions of people of different ages.

² Confidence intervals are a measure of the statistical precision of an estimate and show the range of uncertainty around the estimated figure. Calculations based on small numbers of events are often subject to random fluctuations. As a general rule, if the confidence interval around one figure overlaps with the interval around another, we cannot say with certainty that there is more than a chance difference between the two figures.

³ Cause of death for lung cancer was defined using the International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision (ICD-10) codes C33-C34.

⁴ Figures for England exclude deaths of non-residents.

⁵ Figures are based on deaths registered in each calendar.

National Income

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what proportion of the gross domestic product of the UK was produced in each region in each of the last 30 years. [57586]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Stephen Penneck, dated May 2011:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking what proportion of the Gross Domestic Product of the UK was produced in each region in each of the last 30 years (57586).

The Office for National Statistics does not produce regional estimates of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) but it does produce estimates of regional Gross Value Added (GVA). GVA is GDP minus taxes on products plus subsidies on products. Estimates are produced at current basic prices.

The GVA time series began in 1989 and the latest data available are for 2009 (published in December 2010).

The tables show the UK proportions for the English regions, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland from 1989 to 2009.

Regional proportion of UK total GVA 1989-2009

	Percentage									
	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
North East	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.5	3.5
North West	10.9	10.9	10.8	10.8	10.7	10.7	10.6	10.5	10.3	10.3
Yorkshire and The Humber	7.7	7.7	7.7	7.7	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.5

Regional proportion of UK total GVA 1989-2009

	Percentage									
	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
East Midlands	6.6	6.6	6.6	6.6	6.5	6.5	6.6	6.6	6.6	6.5
West Midlands	8.4	8.4	8.3	8.3	8.3	8.3	8.4	8.3	8.3	8.2
East of England	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.6	8.6	8.6	8.6
London	18.6	18.7	18.6	18.4	18.5	18.4	18.2	18.5	18.8	19.2
South East	13.3	13.3	13.4	13.5	13.5	13.6	13.7	13.8	14.0	14.2
South West	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.6	7.6	7.6
Wales	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.0	3.9
Scotland	8.5	8.6	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.6	8.5	8.3
Northern Ireland	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.3	2.3

	Percentage										
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
North East	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3
North West	10.2	10.1	10.1	10.0	9.9	9.8	9.8	9.7	9.6	9.6	9.6
Yorkshire and The Humber	7.4	7.3	7.3	7.3	7.3	7.3	7.2	7.2	7.1	7.1	7.1
East Midlands	6.4	6.3	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.3	6.3	6.3
West Midlands	8.2	8.1	8.0	8.0	7.9	7.8	7.7	7.6	7.5	7.4	7.4
East of England	8.5	8.6	8.6	8.6	8.6	8.7	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.7
London	19.6	19.7	19.7	20.0	20.1	20.2	20.4	20.7	21.0	21.3	21.5
South East	14.5	14.6	14.7	14.7	14.7	14.7	14.6	14.6	14.5	14.4	14.3
South West	7.6	7.7	7.7	7.7	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.7	7.7	7.7
Wales	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.6	3.6
Scotland	8.2	8.1	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.1	8.2	8.2	8.3
Northern Ireland	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3

Source:

Regional GVA, ONS, total GVA available on the National Statistics website at:
http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_economy/GVA_NUTS1.xls

Public Sector: Co-operatives and Mutuels

Jonathan Evans: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what business support he plans to make available to those seeking to establish public service co-operatives; and if he will make a statement. [56873]

Mr Hurd: Government will invest over £10 million to fund a programme of support for some of the most promising and innovative mutuels so that they reach the point of investment readiness. The support programme also aims to stimulate the development of the mutuels concept in key public services areas in order to catalyse take up of the 'right to provide' through a variety of delivery models.

The full programme is currently being developed. The Mutuels Information Service run by Local Partnerships, provides advice and signposting through a telephone and e-mail helpdesk, to public sector workers interested in exploring opportunities for mutualisation.

Jonathan Evans: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what recent discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on the establishment and participation of co-operatives as a means of delivering public services on behalf of the state; and if he will make a statement. [56875]

Mr Hurd: This coalition Government are committed to giving public sector workers new rights to form employee-owned mutuels and co-operatives.

To help drive this commitment further and faster across Government and the public sector I have established the Mutuels Taskforce chaired by Professor Julian Le Grand. The Taskforce is advising me and other ministerial colleagues about how we can best enable the success of this policy. The group includes representatives from the John Lewis Partnership; leading practitioners; and a range of expert organisations in the field. The Taskforce is considering the evidence and experience internationally, including from within the EU, on mutuels and co-operatives delivering public services.

Jonathan Evans: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what assessment he has made of the sources of finance available for the capitalisation of public service mutuels; and if he will make a statement. [56874]

Mr Hurd: This coalition Government are committed to giving public sector workers new rights to form employee-owned mutuels and co-operatives.

Government will not seek to dictate what is best for employees and the users of services, rather the precise model of mutualisation should follow from the service being provided and the requirements of the new organisation. Financing will be part of this consideration. Some may seek to form a joint venture with an existing organisation, others will seek debt financing or may look to access capital from their membership.

These new mutuels will benefit from "Growing the Social Investment Market—a vision and strategy", published in February 2011, opening up new finance

opportunities to social ventures. They will also be able to access at least £10 million of funding to get the help they need, including support to access finance.

Taxation

Dr Whitehead: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office whether any levy mechanisms are (a) under and (b) awaiting consideration by the classification committee of the Office for National Statistics. [57970]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Stephen Penneck, dated June 2011:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking whether any levy mechanisms are a) under or b) awaiting consideration by the classification committee of the Office for National Statistics (57970).

The National Accounts Classification Committee (NACC) makes classification decisions in line with a published protocol that is available on our website at

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/national_statistics/cop/downloads/NAclassification.pdf

The proposal for a Bank Levy, contained in Part 5 of the Finance Bill 2011, was considered by NACC earlier this year, with agreement that (subject to the passage of legislation) the proceeds of the levy should be classified as a tax, coded under international national accounts guidance as D.59 'other current taxes'.

ONS has been asked by HMT for classification decisions on a number of environmental policies that could be described as levy mechanisms. They include the "Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT)", originally introduced as the Energy Efficiency Commitment; and the "Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation", which was introduced in April 2008 using powers included in the Energy Act 2004. ONS has not yet reached a final decision on these cases.

Trade Unions

Mr Raab: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many staff of (a) his Department, (b) Buying Solutions and (c) the Central Office of Information are entitled to work (i) full-time as trade union representatives and (ii) part-time on trade union activities; how many such staff are paid more than £25,900 annually; and what the cost to the public purse of employing such staff on such duties was in the latest period for which figures are available. [56435]

Mr Maude: There are no full time union representatives in the Cabinet Office, Buying Solutions or the Central Office of Information (COI).

The Cabinet Office, Buying Solutions and COI allocate facility time to recognised Union representatives, as set out in the following table:

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Total days allocated</i>	<i>Number of TU representatives</i>
Cabinet Office	464	38
Buying Solutions	100 approx	4
COI	Not exceeding 110 days	1

41 of the 43 representatives earn a salary in excess of £25,900 annually - the most junior earning in the AO range of £21,371-£24,565, and the most senior is at

Director equivalent level, earning a salary in the £90-95,000 range. Only part of any individual's time is accounted for by trade union work, ranging from the equivalent of two days a week (in the case of the COI representative) to a few hours a year.

Voluntary Work

Chris Ruane: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office if he will take steps to promote the benefits of volunteering to workers in the (a) private and (b) public sector who are to be made redundant. [57113]

Mr Hurd: On 23 May the Government published the Giving White Paper, which sets out a range of new programmes and initiatives that will encourage more people to give time and money.

Individuals leaving the civil service as a result of redundancy will receive transition support from their Departments. Part of this support will include information on volunteering.

To support unemployed people to volunteer the Department for Work and Pensions have created Work Together. This is a Great Britain wide initiative that aims to encourage unemployed people to consider volunteering as a way of improving their employment prospects while they are looking for work.

Well-being

Chris Ruane: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what guidance he has given to the Office for National Statistics on developing indicators to monitor the well-being and happiness of (a) adults and (b) children. [56731]

Mr Hurd: No guidance has been given to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on developing indicators to monitor the well-being of adults and children. At the invitation of the Prime Minister, ONS agreed to produce subjective measures of well-being. Government will be a key user of the information, but their production by ONS will ensure their independence.

Chris Ruane: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what assessment he has made of any variation in wellbeing (a) within and (b) between regions and nations of the UK. [56805]

Mr Hurd: No modelling has been done within the Cabinet Office since the 2003 PMSU paper on life satisfaction on variations in well-being either within the UK or between nations. The Office for National Statistics surveys that have now commenced will have a sample size large enough to examine variations across local authority areas.

Chris Ruane: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office if he will evaluate research on the effects of moving house on the well-being of (a) adults and (b) children. [57102]

Mr Hurd: Cabinet Office has no plans to undertake such an evaluation.

Well-being: Children

Chris Ruane: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) what assessment he has made of the trends in levels of childhood happiness and well-being in the last 30 years; [56726]

(2) which (a) organisations and (b) individuals his Department has consulted in drawing up its indicator for measuring the happiness and well-being of children. [56727]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Stephen Penneck, dated June 2011:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics (ONS), I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Questions asking what assessments have been made of the trends in levels of childhood happiness and well-being in the last 30 years (56726) and which (a) organisations and (b) individuals have been consulted in drawing up an indicator for measuring the happiness and well-being of children (56727).

The ONS published a working paper entitled 'Current Measures and the Challenges of Measuring Children's Well-being' in 2009:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/article.asp?ID=2371>

as well as publishing a Focus on Children and Young People in the same year.

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=15232&Pos=&ColRank=1&Rank=272>

As part of the Measuring National Well-being (MNW) programme, the ONS has met with a range of relevant stakeholders to discuss the measurement of Children's and Young People's Well-being. This has included the Children's Society

<http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/research/initiatives/well-being/publications>

the Children's Rights Commissioner, the New Economics Foundation and Rathbone. As part of the 175 events that we held during the national debate, we were also invited to a number of schools where children told us what mattered to them. At the next MNW Technical Advisory Group a range of subject matter specialists from academia, government departments and other relevant organisations will discuss this issue further. The papers from this meeting will be made available on the ONS website.

Further information on Measuring National Well-being please visit our homepage:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/well-being>

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 8 June 2011

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Crops: Genetically Modified Organisms

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment her Department has undertaken of whether Bt proteins from genetically modified crops can survive the human digestive system and pass into the blood supply; and if she will make a statement. [58067]

Anne Milton: I have been asked to reply.

In the European Union, genetically modified (GM) foods undergo a pre-market evaluation that includes the safety of components introduced into GM crops, such as Bt proteins. The safety of Bt proteins has also been assessed during the authorisation of pesticides that contain the microorganism *Bacillus thuringiensis*. The assessment of the Bt proteins that are present in authorised GM foods is based on tests in animals and does not include human trials to examine whether the proteins pass into the blood supply. However, the available data from in vitro tests have shown that Bt proteins are rapidly broken down by digestive enzymes in the same way as most other proteins in the diet.

Dangerous Dogs

Neil Parish: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she expects to respond to her Department's consultation on (a) proposals for compulsory microchipping and (b) other proposals in its consultation on dangerous dogs. [58045]

Mr Paice: We will shortly announce measures to tackle them and make our streets safer.

Responses to the proposals in the DEFRA dangerous dogs consultation, held last year, were strongly divided with primary concerns being whether the bans on specific dog breeds were the best approach to reduce dog attacks, and how to deal promptly and effectively with those that allow their dogs to be a nuisance to others.

There has not been a public consultation on compulsory microchipping.

DEFRA is working closely with the Home Office on the antisocial behaviour dimension to the dangerous dogs issue. The Home Office have run a public consultation on proposals to replace and streamline the measures to

tackle antisocial behaviour. The new, flexible, tools proposed would replace 18 formal powers currently in use, including those applicable to dogs. The consultation ended on 17 May and the responses are now being analysed.

Domestic Appliances: Energy

Zac Goldsmith: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what her policy is on encouraging the implementation of (a) energy efficiency and (b) energy labelling standards for all major energy-consuming appliances. [57323]

Richard Benyon: The Government are fully committed to raising energy efficiency standards for products, and encouraging consumers and businesses to buy the most efficient products available. Removing the least efficient products from the market remains one of the most cost-effective ways of reducing CO₂ emissions, and benefits consumers and businesses by reducing their energy bills. The UK is at the forefront of negotiating ambitious yet achievable minimum energy performance and labelling standards in Europe for the highest energy-consuming appliances. Government recently launched a campaign with retailers to promote a better understanding of the EU Energy label among consumers.

In addition to minimum energy performance and labelling standards agreed in Europe, DEFRA, along with the Energy Saving Trust, has launched a voluntary retailer initiative for televisions, which encourages retailers to remove the least efficient products from their shelves ahead of legislative requirements and promote best in class products. The UK is also working closely with industry on an EU-wide voluntary code of conduct on data centres.

Our enforcement authority, the National Measurement Office, works with businesses to ensure these energy efficiency measures are adhered to.

Food: Production

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what proportion of the food production industry is comprised of small and medium-sized enterprises. [58134]

Mr Paice: Small and medium enterprises are those where the number of employees is between 0 and 249.

As a percentage of the total number of enterprises in the manufacture of food products and beverages sector, 98% are small and medium enterprises.

Based upon turnover of the manufacture of food products and beverages sector, 26% are small and medium enterprises.

The breakdown of these figures is shown in the following table.

	2010 UK					
	Number			Percent		
	Enterprises	Employment (1,000)	Turnover (£ million)	Enterprises	Employment	Turnover
<i>Manufacture of food products and beverages</i>						
All enterprises	13,650	404	78,035	100.0	100.0	100.0

	2010 UK					
	Enterprises	Number		Turnover (£ million)	Percent	
Employment (1,000)		Enterprises	Employment		Turnover	
All employers	5,885	396	77,599	43.1	98.0	99.4
With no employees ¹	7,765	8	436	56.9	2.0	0.6
1	480	1	75	3.5	0.2	0.1
2-4	1,790	6	773	13.1	1.5	1.0
5-9	1,140	² 7	823	8.4	1.7	1.1
10-19	820	12	² 1,130	6.0	3.0	1.4
20-49	770	24	3,272	5.6	5.9	4.2
50-99	375	² 25	² 5,282	2.7	6.2	6.8
100-199	235	34	6,612	1.7	8.4	8.5
200-249	45	² 10	² 1,660	0.3	2.5	2.1
Total SMEs	13,420	127	20,063	98	31	26
250-499	95	31	² 5,060	0.7	7.7	6.5
500 or more	135	241	51,474	1.0	59.7	66.0

¹ "With no employees" comprises sole proprietorships and partnerships comprising only the self-employed owner-manager(s), and companies comprising of only one employee director.

² Numbers for beverages not included in order to avoid disclosure of confidential data

Note:

Numbers of enterprises are rounded, in order to avoid disclosure. Consequently, the "All Enterprises" and "All Employers" totals may not exactly match the sum of their parts.

Source:

BIS Enterprise Directorate Analytical Unit

Food: Waste

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what regulations govern the provision by retail outlets and restaurants of items of food past their sell-by date to homeless people and charitable organisations. [57518]

Mr Paice: There are no specific regulations which cover the provision of food to homeless people or charities.

However businesses should be aware of the following.

The Food Safety Act 1990 (as amended) provides the framework for all food legislation in Britain—similar legislation applies in Northern Ireland. This provides food safety requirements to prevent food being sold or given away by a food business that would be injurious to health or unfit for consumption.

The Food Labelling Regulations 1996 (as amended) require that all pre-packed foods carry a durability indication, either a 'best before' or 'use by' date. It is against the law to supply food for human consumption past the 'use by' date as the safety of the food is likely to be compromised. Food can be supplied after the 'best before' date, as long as the food is fit for consumption and not injurious to health.

'Sell by' dates are voluntary markings by retailers and as such there are no regulations covering their use.

Most of the provision in the Food Labelling Regulations do not apply to catering establishments, including providing date marks. However, the Food Safety Act requirements still apply and the food would have to be safe.

Forests

Neil Parish: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what arrangements she has put in place to ensure the protection and

continuation of existing permissive access rights under any prospective sale of Forestry Commission land. [58033]

Mr Paice: All new sales of the public forest estate have been suspended until the Government have considered the recommendations from the Independent Panel on Forestry.

Infectious Diseases: Herbal Medicine

Harriett Baldwin: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what representations she has received on the treatment of echinococcus multilocularis following the implementation of the EU Directive on Traditional Herbal Medicinal Products. [57308]

Mr Paice: I have not received any representations regarding the treatment of animals against *Echinococcus multilocularis* with respect to the implementation of the EU directive on traditional herbal medicines, which primarily relates to human health and therefore falls to the Department of Health.

Livestock: Transport

Laura Sandys: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what information regarding animal welfare (a) on the journey and (b) at the final destination is requested by the Animal Exports Division of her Department before authorisations for exports are granted. [57912]

Mr Paice: The Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) is responsible for checking the application for a journey log which has to be submitted by the transporter for any consignment of major livestock species or domestic equidae that are to be exported on

journeys lasting over 8 hours. The application must provide, among other things, details of the length of the journey including any statutory rest periods. Once AHVLA is satisfied that the journey will meet all of the necessary EU legal requirements, it is approved. The journey log must then accompany the consignment on the journey to the final destination. The journey log must be returned by transporters to AHVLA following completion of the journey. AHVLA undertakes checks of returned journey logs to ensure the journey was completed as planned, (or if deviations occurred, these were justifiable) and that no infringements of the EU legislation took place.

Laura Sandys: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent discussions she has had with her EU counterparts on the regulation of the export of live animals. [57913]

Mr Paice: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mrs Moon) on 3 May 2011, *Official Report*, columns 610-11W.

Pets: Animal Welfare

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what research her Department has (a) commissioned and (b) evaluated on pet cat containment fences; and if she will make a statement. [57618]

Mr Paice: No such research has been commissioned by DEFRA.

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what her policy is on banning the use of cat containment fences. [57619]

Mr Paice: Any restriction on the use of containment fences would require new legislation to be introduced. If the Government were to propose new legislation to ban the use of containment fences, there would be a public consultation exercise to provide the opportunity for interested individuals and organisations to provide their comments on the Government's proposals. All comments received would then be carefully considered before the introduction of any such legislation.

Rain Forests: Brazil

Mr Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent discussions she has had with the Government of Brazil on the deforestation of the Amazon region and its likely effects on the environment; and if she will make a statement. [57489]

Mr Paice [*holding answer 7 June 2011*]: The Secretary of State visited Brazil in April and held constructive discussions with the Government to discuss deforestation and the associated biodiversity loss, with particular reference to the Amazon and Cerrado.

Trapping

Cathy Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs pursuant to the answer of 15 February 2011, *Official Report*,

column 710W, on trapping, whether she has set a date for publication of the report; and if she will make a statement. [57730]

Mr Paice: We still expect to publish the report in 2011 but it remains the case that no firm date has yet been set.

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Fire Services: Finance

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) what the (a) highest, (b) average and (c) lowest percentage change is in estimated revenue spending power for fire services in England between 2011 and 2013; [58222]

(2) what the percentage change in estimated revenue spending power will be for the West Midlands Fire Service between 2011 and 2013. [58223]

Robert Neill: Overall, single purpose fire and rescue authorities will see a change in their estimated revenue spending power of -2.2% in 2011-12 and -0.5% in 2012-13. Information on the percentage changes in estimated revenue spending power for individual authorities can be found on the DCLG website at:

2011-12:

<http://www.local.communities.gov.uk/finance/1112/spannexas.xls>

2012-13:

<http://www.local.communities.gov.uk/finance/1112/spannexas3.xls>

Fire Services: West Midlands

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what representations he has received on changes to the formula grant for West Midlands Fire Service. [58220]

Robert Neill: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Westminster North (Ms Buck) on 24 May 2011, *Official Report*, columns 687-88W.

Homelessness

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what consideration he has given to the balance between community empowerment and preventing opposition to any kind of local development in planning and allocating (a) homeless and (b) other services under the provisions of the Localism Bill. [57718]

Greg Clark: With regard to planning, where the last Government tried to deliver development through imposition from above, this Government will do so through participation and involvement on the ground. Our reforms will enable people to shape development in their local area, and share in the benefits of growth, to deliver the development the country needs.

With regards to homelessness, the Localism Bill does not change the duty on local housing authorities to secure suitable accommodation for households who are

eligible for assistance, homeless through no fault of their own and in 'priority need'. The Bill's provisions give local authorities flexibility to end the homelessness duty with offer of suitable accommodation in private rented sector.

With regards to other services, the community right to challenge will enable communities to express an interest in running a local authority service which, where accepted, will lead to a procurement exercise for the service.

Local Enterprise Partnerships

Chi Onwurah: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) what process his Department undertook in determining the awarding of the contract to run the national representative body for local enterprise partnerships to the British Chambers of Commerce; [57859]

(2) what arrangements he plans to put in place to ensure transparency in the funding of the national representative body for local enterprise partnerships; [57860]

(3) whether he assessed the merits of alternative options for the operation of a network of local enterprise partnerships before awarding the work to the British Chambers of Commerce; [57861]

(4) what process his Department undertook to determine the cost to the public purse of establishing a national local enterprise partnership network run by the British Chambers of Commerce; [57862]

(5) if he will publish the final business case made to his Department by the British Chambers of Commerce for the operation of the national local enterprise partnership network. [57863]

Robert Neill: The British Chambers of Commerce offered to run a network of local enterprise partnerships and submitted a proposal to support this offer. The Government have chosen the British Chambers of Commerce as the preferred option to run the network because, with its existing extensive network and capability across the country, it is ideally placed to provide the capability and support that partnerships need to achieve their economic ambitions.

The Department is not procuring this service but will support this activity led by British Chambers of Commerce. No grant agreement is yet in place and any funding awarded will be subject to a satisfactory funding agreement which will be dependent on the quality of their final business case and is subject to the Department's normal funding arrangements.

Subject to the necessary redactions to protect sensitive personal and commercial information, we shall publish their final business case.

The British Chambers of Commerce is committed to working closely with other business organisations to ensure that the network is a success. We hope other business organisations will engage constructively in this work going forward.

Public Sector: Pensions

Mr Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government when he plans to respond to the letter of 20 April 2011 concerning public sector pensions sent by the hon. Member for

Walsall North of 20 April to the Treasury; and for what reasons the letter was transferred to his Department. [57735]

Robert Neill: A reply was sent to the hon. Member on 23 May 2011. The letter was transferred as my Department has policy responsibility for the Local Government Pension Scheme in England and Wales.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Arts

Mr Ivan Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport (1) pursuant to the answer of 23 May 2011, *Official Report*, column 345W, on the arts, when the project into quantifying the economic benefit of the arts and cultural sector will be completed; and if he will publish the report of the project; [58129]

(2) whether he has plans to commission a study on the value of the arts to (a) the economy and (b) society. [57893]

Mr Jeremy Hunt: The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is currently in a scoping phase regarding the project aimed at providing a framework for quantifying the economic contribution of the Department's sectors, including arts and culture. Once this scoping phase is completed, we will be in a position to decide whether this work will be undertaken internally or commissioned externally. Once complete, the outputs of this work will be published on the DCMS website.

This project is focused on economic contribution. A few strands of work have been completed on the value of arts to society. Research produced through the Department's CASE programme considers the value of culture in terms of engagement. This can be found at the following link:

<http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/research/CASE-value-summary-report-July10.pdf>

The Arts Council did a large scale consultation in 2007 on the value of arts, the details of which can be found at the following link:

<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/about-us/research/public-value-programme/arts-debate-findings/>

A report was written for the Department on the measurement of the value of culture and this was published in December 2010. This can be found at the following link:

<http://www.culture.gov.uk/publications/7660.aspx>

BBC

Caroline Dinéage: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport if he will initiate discussions with the BBC Trust on steps to assist in ensuring that any BBC cost-saving measures are targeted at making efficiency savings. [57576]

Mr Vaizey: How the BBC implements cost-saving measures is a matter for the BBC but I encourage them to avoid any reduction in its core services as was agreed during the licence fee negotiations.

Mr Ivan Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what the scope is of potential changes that can be made to the governance of the BBC in advance of charter renewal. [58024]

Mr Jeremy Hunt: Any changes would be made within the framework of the BBC Charter and Agreement.

Henley Review

Mr Ivan Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport (1) what meetings he has had with the Secretary of State for Education to discuss the Henley review of cultural education; [58042]

(2) when the Henley review on the future of cultural education will report. [57895]

Mr Jeremy Hunt: The independent review of cultural education was announced on the 8 April 2011 and Ministers have asked Darren Henley to produce his final report by the end of the year.

Discussions between my Department and the Department for Education are on-going.

S4C

Jonathan Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport whether he received a request from (a) members of the Welsh Government or (b) the Secretary of State for Wales between 6 May and 20 May 2011 to meet to discuss issues relating to S4C. [57466]

Mr Vaizey: We are not aware of any requests from Members of the Welsh Government or the Secretary of State for Wales between 6 and 20 May 2011 to meet the Secretary of State to discuss issues relating to S4C.

Video Games

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what steps his Department is taking to implement recommendations of the Byron Review relating to assistance to parents to restrict children's access to games which are not suitable for their age. [57246]

Mr Vaizey: The Government are currently working with a number of key organisations on the detail of making statutory the Pan European Games Information scheme for games aimed at those aged 12 or over. This accords with the recommendations made by Tanya Byron in her report "Safer Children in Digital World". It is vital that we are satisfied that the arrangements that we are putting in place work for industry, regulators, those involved in enforcement, and, especially, for parents.

INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENTARY STANDARDS AUTHORITY COMMITTEE

Surveys

Priti Patel: To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the Speaker's Committee for the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority how many (a) opinion polls and (b) surveys IPSA (1) has commissioned since

its establishment; and what estimate has been made of the cost to the public purse of each such activity; [57625]

(2) is planning to conduct in the next 12 months; and what estimate has been made of the cost of each such activity. [57626]

Mr Charles Walker: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority. I have asked IPSA to reply.

Letter from Scott Woolveridge, dated June 2011:

As acting Chief Executive of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Questions about opinion polls and surveys planned and conducted by IPSA.

Since IPSA began operations in May 2010 it has conducted one public opinion poll and one external online survey as part of the first Annual Review of the MPs' Expenses Scheme. The opinion poll was part of a regular omnibus poll conducted by an independent polling company at a cost of approximately £2700. The online survey was created by IPSA staff using commercial software, at a one-off cost of £1169 (with one-off web hosting cost of £464). This software has subsequently been used for a website usability survey and may be used to conduct future external surveys.

At this stage, IPSA does not have specific plans for future external surveys or opinion polling, although we would anticipate periodically carrying out research into public opinion in relation to the work of IPSA.

JUSTICE

Departmental Trade Unions

Mr Raab: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many staff of (a) his Department, (b) HM Courts and Tribunals Service, (c) HM Land Registry, (d) the National Offender Management Service, (e) the National Archives and (f) the Office of the Public Guardian were entitled to work (i) full-time as trade union representatives and (ii) part-time on trade union activities in (A) 2009-10 and (B) 2010-11; how many such staff were paid more than £25,900 annually; and what the cost was to the public purse of employing such staff on such duties. [58224]

Mr Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 23 May 2011, *Official Report*, columns 407-408W.

Facilities Agreements between the Ministry of Justice and the Trade Union Sides follow the provisions of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 and the ACAS Code of Practice "Time off for Trade Union Duties and Activities" available at:

<http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2391>

These departmental agreements are in the process of being reviewed, and more recent data cannot currently be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

Drugs: Rehabilitation

Nicola Blackwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what the average cost of a drug rehabilitation requirement was in the latest period for which figures are available; how many such requirements are in force; how many such requirements made in respect of

persons (a) of each sex and (b) each age group were (i) made, (ii) successfully completed and (iii) breached by non-compliance in each of the last three years. [58144]

Mr Blunt: The drug rehabilitation requirement (DRR) is the primary means for sentenced offenders to address their drug misuse as part of a community order or suspended sentence order. The costs of the DRR cover treatment, which is funded by drug (and alcohol) action teams (D(A)ATs) in England, and the costs of managing the requirement by local Probation Trusts.

Significant local variations in D(A)AT commissioning practice and costs of treatment modalities have made it difficult to establish the average cost of the treatment element of a DRR.

Detailed work to cost the services funded by NOMS estimates the average direct cost of supporting a DRR. This is the cost per completion at different levels of intensity for different lengths of requirement, each of which relate to the seriousness of the offence and the extent of the offender's needs.¹ The estimates are as follows, and are contained in published information which has been placed in both Libraries.

Table 1: Cost per completion ("does cost") of DRR by type and length

DRR duration (months)	Intensity			£
	Low	Medium	High	
6	1,010	2,165	2,682	
9	1,409	3,096	3,838	
12	2,244	4,067	5,040	
18	3,047	5,969	7,397	

The most recent analysis of the case load found that on 31 December 2010 there were 8,114 community orders with a DRR and 3,127 suspended sentence orders with a DRR in force.

The following table shows the number of DRR commencements, successful completions, and revocations for non-compliance following breach proceedings broken down by age and gender in each of the last three years for which full information is available². Data on the number of applications made for a summons or warrant to return the offender to court for breach is not collected centrally by type of requirement.

The proportion of offenders successfully completing DRRs rose from 47% in 2008-09 to 56% in 2009-10³. This is encouraging because we know from research relating to the drug treatment and testing order (DTTO), which was replaced by the DRR, that offenders who complete orders have significantly lower reconviction rates (53%) than those that do not (91%)⁴, although it is not possible to attribute this difference entirely to the programme.

NOMS recently undertook a delivery review of DRRs which recommended the overhaul of starts and completion targets with clear outcome focused measures.

¹ The DRR can be used for low, medium and high sentencing bands. The amount and intensity of the drug treatment delivered under the DRR can be tailored to individual treatment needs regardless of the seriousness of the offence. The content and duration of the total community order should provide the overall restriction of liberty which is commensurate with the seriousness of the offence.

² These figures have been drawn from 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.

³ Ministry of Justice (2010) National Offender Management Service Annual Report 2009/10: Management Information Addendum. London: Ministry of Justice.

⁴ Hough, M., Clancy, A., McSweeney, T. and Turnbull, P.J. (2003) The Impact of Drug Treatment and Testing Orders on offending: two year reconviction results. Home Office Research Findings No. 184. London: Home Office.

Number of drug rehabilitation requirements (DRRs) commenced, successfully completed and revoked for failure to comply 2008-10

		Male							All
		18-20	21-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	
2008									
Community order	Commencements	481	1,334	2,755	4,243	1,403	134	5	10,355
	Completions	156	389	768	1,300	505	59	1	3,178
	Revoked (failure to comply)	30	63	148	198	57	1	0	497
Suspended sentence order	Commencements	200	510	944	1,411	409	48	0	3,522
	Completions	52	149	244	406	130	18	1	1,000
	Revoked (failure to comply)	10	25	54	70	14	0	0	173
2009									
Community order	Commencements	402	1,173	2,405	4,060	1,327	169	8	9,544
	Completions	170	505	1,076	1,819	716	89	6	4,381
	Revoked (failure to comply)	26	54	102	155	39	3	0	379

Number of drug rehabilitation requirements (DRRs) commenced, successfully completed and revoked for failure to comply 2008-10

		<i>Male</i>								
		<i>18-20</i>	<i>21-24</i>	<i>25-29</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60+</i>	<i>All</i>	
Suspended sentence order	Commencements	154	426	894	1,351	441	54	5	3,325	
	Completions	83	162	279	498	200	13	1	1,236	
	Revoked (failure to comply)	12	16	33	39	7	0	0	107	
<i>2010</i>										
Community order	Commencements	453	1,213	2,239	3,903	1,498	172	7	9,485	
	Completions	170	467	889	1,746	685	77	9	4,043	
	Revoked (failure to comply)	22	47	93	138	33	1	0	334	
Suspended sentence order	Commencements	139	421	812	1,483	436	43	8	3,342	
	Completions	53	171	332	555	246	29	4	1,390	
	Revoked (failure to comply)	7	16	18	51	6	1	0	99	
<hr/>										
		<i>Female</i>								
		<i>18-20</i>	<i>21-24</i>	<i>25-29</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60+</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>2008</i>										
Community order	Commencements	200	493	767	1,008	308	22	1	2,799	13,154
	Completions	54	130	206	275	91	15	1	772	3,950
	Revoked (failure to comply)	12	27	55	52	19	2	0	167	664
Suspended sentence order	Commencements	41	128	239	285	83	6	0	782	4,304
	Completions	11	31	63	83	26	1	0	215	1,215
	Revoked (failure to comply)	6	12	12	14	3	0	0	47	220
<i>2009</i>										
Community order	Commencements	166	453	640	967	296	20	1	2,543	12,087
	Completions	53	171	277	411	141	9	2	1,064	5,445
	Revoked (failure to comply)	12	26	37	54	19	0	0	148	527
Suspended sentence order	Commencements	37	145	218	271	107	17	0	795	4,120
	Completions	16	50	86	96	46	1	0	295	1,531
	Revoked (failure to comply)	2	8	15	11	4	0	0	40	147
<i>2010</i>										
Community order	Commencements	142	429	704	932	280	22	2	2,511	11,996
	Completions	49	134	247	388	139	9	1	967	5,010
	Revoked (failure to comply)	11	33	35	34	6	1	0	120	454
Suspended sentence order	Commencements	53	100	179	315	79	7	0	733	4,075
	Completions	14	50	73	123	59	9	0	328	1,718
	Revoked (failure to comply)	1	4	8	12	1	0	0	26	125

Homicide: Convictions

Mr Slaughter: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many convictions for offences of (a) murder, (b) rape and (c) unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor there have been in each year since 1997; and what proportion of such convictions followed a guilty plea at the first instance in each such year. [57979]

Mr Blunt: Defendants pleading guilty at the Crown Court for either, murder, rape or sexual activity with a child, the total number of offenders found guilty for these offences and the proportion of convictions where a guilty plea was given, England and Wales 1997 to 2010 are shown in the table.

It is not possible to determine from the Ministry of Justice court proceeding database at what stage a defendant pleaded guilty or not guilty.

Defendants pleading guilty at the Crown Court for either, murder, rape or sexual activity with a child, the total number of offenders found guilty for these offences and the proportion of convictions where a guilty plea was given, England and Wales 1997 to 2010^{1,2}

<i>Offence and outcome</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
<i>Murder</i>														
Found guilty	275	256	252	261	285	324	277	361	394	372	369	439	376	346
No. of guilty pleas	27	44	49	40	55	55	60	90	92	87	96	84	87	72
Proportion of convictions where a guilty plea was given (%)	10	17	19	15	19	17	22	25	23	23	26	19	23	21
<i>Rape</i>														
Found guilty	615	674	654	593	569	651	671	748	787	854	860	913	984	1,037
No. of guilty pleas	231	237	246	215	213	258	259	310	361	395	385	406	443	466
Proportion of convictions where a guilty plea was given (%)	38	35	38	36	37	40	39	41	46	46	45	44	45	45
<i>Sexual activity with a child^B</i>														
Found guilty	167	179	155	164	168	177	198	268	522	726	694	780	801	902
No. of guilty pleas	145	163	139	139	152	165	181	244	435	584	575	626	658	744
Proportion of convictions where a guilty plea was given (%)	87	91	90	85	90	93	91	91	83	80	83	80	82	82

¹ The figures given in the table on court proceedings relate to persons for whom these offences were the principal offences for which they were dealt with. When a defendant has been found guilty of two or more offences it is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe.

² 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 used.

³ Prior to 2003 sexual activity with a child was classed as unlawful sexual intercourse with a child under Sexual Offences Act 1956.

Source:

Justice Statistics Analytical Services—Ministry of Justice

TREASURY

Banks: Regulation

Chris Leslie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what sanctions he has considered introducing in the event that the banks participating in Project Merlin do not meet their lending targets; [58230]

(2) what sanctions Ministers and officials of his Department and representatives of the banking sector discussed imposing in the event that banks participating in Project Merlin did not meet their agreed lending targets during the negotiations for that agreement. [58232]

Mr Hoban: On 9 February, the Chancellor announced a new commitment by the UK's biggest high street banks on lending expectations and capacity. As part of this commitment, the banks intend to lend £190 billion of new credit to businesses in 2011, up from £179 billion in 2010. If demand exceeds this, the banks will lend more. £76 billion of this lending will be to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This is a 15% increase on 2010 lending of £66 billion.

The commitment to make new lending to SMEs are part of the performance metrics of each bank's chief executive and those of the senior managers responsible for SME lending. The Government reserve the right to

return to this issue and take further measures if the banks fail to live up to their commitments.

Carbon Emissions

Martin Horwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the analysis underlying the decision to set carbon price support at the level (a) announced in the 2011 Budget and (b) proposed in the preceding consultation. [57938]

Justine Greening: The consultation asked for views on how best to implement a carbon price floor, including how the Government should determine future market prices of carbon upon which to base carbon price support rates. The consultation used the Government's long-term carbon price forecast as an illustration.

The Government published their response to the consultation on 30 March 2011, confirming that a market-based approach would be used to determine carbon price support rates as this was the option preferred by respondents.

This is available online at:

http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/carbon_price_floor_consultation_govt_response.pdf

Child Care Tax Credit

Ms Buck: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what estimate he has made of the number of households that are entitled to assistance with childcare costs through tax credits received in excess of 80 per cent. of the maximum permissible amount; [57928]

(2) what estimate he has made of the proportion of households receiving above 80 per cent. of the maximum permissible amount of childcare costs through tax credits in (a) each region, (b) Scotland and (c) Wales; [57929]

(3) what the maximum any household received as a proportion of the maximum permissible amount of childcare costs was in the latest period for which figures are available. [57930]

Justine Greening: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to her on 26 April 2011, *Official Report*, column 224W.

Michael Dugher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect on incentives on single parents to work of the end of childcare tax credit. [58136]

Mr Gauke: When estimating changes to marginal deduction rates, it is reform to the tax and benefit system as a whole that is important to households, rather than certain subsets of it.

Parents, including lone parents, currently receive support to pay for childcare through the childcare element of working tax credit. In addition, the Government maintained free early learning for three and four year olds, and extended 15 hours a week of free early education and care to all disadvantaged two year olds from 2012-13.

The new universal credit will replace the current complex system of means-tested working age benefits with an integrated payment over the next two Parliaments, reducing fraud and error and ensuring that work pays. The universal credit will improve financial work incentives

by ensuring that support is reduced at a consistent and managed rate as people return to work and increase their working hours and earnings.

The Government are working with key stakeholders, drawing on their expertise, to establish which options will best support parents to meet the costs of childcare in the future within or alongside universal credit. Details of the new proposal will be set out shortly.

Departmental Legal Costs

Mr Slaughter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much his Department paid in (a) damages, (b) claimant costs and (c) defendant costs in respect of all civil claims brought against his Department in which the claimant was successful or the Department settled in each of the last three years. [54634]

Justine Greening: The Department has not incurred any costs for damages in the last three years. Details of payments made in relation to claimant costs and defendant costs for civil claims brought against the Department during the past three years are set out in the following table.

Nature of payment	Financial year		
	2010-11	2009-10	2008-09
Claimant costs	—	270,000.00	—
Defendant costs	171,361.72	447,874.28	208,898.87
Total sum paid out	171,361.72	717,874.28	208,898.87

£

Devolution: Scotland

Ann McKechin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what matters were discussed during his meeting with the First Minister on 23 May 2011; and what his policy is on the Scottish Government's request to (a) bring forward and increase borrowing powers under the Scotland Bill, (b) devolve the Scottish Crown Estate and (c) devolve corporation tax to the Scottish Parliament. [57899]

Danny Alexander: UK Government Ministers held a series of constructive meetings with the First Minister of Scotland on 23 and 24 May, at which a range of matters were discussed. Any further announcements will be made to Parliament in due course in the context of Scotland Bill.

Devolution: Wales

Jonathan Edwards: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he received requests for meetings from (a) members of the Welsh Government or (b) the Secretary of State for Wales between 6 May and 20 May 2011 to discuss public expenditure in Wales. [57467]

Danny Alexander: Treasury Ministers and officials regularly meet with representatives from a wide range of organisations in the public and private sector. As was the case with previous Administrations, it is not the Government's practice to provide details of all such meetings.

Double Taxation: Israel

Mr Slaughter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the UK-Israel convention on double taxation is applied to (a) income tax and (b) company tax levied by Israel on individuals or companies based in settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories or the Golan Heights. [57958]

Mr Gauke: The 1962 Double Taxation Convention between the UK and Israel does not apply to individuals or companies in the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories or the Golan Heights.

Financial Services Compensation Scheme

Craig Whittaker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the reason is for the time taken to commence the review of the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. [57922]

Mr Hoban: It is essential that the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) is able to pay out compensation to all eligible policyholders. Without certainty of payout, consumer protection is substantially weakened. It is therefore vital that the FSCS is able to raise resources in a range of circumstances to compensate consumers effectively.

The rules governing the FSCS are set by the Financial Services Authority (FSA), which has commenced a review of the funding model of the FSCS. They will proceed to a formal consultation and cost benefit analysis once discussions on European directives affecting compensation arrangements have been concluded and the Government's policy on the future role of the FSCS in the context of reform of the regulatory architecture for financial services has been settled.

Andrew Stephenson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what discussions he has had with the Financial Services Authority on the potential effect on insurance brokers of the increase in the levy for the Financial Services Compensation scheme; [58046]

(2) what assessment he has made of the potential effects on insurance brokers of the increased levy under the Financial Services Compensation scheme. [58141]

Mr Hoban: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given on 7 June 2011, *Official Report*, column 126W.

Non-domestic Rates: Empty Property

Jason McCartney: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much accrued to the Exchequer from empty property business rates in the last 12 months. [57952]

Mr Gauke: The Government do not hold information on the amount of business rates raised from empty properties in England.

The Government publish data on empty property rate relief, received by owners of empty non-domestic properties. The latest figures can be found at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/xls/1824788.xls>

Revenue and Customs: Complaints

Damian Hinds: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many complaints (a) his Department and (b) HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) received on the operation of HMRC in respect of (i) service levels, (ii) timeliness of response, (iii) clarity of communications and (iv) other matters; and what categories are used to classify such complaints. [56387]

Mr Gauke: HM Revenue and Customs maintains a complaints database to help the Department understand why complaints are made and act to address this. Within the database, complaints are assigned to one of the following core categories: delay, staff conduct, process/system, policy/legislation, communication, misleading advice, loss/damage, mistake/error, compensation/costs claim and discrimination. HMRC categorises complaints when they are resolved, rather than when they are received.

For the year 2010-11 HMRC resolved 76,438 complaints of which 22,185 were categorised as 'delay' and 10,632 were categorised as 'communication'. HMRC does not categorise complaints under a heading of "service levels".

Smuggling: Northern Ireland

Mr Donaldson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many complaints HM Revenue and Customs has received on the use of vehicle stop and search powers in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years and how many such complaints have been upheld. [55769]

Mr Gauke [holding answer 16 May 2011]: No complaints have been received in Northern Ireland in the last four years as a result of our stop and search powers.

Mr Donaldson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations HM Revenue and Customs received from political parties in Northern Ireland (a) in the 12 months prior to and (b) during its review of vehicle stop and search powers. [55770]

Mr Gauke [holding answer 16 May 2011]: HMRC received one MP's letter for NI which was in December 2010 from the right hon. Member asking about the cessation of our stop and search powers in Northern Ireland.

Mr Donaldson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many detections HM Revenue and Customs made as a result of the use of vehicle stop and search powers in each of the last five years. [55771]

Mr Gauke: In the period April to October 2010, 41 detections were made as a result of the stop and search powers in Northern Ireland. The use of the powers was suspended in October 2010.

Mr Donaldson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse incurred in training HM Revenue and Customs officers in Northern Ireland in the use of vehicle stop and search powers in each of the last five years. [55772]

Mr Gauke [*holding answer 16 May 2011*]: Costs for training HMRC officers in the use of stop and search powers in NI over the last five years were £4,200. These were incurred in 2009-10 and no other expenditure has been incurred on this training in the last five years.

VAT: Insurance

Mr Laurence Robertson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on the future of the exemption from value added tax for outsourced insurance-related services in the UK; and if he will make a statement. [53111]

Mr Gauke [*holding answer 3 May 2011*]: Discussions concerning an EU Commission Proposal that would modernise the VAT exemption for financial and insurance services have taken place at the Council of Ministers Working Party level for several years and are continuing under the Hungarian presidency. These have included the issue of the VAT treatment of outsourcing in the insurance sector. The matter was discussed by Ministers as part of an overall orientation debate on the dossier at the November 2010 ECOFIN.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Burma: Politics and Government

Fiona O'Donnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Burmese Government following reports of a breach of the ceasefire agreement with the Shan State Army; and if he will make a statement. [57978]

Mr Jeremy Browne: The Government are deeply concerned by the reported breakdown of a ceasefire agreement with the Shan State Army North (now known as the Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army) that has led to renewed conflict in Shan State. Our ambassador to Rangoon raised the issue of the ongoing conflict with the Burmese Government on 10 May 2011 underlining the importance of a political solution. Senior Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials made the same point to the Burmese Ambassador to the UK on 5 May 2011. We continue to monitor the situation and urge the Burmese Government to engage in genuine dialogue with ethnic groups and work towards a peaceful solution.

Departmental Equality

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a public address on diversity in his Department. [57297]

Mr Bellingham: In line with our obligations under the Equality Act 2010, the Department will be publishing diversity information by 31 December 2011.

Lord's Resistance Army

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Governments of (a)

the Democratic Republic of Congo, (b) Uganda and (c) Rwanda on the activities of the Lords Resistance Army. [57289]

Mr Bellingham: We have regularly discussed the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) with key partners, including the Governments of Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda and UN Peacekeeping Operations in the region. These discussions, which have taken place bilaterally, at the International Working Group (IWG) on the LRA and at the UN Security Council, have been with a view to helping to improve co-ordination amongst those countries and organisations that are working to reduce the threat posed by the LRA to civilians in the region.

Discussions have covered the joint military effort to pursue the remaining LRA units in DRC, Central African Republic and South Sudan; work by UN agencies on disarming, demobilising and repatriating LRA combatants; and the work of UN agencies and Non-Government Organisations to provide humanitarian relief to LRA affected areas.

Uganda: Politics and Government

Mr Gregory Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will discuss with his Ugandan counterpart the treatment of the opposition leader Kizza Besigye and unarmed civilians during recent protests in that country. [57851]

Mr Bellingham: I have directly raised the UK's concerns over the Ugandan authorities' handling of the ongoing opposition protests with Foreign Minister Sam Kutesa. Our High Commission in Kampala, along with other EU member state missions, has raised our concerns directly with President Museveni. Our High Commission has also raised concerns with the Ugandan Prime Minister and Inspector General of Police.

The UK and its partners have urged the Ugandan authorities to respect their peoples' constitutionally guaranteed rights to peaceful exercise of the freedoms of speech and assembly, and that the police should respond proportionally to instances of unrest amongst demonstrators.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Manpower

Ms Ritchie: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many staff were employed in each directorate of his Department in 2009-10. [57907]

Mr Paterson: The number of staff employed by the Northern Ireland Office in 2009-10 is recorded in the departmental report for this period. The information can be found on page 13 of the Report. We do not hold information on the number of staff recorded by directorate in 2009-10.

http://www.nio.gov.uk/nio-pubs-search-results?start=20&category=Departmental_Reports&keyword=&order=date&submitbutton.x=17&submitbutton.y=9

Ms Ritchie: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many members of staff at the Northern Ireland Office at each grade were transferred to the Department of Justice Northern Ireland (a) before, (b) on and (c) since 12 April 2010. [57906]

Mr Paterson: The information is as follows:

(a) No members of staff were transferred into the Department of Justice before it took legal effect on 12 April 2010.

(b) The number of Department of Finance and Personnel (Northern Ireland) staff seconded to the Northern Ireland Office prior to devolution and who subsequently transferred to the Department of Justice NI at devolution is:

Grade	Number of staff
SCS	24
Grade 7/A	75
Grade DP/B1	112
Grade SO/B2	196
Grade C/EO	240
Grade AO/D1	318
Grade AA/D2	110
Non-general service grades	649
NIPS Uniform grades	1879

(c) The number of staff at the Northern Ireland Office who have transferred to the Department of Justice NI since 12 April 2010 is:

Grade	Number of staff
SCS	1
Grade 7/A	3
Grade DP/B1	3
Grade SO/B2	4
Grade C/EO	7
Grade AO/D1	3
Grade AA/D2	7

Prison Service: Manpower

Mr Gregory Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions the Secretary of State has had with the Board of Directors of the Prison Service Trust in Northern Ireland in the last two years on the establishment of a Garden of Remembrance dedicated to the memory of prison office staff who gave their lives in the course of the troubles. [57852]

Mr Paterson: Since my appointment, I have not had any discussions with the Board of Directors of the Prison Service Trust in Northern Ireland with regard to this matter.

TRANSPORT

Bus Services: Standards

Graham Stringer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has plans to make the data generated by real time information equipment supported by Bus Service Operators Grant available to (a) the Vehicle

and Operator Services Agency and (b) the Traffic Commissioners for the purposes of overseeing service performance. [58015]

Norman Baker: The Department for Transport is currently undertaking an initial information gathering exercise by contacting bus operators claiming the Bus Service Operators Grant Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) incentive to determine what data are available and in what format.

The Department has not yet requested data generated by the Bus Service Operators Grant AVL incentive and will produce a note of why it needs any data requested after this initial information gathering stage and will set out in writing how these data will be collected, used and protected.

Graham Stringer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many officers the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency made available for monitoring the performance of bus services in each region in the latest period for which figures are available. [58016]

Mike Penning: The figures as at the end of April 2011 are as follows:

	Number
Scotland	4
North East/North West	3
West Midlands	1
Wales	3
Western	1
South East	1
Eastern	1

Graham Stringer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of (a) buses and (b) coaches were subject to prohibition notices as a result of (i) announced and (ii) unannounced checks by the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency in each of the last five years. [58017]

Mike Penning: The Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) does not record PSV prohibition figures based on announced and unannounced encounters. There is also no split of the information between buses and coaches. However the following information for all PSVs is held:

	Fleet checks at operators premises	Percentage Roadside Checks
2010-11	15.3	19.2
2009-10	14.8	23.4
2008-09	13.2	20.4
2007-08	15.0	19.9
2006-07	14.4	17.0

Note:

Some fleet checks at operators' premises will be announced but it is not possible to determine the proportion.

Great Western Railway Line

Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for journey time improvements

to the Great Western main line between South Wales and London other than by electrification; and if he will make a statement. [57688]

Mrs Villiers: The new fleet of trains procured by the Intercity Express programme will reduce journey times from Cardiff to London Paddington by seventeen minutes and Swansea to London Paddington by twenty minutes. The journey time reductions are a result of the trains' faster acceleration, shorter station dwell times and a revised service pattern, and are not caused by electrification as such.

Furthermore, because modern trains accelerate very much faster, Network Rail is reviewing whether any speed limits along the line of route might be increased so as to maximise the benefit of this improved acceleration.

Pedestrian Crossings

Jim Fitzpatrick: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when guidance for local authorities on the introduction of (a) school, (b) pedestrian and (c) light-controlled pedestrian crossings was last published; and whether he has any plans to publish revised guidance. [57456]

Norman Baker: Guidance on school crossing patrols is published by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA). The School Crossing Patrol Service Guidelines were last updated in 2010 and are reviewed annually.

The Department published guidance on the introduction of pedestrian crossings in 1995 in Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/95: The Assessment of Pedestrian Crossings, and LTN 2/95: The Design of Pedestrian Crossings.

Detailed guidance on puffin crossings was published in 2006 in the Puffin Good Practice Guide. These may be revised in the future as a result of the Traffic Signs Policy Review.

Traffic Commissioners: Manpower

Graham Stringer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many support staff were available to (a) the Senior Traffic Commissioner and (b) individual traffic commissioners in the latest period for which figures are available. [58014]

Mike Penning: The budget for the Office of the Traffic Commissioner and Licensing for 2011-12 is 177.25 members of staff of which 166.24 are in post. These are distributed as follows:

(a) there is one member of staff available to the Senior Traffic Commissioner;

(b) there are 82.46 staff based in the Central Licensing Office in Leeds to whom all Traffic Commissioners (TCs) have access. There are a further 57.92 staff in the traffic area offices as follows:

Scotland	11.40
North Easter	6.40
North western	12.4
Wales and the Midlands	7.32
Western	11.40

Eastern	9.00
South East and Metropolitan	7.65

¹ Some dealing with devolved issues.

In addition to the above there are the following staff:

Scottish parking appeals	4
Driver conduct	6.51
Traffic Commissioner personal secretaries	4.2
International Road Freight Office	2.5.

Transport: EU Action

Graham Stringer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of his response to the European Commission on the EU White Paper on Transport. [58018]

Mrs Villiers: The European Commission has not requested a response on the EU Transport White Paper. There will be a debate on the White Paper at the June Transport Council. I will report on the outcome of that Council to Parliament.

Transport: Finance

John Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to the answer of 22 November 2010, *Official Report*, column 32W, on transport: finance, when he intends to publish up-to-date business case information for Highways Agency major schemes; and if he will make a statement. [57885]

Mike Penning: Following the Secretary of State for Transport's announcement in October 2010 and his commitment to publish the business case for each scheme, the business cases for each individual scheme were published on 30 December 2010 and are available to view on the Highways Agency website. The Department for Transport's website has also published guidance to help the public understand the business cases and how they were used to make ministerial decisions.

DEFENCE

Armed Forces: Dogs

Simon Hart: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the average daily feed cost for (a) dogs and (b) horses in the service of the armed forces was in the most recent period for which figures are available. [57874]

Mr Robathan: The information is not held in the format requested.

Chinook Helicopters

Mr Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of procuring the new Chinook helicopters referred to in the strategic defence and security review. [57492]

Peter Luff [holding answer 7 June 2011]: The Ministry of Defence is currently in discussion with Boeing in preparation for the main investment decision point for the 12 new and two replacement Chinooks announced

as part of the strategic defence and security review. The cost to the public purse will not be confirmed until the contract is signed. We will announce any significant procurement decisions to Parliament in the usual way.

Departmental Land

Damian Hinds: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects a decision to be made on the future of his Department's base at Bordon. [57298]

Nick Harvey: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 16 May 2011, *Official Report*, columns 75-76W, to the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Alun Cairns).

As a current technical training site, Bordon is one of locations under consideration by the Defence technical training change programme. However, I hope to be able to announce the future of the base at Bordon before the summer recess.

Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department expects to spend on the (a) Joint Strike Fighter Autonomic Logistics, (b) Joint Strike Fighter Autonomic Logistics Global Sustainment System, (c) Joint Strike Fighter Autonomic Logistics Information System, (d) Joint Strike Fighter Air Vehicles and (e) Joint Strike Fighter Lightning II Pilot and Maintenance Training Systems. [57711]

Peter Luff: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 23 May 2011, *Official Report*, column 392W. The total cost of the component systems of the Joint Strike Fighter will be determined when the main investment decision point is made. Publishing such details at this early stage would undermine the Department's commercial position.

Libya: Armed Conflict

Thomas Docherty: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the answer of 24 May 2011, *Official Report*, column 785, on Libya, which countries have provided military advisers to assist the opposition forces. [57931]

Nick Harvey: The United Kingdom has deployed a team of military advisers to mentor the National Transitional Council, improving their ability to protect civilians and civilian populated areas. The French and Italian Governments have both stated publicly that they have deployed military advisers to Libya. The release of information pertaining to deployments by other international partners is a matter for those nations concerned.

Tornado Aircraft

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many Helmet Mounted Cueing Systems his Department (a) plans to install and (b) has installed on the GR4 Tornado; [57876]

(2) if he will estimate the cost to the public purse of installing the Helmet Mounted Cueing System on the GR4 Tornado. [57877]

Peter Luff: I am withholding information about the fitting of a Helmet Mounted Cueing System (HMCS) to Tornado GR4 aircraft as its disclosure would, or would be likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the armed forces. The cost of the Tornado GR4 HMCS programme is just over £11 million.

SCOTLAND

Crown Relocations

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many contracts his Department holds with Crown Relocations; and what the (a) purpose and (b) monetary value of each such contract is. [58635]

David Mundell: The Scotland Office does not hold any contracts with Crown Relocations.

EU Council of Ministers

Ann McKeichin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether any agreement on enabling Scottish Government Ministers to sit on the EU Council of Ministers was reached at the meetings between the UK Government and the First Minister of Scotland on 23 and 24 May 2011. [57901]

Michael Moore: UK Government Ministers held a series of constructive meetings with the First Minister of Scotland on 23 and 24 May, at which a range of matters were discussed. As part of the United Kingdom, Scotland has strong representation at European Council meetings. The UK Government look favourably on all requests from the devolved Administrations to attend and speak at European Council meetings, where devolved matters are to be discussed.

Excise Duties: Alcoholic Drinks

Ann McKeichin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions his Department has had with (a) HM Treasury and (b) the Scottish Government on the Scottish Government's request that the Scottish Parliament should control the level of excise duty paid on alcohol in Scotland. [57900]

Michael Moore: I have regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues on a range of matters affecting Scotland. At my meeting with the First Minister for Scotland on 12 May, we discussed a range of matters relating to the Scotland Bill.

Serco

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many contracts his Department holds with Serco; and what the (a) purpose and (b) monetary value of each such contract is. [58653]

David Mundell: The Scotland Office does not hold any contracts with Serco.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Aid

10. **Mr Bone:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what estimate he has made of the amount to be spent on overseas aid in (a) 2011-12 and (b) 2014-15. [57748]

Mr Andrew Mitchell: UK Official Development Assistance as a proportion of gross national income will be 0.56% in 2011 and 2012. The Government are fully committed to delivering 0.7% of GNI as ODA from 2013 and will enshrine this commitment in law, in line with the coalition agreement.

Fair Trade Procurement

11. **Steve Rotheram:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what his Department's policy is on fair trade procurement. [57749]

Mr Duncan: The Department for International Development (DFID) encourages the procurement of fairly traded products. For instance all tea and coffee available for sale to DFID staff in the UK are either Rain Forest Alliance or Fairtrade certified. The provision and promotion of ethical produce forms part of the specification for our catering services.

Aid Workers: Misrata

12. **Nic Dakin:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps he is taking to assist aid workers in Misrata. [57750]

Mr Andrew Mitchell: During the two month siege of Misrata by Gaddafi's forces, the UK provided essential support to humanitarian organisations. This included food, medical supplies and personnel. We also supported the evacuation of 5000 people stranded at the port.

Climate Change

Mrs Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps his Department is taking to mitigate the effects of climate change in developing countries. [57743]

Mr Duncan: The Department for International Development (DFID) will support those exposed to extreme weather events—floods, droughts and famines—to prepare and protect themselves. We will also support developing countries to invest in low carbon growth while reducing poverty

EU Aid

Mr Hollobone: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what proportion of British overseas aid was channelled through EU institutions in the last year for which figures are available. [58238]

Mr O'Brien: In 2009-10 financial year, 18% of UK spend on development was channelled through European Union institutions; this amounted to £1.42 billion.

Libya: International Assistance

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what discussions he has had with the UN Secretary General on post-conflict resolution planning and delivery of humanitarian aid to Libya; and if he will make a statement. [57968]

Mr Andrew Mitchell: I met the UN Secretary-General at the end of March at the London Libya Conference. I welcomed his leadership on the co-ordination of humanitarian assistance and supported his role in post-conflict planning to bring stability to Libya once a political settlement is in place.

The UK recognises that there are immediate stabilisation needs that must be addressed in the interim. We have therefore deployed a stabilisation response team to conduct an assessment of interim needs and help underpin the international stabilisation effort in Libya.

We will continue to work closely with the United Nations, including through the Secretary-General's special adviser on post-conflict planning in Libya and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Co-ordinator, and their teams. The UK is supporting the UN-led international effort to deliver immediate humanitarian assistance to those affected by the conflict, and to work towards a better future for the Libyan people.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

British Constitution: Wales

Jonathan Edwards: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether he received a request from (a) members of the Welsh Government or (b) the Secretary of State for Wales between 6 May and 20 May 2011 to meet to discuss constitutional issues. [57464]

The Deputy Prime Minister: I meet the Secretary of State regularly to discuss Government business including constitutional issues. I am due to meet the First Minister at the Joint Ministerial Committee meeting on 8 June and at the British Irish Council summit in London on 20 June.

Diamond Jubilee 2012: Urban Areas

Rehman Chishti: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) how many panel members will determine the outcome of the Diamond Jubilee City Status competition; [57870]

(2) what process he plans to follow to assess entries in the Diamond Jubilee City Status competition. [57871]

Mr Harper: As was made clear in the publicity material which accompanied the launch of the competition, responsibility for advising Her Majesty on civic honours and other royal matters rests with the Deputy Prime Minister and Lord President of the Council, assisted by the Minister for Political and Constitutional Reform. The Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media

and Sport, my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Mr Hunt), is responsible for co-ordinating the Government's involvement in the diamond jubilee. Other Ministers who will be involved as appropriate include the Secretary of State for Scotland, the right hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (Michael Moore), the Secretary of State for Wales, my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan), the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, my right hon. Friend the Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson) and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr Pickles).

The contents of the applications received will be assessed 'in the round' and on their individual merits. As a royal prerogative matter relating to honours the process will remain confidential, as will Ministers' conclusions until the results are announced. The Queen's decision, made on ministerial advice, will be final and no reasons will be given for applicants' success or failure in the competitions. Local authorities will be sent brief comments on their entries when the decisions are announced.

CABINET OFFICE

Big Society Bank

Chris Leslie: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what estimate his Department has made of the financial return on investment that banks lending on commercial terms through the big society bank will receive. [58233]

Mr Hurd: Four UK banks have agreed to invest £200 million into the big society bank subject to its business plan and on a commercial basis.

Now that the outline proposal for the BSB has been agreed by Government, negotiations are under way on the terms of the investment. The banks are committed to investing in a way that is compatible with the big society bank's mission is to help grow a sustainable social investment market and achieve returns against a double bottom line of social and financial impact. The exact terms of this investment have yet to be finalised.

Charitable Donations: Schools

Mr Blunkett: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office with reference to the Giving White Paper, what assessment he has made of the role of the Speakers for Schools programme to play in the promotion of the policies outlined in the White Paper; and if he will make a statement. [58351]

Mr Hurd: The aim of 'Speakers for Schools' is to encourage inspirational, high profile figures from a range of backgrounds to speak for free in state schools—giving them access to the sorts of networks which private schools have. In recognition that Government can do much to lead the way in this agenda, both in terms of demonstrating commitment to giving their time and by inspiring others to do the same, all members of the Cabinet have signed up to the scheme, which is non-political, and already has significant cross-party support.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Theft

Keith Vaz: To ask the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross, representing the House of Commons Commission, how many thefts from the parliamentary estate have been reported in each month from May 2010 to May 2011. [57934]

John Thurso: The following table indicates the number of reported incidents involving theft on the parliamentary estate between May 2010 and May 2011:

	<i>Number of reported thefts</i>
<i>2010</i>	
May	0
June	2
July	3
August	0
September	0
October	0
November	4
December	2
<i>2011</i>	
January	7
February	2
March	6
April	9
May	16

Keith Vaz: To ask the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross, representing the House of Commons Commission, how many cases of theft from the parliamentary estate were reported in each year since 2006; and what items were reported stolen. [57935]

John Thurso: The following table details the number of thefts reported and detail of items stolen by year. It should be noted that multiple items may have been stolen in one incident of reported theft.

	<i>Total number of thefts reported</i>	<i>Detail of item reported stolen</i>
2006	13	1x sim card 1x copier paper 1x lights 1x shoes 1x clock 1x CD rewriter 1x flowers 2x laptop 1x mobile phone 1x cash 1x dictaphone 1x personal property
2007	8	1x wallet 1x laptop

	<i>Total number of thefts reported</i>	<i>Detail of item reported stolen</i>
		1x rug
		1x bottle of whisky
		1x cable drum
		1x purse
		1x doorkeeper's badge
		2x cash
2008	11	3x cash
		1x camera
		1x candlestick
		1x set of golf clubs
		1x mobile phone
		1x set of chairs
		1x coat
		1x laptop
		1x pedal cycle
2009	15	1x sat-nav
		6x cash
		1x wallet
		1x computer wire
		4x mobile phone
		1x letters
		1x tax disc
2010	19	5x cash
		1x orchid
		1x bag
		2x laptop
		1x camera
		1x purse
		1x MP3 player
		1x computer
		1x microphone
		1x knife
		3x mobile phone
		1x iPod nano
		1x hard drive
2011	40	2x computer
		25x laptop
		1x coat
		2x cash
		1x charm
		1x keys
		1x sat-nav
		1x iPod
		3x mobile phone
		1x watch
		1x camera
		1x iPad
		1x wallet
		1x camcorder

HOME DEPARTMENT

Foreign Travel Orders

Mr Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many foreign travel orders issued to prevent a registered sex offender from travelling abroad have been issued in the last three years. [57697]

Lynne Featherstone: The number of foreign travel orders that have been issued by the police to registered sex offenders can be found in the 2009-10 Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Annual Report which was published on 27 October 2010. The figures run from 2005-06 to 2009-10 as of 31 March 2010.

<http://www.parliament.uk/deposits/depositedpapers/2011/DEP2011-0045.pdf>

Human Trafficking

Mr Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people referred to the National Referral Mechanism for victims of trafficking are being accommodated in the prison estate. [57696]

Damian Green: There are currently nine people in the prison estate whose case is in the process of being considered within the National Referral Mechanism.

Crown Prosecution Service prosecutors must consider a range of circumstances to conclude whether the public interest is best served in continuing the prosecution of defendants charged with offences who might be trafficked victims. Where the potential victim of trafficking raises trafficking for the first time when in prison, it is open to their legal representative to make an application to the courts for leave to appeal conviction and sentence.

Human Trafficking: EU Law

Mr Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when her Department plans to transpose into UK law the provisions of the EU directive on human trafficking. [57698]

Damian Green: The Government will shortly be applying to the European Commission to formally opt in to the EU directive on human trafficking. If our application is accepted, we will consider the necessary legislative requirements thereafter, subject to the parliamentary timetable.

Members: Correspondence

Mr Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when she plans to respond to the letter of 4 April 2011 from the hon. Member for Walsall North about a constituent, reference M7095/11; [53790]

(2) with reference to the interim reply of 3 May 2011, reference M7095/11, when she plans to provide a substantive response to the letter of 4 April 2011 from the hon. Member for Walsall North; [55441]

(3) pursuant to the holding replies of 3 May 2011 to question 53790 and 13 May 2011 to question 55441 on ministerial correspondence, when she plans to provide a substantive response to the letter of 4 April 2011,

reference M7095/1, from the hon. Member for Walsall North; what the reason is for the continued delay of a substantive reply; and what the average time taken for a ministerial response to letters from hon. Members was in the latest period for which figures are available. [57734]

Nick Herbert [*holding answers 3 May and 13 May 2011*]: I refer the hon. Member to my letter of 31 May 2011. A copy will be placed in the House Library.

Police: Manpower

Clive Efford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (a) police officers of each rank and (b) sergeants in charge of safer neighbourhood teams were in post in each (i) police authority area and (ii) London borough command area

in (A) May 2010 and (B) May 2011; what estimate she has made of the numbers to be in those posts on 1 April 2015; and if she will make a statement. [57985]

Nick Herbert: Data relating to police officer strength by rank and to police officers predominantly employed in the neighbourhood function as at 31 March 2010 in England and Wales are given in Tables A and B respectively. Figures for Metropolitan and London city police officer strength as at 31 March 2010, by basic command unit (which in London relate to boroughs), are provided on Tables C and D respectively. The information on police officer functions and basic command units cannot centrally be broken down by rank.

The Home Office does not collect data on future estimates of police numbers.

Police personnel statistics for 31 March 2011 are expected to be published in July 2011.

Table A: Police officer strength as at 31 March 2010, in England and Wales, by police force area and rank, England and Wales

Police force	ACPO rank	Full-time equivalents ¹						
		Chief Superintendent	Superintendent	Chief Inspector	Inspector	Sergeant	Constable	Total ranks
Avon and Somerset	6	9	25	52	181	492	2,537	3,302
Bedfordshire	4	5	12	20	64	179	962	1,246
Cambridgeshire	3	7	13	30	88	253	1,077	1,471
Cheshire	4	5	16	26	118	362	1,624	2,155
Cleveland	4	4	10	24	84	247	1,351	1,724
Cumbria	4	4	7	18	59	183	963	1,238
Derbyshire	4	9	15	24	100	313	1,610	2,074
Devon and Cornwall	5	10	34	30	183	609	2,685	3,556
Dorset	4	6	12	25	89	240	1,110	1,486
Durham	3	8	11	17	84	225	1,159	1,507
Essex	5	10	23	44	147	527	2,850	3,606
Gloucestershire	4	7	12	21	67	203	994	1,309
Greater Manchester	6	22	55	101	365	1,169	6,430	8,148
Hampshire	5	13	25	55	194	634	2,821	3,748
Hertfordshire	5	8	17	37	112	328	1,622	2,130
Humberside	4	8	17	32	115	330	1,552	2,058
Kent	7	15	26	69	184	530	2,956	3,787
Lancashire	5	11	21	49	196	620	2,747	3,649
Leicestershire	4	8	14	31	110	373	1,777	2,317
Lincolnshire	3	6	9	12	65	179	932	1,206
London, City of	3	5	11	21	56	144	612	852
Merseyside	6	15	32	58	233	639	3,534	4,516
Metropolitan Police	37	86	217	475	1,695	6,069	24,788	33,367
Norfolk	5	7	15	17	97	284	1,236	1,662
Northamptonshire	4	6	13	25	67	220	1,008	1,343
Northumbria	5	13	31	51	174	600	3,314	4,187
North Yorkshire	4	5	10	16	83	250	1,118	1,486
Nottinghamshire	4	9	21	37	126	410	1,802	2,409
South Yorkshire	4	11	25	38	155	459	2,260	2,953
Staffordshire	4	7	16	27	97	377	1,634	2,161
Suffolk	4	4	12	25	76	223	902	1,246
Surrey	4	12	18	32	107	286	1,430	1,890
Sussex	5	11	16	53	184	543	2,401	3,213
Thames Valley	4	11	35	59	204	685	3,437	4,434
Warwickshire	4	4	11	15	51	135	753	973
West Mercia	5	10	14	35	122	408	1,797	2,391
West Midlands	6	27	44	73	360	1,156	6,960	8,626
West Yorkshire	6	20	42	79	289	809	4,513	5,758

Table A: Police officer strength as at 31 March 2010, in England and Wales, by police force area and rank, England and Wales

Police force	Full-time equivalents ¹							
	ACPO rank	Chief Superintendent	Superintendent	Chief Inspector	Inspector	Sergeant	Constable	Total ranks
Wiltshire	4	6	10	18	73	196	875	1,181
Dyfed-Powys	3	6	9	17	67	190	903	1,195
Gwent	3	5	13	20	77	228	1,091	1,437
North Wales	4	5	19	17	81	279	1,185	1,590
South Wales	6	13	22	52	179	520	2,355	3,148
Total of all 43 forces	223	473	1,029	1,974	7,258	23,109	109,669	143,734

¹ This table contain full-time equivalent figures that have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Because of rounding, there may be an apparent discrepancy between totals and the sums of the constituent items

Table B: Police officers predominantly employed in neighbourhood^{1, 2} functions (FTE)^{3, 4} in England and Wales as at 31 March 2010

	Number of police officers
Avon and Somerset	293
Bedfordshire	100
Cambridgeshire	166
Cheshire	468
Cleveland	251
Cumbria	5
Derbyshire	186
Devon and Cornwall	334
Dorset	138
Durham	170
Dyfed-Powys	79
Essex	486
Gloucestershire	97
Greater Manchester	992
Gwent	363
Hampshire	469
Hertfordshire	239
Humberside	142
Kent	325
Lancashire	376
Leicestershire	348
Lincolnshire	96
London, City of	65
Merseyside	739
Metropolitan Police	895
Norfolk	337
Northamptonshire	213
Northumbria	573
North Wales	164
North Yorkshire	5
Nottinghamshire	312
South Wales	390
South Yorkshire ⁶	345
Staffordshire	309
Suffolk	138
Surrey	185
Sussex	251
Thames Valley	484
Warwickshire	157
West Mercia	283
West Midlands	1,782
West Yorkshire	1,871

Table B: Police officers predominantly employed in neighbourhood^{1, 2} functions (FTE)^{3, 4} in England and Wales as at 31 March 2010

	Number of police officers
Wiltshire	29

¹ Staff with multiple responsibilities (or designations) are recorded under their primary role or function. The deployment of police officers is an operational matter for individual chief constables.

² In 2008-09 'Foot/Car/Beat/Patrol' was replaced by 'Neighbourhoods' and 'Response'.

³ This table contains full-time equivalent figures that have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

⁴ Available information on functions cannot be centrally broken down by rank.

⁵ Data not available centrally.

Table C: Police officer strength^{1, 2} Metropolitan police force area, by Basic Command Unit, 31 March 2010¹

	Number of officers
Barking and Dagenham	448
Barnet	596
Bexley	406
Brent	712
Bromley	524
Camden	889
City of Westminster	1,656
Croydon	755
Ealing	728
Enfield	601
Greenwich	711
Hackney	784
Hammersmith and Fulham	600
Haringey	734
Harrow	404
Havering	395
Hillingdon	526
Hounslow	540
Islington	719
Kensington and Chelsea	579
Kingston upon Thames	337
Lambeth	1,042
Lewisham	691
Merton	396
Newham	826
Redbridge	502
Richmond upon Thames	335
Southwark	964
Sutton	356
Tower Hamlets	829
Waltham Forest	578
Wandsworth	619
Heathrow	461

Table C: Police officer strength^{1, 2} Metropolitan police force area, by Basic Command Unit, 31 March 2010¹

	Number of officers
Central Services	12,126
Total	33,367

¹ These figures are based on full-time equivalents that have been rounded to the nearest whole number, due to rounding there may be an apparent discrepancy between totals and the sums of constituent items. Figures include those officers on career breaks.

² Available information on Basic Command Units cannot be centrally broken down by rank.

Table D: Police officer strength^{1, 2}, City of London police force area, by Basic Command Unit, 31 March 2010¹

	Number of officers
City of London Police	308
Central Services	544
Total	852

Police: Termination of Employment

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to the answer of 23 May 2011, *Official Report*, column 422W, on police: termination of employment, what regulation required police forces to issue leavers with a certificate showing (a) final rank and (b) the period of service in that force and in any other force prior to the enactment of Regulation 17 of the Police Regulations 2003. [57910]

Nick Herbert: The equivalent provision that was in effect immediately before the commencement of Regulation 17 of the Police Regulations 2003 was Regulation 19 of the Police Regulations 1995, which came into force on 8 March 1995 and was revoked by the 2003 Regulations with effect from 1 April 2003.

Public Houses: Crime

Mr Hepburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions police officers attended incidents at (a) pubs, (b) night clubs and (c) non-profit making private members' clubs in the last year for which figures are available. [57894]

Nick Herbert: The requested information is not collected centrally.

Road Traffic Offences: Fixed Penalties

Damian Collins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many graduated fixed penalty notices for foreign vehicles have been issued by the Central Roads Policing Department in (a) Kent and (b) Shepway district in the last 12 months. [58213]

Nick Herbert: The requested data are not collected centrally. While data on fixed penalty notices are collected and published in chapter 3 of the annual Home Office Statistical Bulletin "Police Powers and Procedures", data that identify foreign vehicles are not part of that collection.

ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Fossil Fuels

James Wharton: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change with reference to the answer to the hon. Member for Wimbledon of 8 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 10W, on fossil fuels, what proportion of UK energy demand has been met from fossil fuel sources in each year since 2008. [58539]

Charles Hendry: The volume and proportion of UK energy demand met from fossil fuel sources since 2008 is shown in the following table.

	Million tonnes of oil equivalent					
	2008		2009		2010	
	Volume	Proportion	Volume	Proportion	Volume	Proportion
	(percentage)	(percentage)	(percentage)	(percentage)	(percentage)	(percentage)
Coal	38.0	16.9	31.2	14.8	32.4	14.9
Petroleum	75.1	33.3	71.2	33.7	70.5	32.4
Natural gas	93.0	41.3	85.9	40.7	93.1	42.8
Total all fossil fuels	206.1	91.4	188.3	89.2	195.9	90.0

Figures for 2008 were revised in the Digest of UK Energy Statistics 2010 and therefore differ from those provided in the answer given on 8 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 10W.

Natural Gas: Exploration

Mr Bain: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what recent advice he has received on the effect of hydraulic fracturing in the production of shale gas on levels of water pollution. [58321]

Charles Hendry: The UK has a long history of onshore gas exploration, the technology—including hydraulic fracturing—is understood and there is a strong regulatory safety and environmental regime in place administered by the Health and Safety Executive, local authorities and the respective environmental agencies to ensure that potential risks to safety or the environment are properly managed.

In relation to the current shale gas drilling operations I understand that the Environment Agency does not consider that these pose a risk to the environment—including to water resources.

Huw Irranca-Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change if he will review the implications of recent seismic tremors near Blackpool for his policy on onshore drilling for unconventional gas. [58306]

Charles Hendry: Following the recent seismic tremors, the Department had discussions with the operator, Cuadrilla, and agreed that a pause in operations is appropriate so that a better understanding can be gained of the cause of the seismic events experienced in Poulton-le-Fylde. A geomechanical study is being undertaken, along with further work by the British Geological Survey

and Keele university. The implications of this information will be reviewed before any resumption of hydraulic fracture operations is approved.

Huw Irranca-Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change pursuant to the answer of 5 April 2011, *Official Report*, column 885W, on natural gas: exploration, if he will meet (a) the Health and Safety Executive and (b) the environment agencies to discuss the implications for unconventional gas extraction of recent seismic tremors reported near Blackpool. [58307]

Charles Hendry: The Department is involved in a continuous dialogue with the HSE and environment agencies in relation to unconventional gas extraction in the UK. A geomechanical study is being undertaken to look at the recent seismic tremors near Blackpool. The results of the study will be considered by the Department in consultation with the HSE and environment agencies.

Offshore Industry

Mr Bain: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change (1) what representations he has received from oil and gas companies on levels of production in the UK Continental Shelf in each of the next four financial years; [58422]

(2) what evidence he has received from oil and gas companies on levels of production in the UK Continental Shelf in each of the next four financial years; [58423]

(3) if he will estimate the level of imports into the United Kingdom of (a) oil and (b) gas in each of the next four financial years. [58425]

Charles Hendry: The Department regularly receives detailed field-by-field data on current and forecast production from the current operators of each field. Based on the data received, twice a year the Department produces and publishes projections of oil and gas production by calendar year; estimates are not made for financial years. Tables and charts showing the Department's latest projections are at:

https://www.og.decc.gov.uk/information/bb_updates/chapters/Section4_17.htm

The table at the end of the note includes estimates of net oil and gas imports each year.

Offshore Industry: Taxation

Huw Irranca-Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change whether discussions at (a) ministerial and (b) official level were held between his Department and the Treasury prior to the announcement of changes to the oil and gas tax regime in the 2011 Budget. [58828]

Charles Hendry: The Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, my right hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Chris Huhne), and I have regular discussions with Treasury colleagues on a range of issues, and officials have regular contacts with their opposite numbers.

Ofgem

Zac Goldsmith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change pursuant to the written ministerial statement of 19 May 2011, *Official Report*, columns 26-28WS, on the Ofgem review: summary of conclusions, what consideration he has given to the merits of setting energy efficiency as a strategic goal to which Ofgem should contribute. [58376]

Charles Hendry: The content of the new Strategy and Policy Statement, including the policy outcomes that Ofgem should contribute to, will be considered as part of a formal drafting process. This will include consultation with all interested parties.

Zac Goldsmith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change pursuant to the written ministerial statement of 19 May 2011, *Official Report*, columns 26-28WS, on the Ofgem Review: summary of conclusions, what timetable he has set for the development of his strategic policy framework for the energy sector. [58617]

Charles Hendry: The new strategy and policy statement will require primary legislation before it can come into force. We will therefore introduce it as soon as parliamentary time allows.

HEALTH

Care Quality Commission

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the average caseload was of compliance inspectors in the Care Quality Commission as at 1 April (a) 2010 and (b) 2011. [58077]

Mr Simon Burns: The following information has been provided by the Care Quality Commission:

The average caseload was around 50 locations per compliance inspector as at 1 April 2010.

The average caseload was 62 locations per compliance inspector as at 1 April 2011.

Note:

Figures based on filled posts which is an interim position pending recruitment.

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the (a) highest and (b) lowest caseload was of a compliance inspector in the Care Quality Commission as at 1 April 2011. [58078]

Mr Simon Burns: The following information has been provided by the Care Quality Commission:

The highest of the average regional caseloads of compliance inspectors was 70 locations¹ as at 1 April 2011.

The lowest of the average regional caseloads of compliance inspectors was 56 locations¹ as at 1 April 2011.

Regional case loads expressed are averages. On 1 April London had an average caseload of 70 locations per inspector, which was the highest. The lowest average caseload for a region was 56 in the east midlands.

¹ Figures based on filled posts which is an interim position pending recruitment.

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many GP practices the Care Quality Commission will be responsible for regulation of from 2012; and what estimate the Care Quality Commission has made of the number of additional registration assessors and compliance inspectors that will be required to deal with any new work. [58080]

Mr Simon Burns: The Care Quality Commission (CQC) estimates that approximately 8,500 general practitioner practices will be required to register with the Commission.

In terms of delivering its regulatory functions, the CQC is an independent body and it is therefore for the CQC to determine the staffing complement it requires in order to carry out its functions efficiently and effectively.

The following information has been provided by the CQC:

The CQC is currently reviewing its core processes with a view to refining its methods, guidance and processes in the light of experience and lessons learned from 1 April 2010 to date. The CQC therefore anticipates that some of the ways in which it regulates in respect of methods and guidance will change following completion of this review. It is not possible to estimate numbers of registration assessors and compliance inspectors that will be needed in the future until completion of this review.

The CQC's priority remains that, where it has evidence of a risk to quality and safety, it will deploy resources to react swiftly and take appropriate action.

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many days training on the new regulation methodology Care Quality Commission assessors and inspectors have received on average; and what evaluation the Care Quality Commission has made of the quality of such training. [58081]

Mr Simon Burns: The following information has been provided by the Care Quality Commission (CQC):

From April 2010 to date, compliance inspectors received an average of 22 days training. Registration assessors received an average of 17 days.

Managers have pre-training discussions with their staff to agree training objectives. Following training, the CQC's Learning and Development team receives feedback from trainers, staff and managers on the content, relevance and presentation of training.

Following training, staff take learning back into the work place as practical application. Changes and improvements to practice are monitored through performance and development review, and staff 1:1 processes. Additional support for the practical application of training is provided through peer group discussions about best practice and application and a local buddy system. Work is nationally and locally quality checked against standards.

The CQC has made improvements to the process for obtaining feedback on training through performance and development review discussions, and to identify the training gaps that exist.

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what professional support he expects the Care Quality Commission inspectors to receive from (a) dental and (b) medical advisors to assist them in inspecting dental and GP services. [58083]

Mr Simon Burns: In terms of delivering its regulatory functions, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) is an independent body and it is therefore responsible for

determining what professional support and input are required in order to undertake its functions efficiently and effectively.

The following information has been provided by the CQC:

The CQC has access to a team of national professional advisers and policy experts who work across a range of types of health and social care services. This team includes a variety of clinical and social care professionals and those with policy expertise in a variety of areas. National professional advisors include a general practitioner (GP), a surgeon, a nurse (who also covers midwifery), a radiologist, a dentist, and a social care professional.

The dental practitioner acts as an adviser for the development of training and is available for post-training advice and support.

The GP is currently involved in the planning and development of training for sector overview, registration and monitoring of compliance. Further GP involvement regarding post-training advice and support has not been determined as yet.

National professional advisers support compliance inspectors and are often involved in the planning for site visits. They also play an important role in the CQC assurance processes, including the monthly outliers panel and the Safeguarding Committee.

In the event that the CQC does not have the relevant expertise, the national professional advisors will seek to identify an external expert through contacts such as the relevant Royal Colleges.

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many site inspections the Care Quality Commission carried out in each quarter of the year to 1 April 2011; and what estimate the Care Quality Commission has made of the number of site inspections it will carry out in each quarter of 2011-12. [58084]

Mr Simon Burns: The following information has been provided by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

The following table shows the number of site visits completed by the CQC in each quarter of the financial year April 2010 to March 2011. The CQC brought forward a number of inspections into quarter 1 in order to have accurate information for the registration of services under the Health and Social Care Act 2008. Site visits undertaken on a risk basis to check declarations made during the registration process may not be captured in the table.

<i>Period</i>	<i>Number of site visits</i>
1 April 2010 to 30 June 2010	3,570
1 July 2010 to 30 September 2010	353
1 October 2010 to 31 December 2010	570
1 January 2011 to 31 March 2011	1,972
Total	6,465

The CQC's methodology does not prescribe a set frequency for visits. In line with the principles of risk-based regulation, the CQC carries out visits in line with its judgment of risk when these are the most effective way of gathering information about compliance. This means the CQC targets its resources on providers where the risk is highest, while reducing the regulatory burden on providers where the risk is low.

Across its regulatory scope, the CQC has capacity to undertake 15,000 to 20,000 responsive reviews over a one-year period, the vast majority of which it anticipates to include a site visit. This does not reflect the full extent of its site visit regime.

Site visits will therefore take place wherever necessary and it is not possible to predict the number which will take place in each quarter of the year 2011 to 2012.

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will assess the potential effects on (a) patients and (b) service users and (c) the public of the Care Quality Commission's plans to reduce the number of planned reviews it carries out. [58085]

Mr Simon Burns: The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is responsible for delivering its regulatory functions and determining what reviews it needs to undertake for the purposes of carrying out these functions.

The following information has been provided by the CQC.

The CQC undertook 1,411 compliance reviews (956 planned and 455 responsive) between 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2011. The CQC has not announced plans to reduce the number of planned reviews.

Implementation of the new registration system has resulted in lower levels of reviews for a period as resources have been concentrated on bringing providers (particularly national health service and primary dental care providers) into the new regulatory framework.

The CQC expects general practitioner registration to have an impact on the number of reviews undertaken but anticipates having a clearer picture by the end of the current operating year (ending 31 March 2012) of the level at which reviews will settle.

The CQC's priority remains that where it has evidence of a risk compromising quality and safety, it will deploy resources to react swiftly and take appropriate action.

Health and Social Care Bill

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will visit Brighton Pavilion constituency to hear the views of members of the public on the Health and Social Care Bill at a public meeting. [57476]

Mr Simon Burns: In April 2011, the Government announced that it would take advantage of a natural break in the legislative process to 'pause, listen, and reflect' on people's concerns with a view to bringing forward improvements to the Health and Social Care Bill.

As part of the listening exercise the health ministerial team along with members of the NHS Future Forum, have visited every region in the country to listen to views of the public, staff and patients. Members of the public have also been able to have their say via the NHS modernisation website:

<http://healthandcare.dh.gov.uk/>

We do not have any immediate plans to visit the Brighton area to discuss the Health and Social Care Bill in the coming weeks.

Sexual Assault

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many sexual assault referral centres there are in (a) England and (b) North Yorkshire. [58070]

Anne Milton: There are 31 sexual assault referral centres in England. Three more are planned to open this year. A further nine are under development in a number of police force areas, including one in North Yorkshire.

Air Ambulance Services

Andrew Stephenson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his policy is on support for air ambulance services. [58125]

Mr Simon Burns: The Department recognises that air ambulances play an important role in delivering emergency care, especially in rural areas and where road access is a problem. The air ambulances that operate across the country provide an effective means of ensuring better and faster access to hospitals and of supporting transfers between hospitals.

However, the Department works on the basis that NHS services are best provided and managed by commissioners and providers locally, working closely with their clinicians and key partners, with central Government intervening only when there is a clear need for national action. We believe that the local national health service is in the best position to make decisions about pre-hospital care in each area, including the use and funding of air ambulances.

Community Hospitals: Eltham

Clive Efford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when he expects the contract to build a new community hospital in Eltham to be let for tender; and if he will make a statement; [57854]

(2) what date he has set for the opening of a new community hospital in Eltham; and if he will make a statement; [57855]

(3) if he will assess the effects of staffing reductions at Greenwich Primary Care and Teaching Trust on the ability of the Trust to (a) plan, monitor and develop health services in the borough and (b) progress development of a new community hospital in Eltham; and if he will make a statement. [57856]

Mr Simon Burns: It is for the local national health service to plan and provide services to meet the health needs of its local population. NHS London advises my officials that Greenwich Teaching Primary Care Trust (PCT) is currently working with its construction partner the Bromley, Bexley and Greenwich construction company to prepare a Stage 1 Outline Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT) business case for approval both by the Greenwich Clinical Commissioning Committee and joint PCT boards in July 2011. I understand that the local NHS will be keeping the hon. Member informed of progress and is happy to answer any questions he has regarding this project.

Dental Health: Children

Mr Hollobone: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in improving children's dental health in (a) England and (b) Northamptonshire since May 2010. [58239]

Mr Simon Burns: We are committed to introducing a new dental contract based on capitation, registration and quality, with the aim of improving oral health, especially that of children. Dental contract pilots, which will test aspects of the new contract, are about to become operational. In addition, to reinforce the benefits of the contractual changes, we are exploring how general dental practices can develop closer links to primary schools, and we have included rates of dental decay among five year old children in “Healthy Lives, Healthy People: proposals for a public health outcomes framework”. Dental practices in Northamptonshire, where there is already support on oral health promotion for children and young adults, will be well placed to take advantage of these changes.

Diabetic Specialist Nurses

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment he has made of the effect on the number of diabetic specialist nurses under his proposed reforms to the NHS; [57987]

(2) how many diabetic specialist nurses were employed by the NHS in the latest period for which figures are available. [57988]

Mr Simon Burns: The current number of diabetic specialist nurses employed by the national health service is not collected centrally.

It is for local NHS organisations, with their knowledge of the health needs of their local population to train and recruit the staff needed to best meet these needs.

We do hold information on the number of qualified nursing, midwifery and health—visiting staff employed by the NHS, which is available from the NHS Information Centre for Health and Social Care annual workforce census, however the speciality requested is not collected separately.

The Centre for Workforce Intelligence has been commissioned by the Department to undertake a review of non-medical speciality training later this year. This will look at demand and supply modelling at a national level for each non-medical speciality.

On the 6 April, the Prime Minister launched the NHS Listening Exercise, one of the focuses of which was education and training. This is an opportunity to pause, listen, reflect and improve the NHS reforms. The Government will respond to this in due course.

Epilepsy: Research

Laura Sandys: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will commission research to examine the reasons for the difference between the rate of the UK and the median rate for the EU-15 in respect of epilepsy mortality. [57397]

Paul Burstow: The Medical Research Council (MRC) is responsible for the funding of medical research in the United Kingdom. Working through its council, scientific boards, and committees, the MRC is independent in its choice of which research to support. Research proposals are stringently peer reviewed by a core of scientific experts and other external expert referees both in the UK and abroad.

General Practitioners

Craig Whittaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements he plans to put in place to ensure meetings and decisions taken by GP commissioners are open and transparent to the public following the implementations of his NHS reforms. [57921]

Mr Simon Burns: Subject to the passing of the Health and Social Care Bill, and the outcome of the current listening exercise, we propose that the constitution of each commissioning consortium should set out its arrangements for decision-making and managing potential conflicts of interest. General practitioner (GP) consortia would also be required to hold an annual general meeting and this would be open to anyone.

We also propose clear statutory duties on commissioners in relation to procurement and in relation to anti-competitive behaviours. A clear set of underpinning rules and guidance would be developed to apply to GP consortia, so that they have the necessary support to make decisions that are fair and transparent and avoid any perceived conflicts of interest.

Neil Parish: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to address any inequality between urban and rural provision of medical and care services when establishing GP consortia. [58034]

Mr Simon Burns: Subject to the passing of the Health and Social Care Bill and the outcome of the current listening exercise, there will be a duty on the NHS Commissioning Board and commissioning consortia that they must in the exercise of their functions have regard to the need to reduce inequalities between patients in access to health services and in the outcomes achieved from health services.

In addition, the NHS Commissioning Board will take over responsibility for the allocation of resources from the Department. It would be for the Board to decide how best to allocate resources in a way that supports the principle of securing equivalent access to NHS services relative to the prospective burden of disease and disability.

During the transition to the Board, the Secretary of State for Health has asked the Advisory Committee on Resource Allocation (ACRA), an independent committee comprising general practitioners, academics and NHS managers, to continue to oversee the formulae for the distribution of NHS resources. ACRA’s work programme will include consideration of the issue of rurality in light of the move to allocations to commissioning consortia.

General Practitioners: Telephone Services

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the level of compliance by general practitioners with his Department’s guidance on the use of premium line telephone numbers for use by patients; and if he will make a statement. [57920]

Mr Simon Burns: The Department has made no assessment of the level of compliance of the Directions regarding the use of 084 numbers in the national health

service. It is the responsibility of primary care trusts to ensure that local practices are compliant with the Directions and guidance.

Mr Iain Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance his Department provides to GPs on the use of 0844 numbers for patients seeking appointments; and if he will make a statement. [58000]

Mr Simon Burns: The Department issued guidance and directions to the national health service on 21 December 2009 which stated NHS bodies and general practitioner practices should not enter into new, renew, or extend, contracts for telephone services unless they can be satisfied that patients will not pay more than they would to make equivalent calls to a geographical number.

It is the responsibility of primary care trusts to ensure that local practices are compliant with the directions and guidance.

HealthWatch: Freedom of Information

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for what reasons local HealthWatch bodies are not to be covered by the Freedom of Information Act 2000; and if he will make a statement. [58066]

Mr Simon Burns: Subject to the parliamentary process, local HealthWatch organisations will be public-facing bodies and will need to be transparent to its local communities. The Department is considering adding local HealthWatch organisations to the schedule of the Freedom of Information Act.

Hospitals: Consultants

Craig Whittaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he plans to put in place arrangements to ensure NHS consultants are prevented from establishing their own companies as part of his NHS reforms. [57925]

Mr Simon Burns: We have no such plans. National health service consultants are required to adhere to a Code of Conduct for Private Practice, which includes provisions governing the relationship between NHS work and other work.

Injuries: Young People

Ms Gisela Stuart: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress he has made in implementing the draft guidance developed by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence on strategies to prevent unintentional injuries among children and young people aged under 15. [57712]

Anne Milton: The Department of Health is developing policies that will contribute to injury prevention. These will be developed in partnership with other Departments and organisations. For example, the Department for Education has recently announced the funding of Safe Network, a consortium including the Child Accident Prevention Trust, to provide advice and assistance on the full range of safeguarding issues, including injury prevention.

The “Healthy Child programme: Pregnancy and the first five years of life” includes training for families on the correct use of basic safety equipment and to raise awareness of accident prevention in the home and safety in cars. A copy has already been placed in the Library.

The Department for Transport has also published a new Strategic Framework for Road Safety on 11 May 2011 which sets out the way forward for road safety over the coming years. It covers all road users including children.

James Kingsland

Rosie Cooper: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the work conducted by Dr James Kingsland for his Department is subject to a contractual agreement. [58235]

Mr Simon Burns: Dr James Kingsland has undertaken work under contract with the Department as lead for the National Clinical Commissioning Network, which has focused on practice-based commissioning and the proposed commissioning reforms.

Lung Cancer

Mr Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many chest x-rays were requested by GPs for the purposes of diagnosis of suspected lung cancer (*a*) in each primary care trust and (*b*) in England in the last 12 months for which figures are available; and what proportion of such x-rays confirmed the diagnosis. [57944]

Paul Burstow: The information requested is not centrally held. Currently the Department collects only annual data on the total numbers of x-rays undertaken, broken down by provider. As set out in “Improving Outcomes: A Strategy for Cancer”, the Department is currently working to develop a new data collection which will include the collection of data on the number of chest x-rays requested by general practitioners.

Mr Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the 30-day mortality rate for patients with a diagnosis of lung cancer who received a major surgical resection was (*a*) in respect of each provider, (*b*) in each cancer network and (*c*) in each strategic health authority in the last five years for which figures are available. [57945]

Paul Burstow: The information requested is not centrally held. The National Cancer Intelligence Network (NCIN) recently conducted a study of the 30-day mortality rates for patients with a diagnosis of bowel cancer who received a major surgical resection. Further information about the study is available on the NCIN website at:

www.ncin.org.uk/cancer_type_and_topic_specific_work/cancer_type_specific_work/postoperative_mortality.aspx

Following this analysis of the 30-day postoperative mortality for bowel cancer, the NCIN proposes to work with clinical leads across all tumour sites to see where this study can be repeated.

National Association of Primary Care

Rosie Cooper: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the effects on the National Association of Primary Care of the work of Dr James Kingsland for his Department. [58236]

Mr Simon Burns: The Department has not assessed the effects on the National Association of Primary Care of the work of Dr James Kingsland for the Department.

Rosie Cooper: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the National Association of Primary Care has received any funding from his Department in the last 18 months for which figures are available. [58237]

Mr Simon Burns: The National Association of Primary Care has received funding from the Department in the last 18 months for a range of projects and sponsorships including those aimed at improving engagement with frontline clinicians.

National Clinical Director

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will appoint a national clinical director for allied health professionals with responsibilities equivalent to those of the Director of Nursing and Chief Nursing Officer. [57916]

Mr Simon Burns: The Health and Social Care Bill published on 19 January 2011 sets out details about the membership of the NHS Commissioning Board. We are using the natural break in the passage of the Health and Social Care Bill to pause, listen, reflect on, and improve national health service modernisation plans.

The Board itself will determine its own appointments but will include people with a range of skills and experience.

National Commissioning Board

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to enable the expertise of allied health professionals to be available to the National Commissioning Board. [57969]

Mr Simon Burns: As part of the NHS listening exercise, we are considering clinical input to commissioning at all levels, including the NHS Commissioning Board. Both the report of the Future Forum and the Government response will be published in due course.

Neuromuscular Services

Henry Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent progress has been made by the NHS South East Coast Specialised Commissioning Group in reviewing neuromuscular services in the region; and if he will make a statement. [57513]

Paul Burstow: This is a matter for the national health service locally. We have been advised by the South East Coast strategic health authority that the South East Coast Specialised Commissioning Group (SECSCG), which commissions neuromuscular services on behalf of the region has now completed its review. The review's findings have been published in a report entitled "Better Co-ordination; Better Care—A review of services for people with Neuromuscular Conditions in the South East Coast" which is available on the SECSCG's website at:

www.secscg.nhs.uk/home/news

Following the review, initiatives are underway throughout the South East Coast region to implement its recommendations. These include programmes to improve access to, and join up, services for people with neuromuscular disease. Work is also underway to provide a care pathway coordinator post to provide advice and information for patients and carers, by September 2011.

NHS: Negligence

Yvonne Fovargue: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much the NHS Litigation Authority paid (a) on average to successful claimants (i) in total and (ii) for medical reports in cases of clinical negligence in each of the last three years and (b) on average in respect of its own costs (A) in total and (B) in respect of medical reports in each such year. [58019]

Mr Simon Burns: The information to show how much the National Health Service Litigation Authority (NHSLA) paid on average to successful claimants in total in cases of clinical negligence in each of the last three years and on average in respect of its own costs in total is in the following table.

Number of clinical negligence claims closed with damages 2008-09 to 2010-11

<i>Year of closure</i>	<i>Damages paid</i>	<i>Average damages</i>	<i>Defence costs paid</i>	<i>Average defence costs</i>	<i>Clamant costs paid</i>	<i>Average claimant costs</i>
2008-09	278,038,411	93,114	35,916,879	12,028	95,911,592	32,120
2009-10	267,332,564	71,137	38,491,431	10,243	112,528,769	29,944
2010-11	499,478,033	94,976	59,664,874	11,345	192,481,953	36,600
Total	1,044,849,007	87,049	134,073,184	11,170	400,922,313	33,402

Number of clinical negligence claims settled as periodical payments 2008-09 to 2010-11

<i>Year of settlement</i>	<i>Total damages</i>	<i>Average damages</i>	<i>Defence costs paid</i>	<i>Average defence costs</i>	<i>Clamant costs paid</i>	<i>Average claimant costs</i>
2008-09	552,136,757	4,214,784	17,207,984	131,359	38,403,070	293,153
2009-10	504,736,479	3,943,254	13,712,666	107,130	34,043,228	265,963
2010-11	547,337,006	4,210,285	12,830,840	98,699	21,748,248	167,294

Number of clinical negligence claims settled as periodical payments 2008-09 to 2010-11

<i>Year of settlement</i>	<i>Total damages</i>	<i>Average damages</i>	<i>Defence costs paid</i>	<i>Average defence costs</i>	<i>Claimant costs paid</i>	<i>Average claimant costs</i>
Total	1,604,210,242	4,123,934	43,751,490	112,472	94,194,546	242,145

Notes:

1. Periodical payment orders (PPOs) that have ongoing payments have been included separately and the figure provided is as though they were settled on a lump sum basis.
2. Some of the defence costs and claimant costs not have been finalised yet and so the costs, payment figures and average costs payment figures may be understated.
3. It is not possible to show specific costs for medical records as the NHSLA does not record costs in this level of detail.

Source:

National Health Service Litigation Authority (May 2011)

Yvonne Fovargue: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many settled claims funded by legal aid and brought against the NHS Litigation Authority were brought on behalf of a minor in each of the last three years; what proportion of all legally-aided claims that figure represents in each such year; and how much was paid out (a) in total and (b) on average in each such year. [58020]

Mr Simon Burns: The information to show how many settled claims funded by legal aid and brought against the NHS Litigation Authority that were brought on behalf of a minor in each of the last three years is in the following tables:

Number of clinical negligence claims funded by legal aid closed 2008-09 to 2010-11

<i>Year of closure</i>	<i>Legally aided claims on behalf of a minor</i>			<i>All legally aided claims</i>			<i>Legally aided claims on behalf of a minor as % of all legally aided claims</i>		
	<i>Settled nil damages</i>	<i>Settled with damages</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Settled nil damages</i>	<i>Settled with damages</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Settled nil damages</i>	<i>Settled with damages</i>	<i>Total</i>
2008-09	244	313	557	598	994	1,592	41	31	35
2009-10	251	349	600	573	1,068	1,641	44	33	37
2010-11	264	454	718	629	1,373	2,002	42	33	36
Total	759	1416	1,875	1,800	3,435	5,235	42	32	36

Number of clinical negligence claims funded by legal aid and settled as periodical payments 2008-09 to 2010-11

<i>Year of settlement</i>	<i>Legally aided claims on behalf of a minor</i>	<i>All legally aided claims</i>	<i>Legally aided claims on behalf of a minor as % of all legally aided claims</i>
2008-09	104	126	83
2009-10	100	107	93

Number of clinical negligence claims funded by legal aid and settled as periodical payments 2008-09 to 2010-11

<i>Year of settlement</i>	<i>Legally aided claims on behalf of a minor</i>	<i>All legally aided claims</i>	<i>Legally aided claims on behalf of a minor as % of all legally aided claims</i>
2010-11	101	116	87
Total	305	349	87

Total value of clinical negligence claims funded by legal aid closed 2008-09 to 2010-11

<i>Year of closure</i>	<i>Legally aided claims on behalf of a minor</i>			<i>All legally aided claims</i>		
	<i>Number settled with damages</i>	<i>Total payments (damages + costs) (£)</i>	<i>Average total payments (£)</i>	<i>Number settled with damages</i>	<i>Total payments (damages + costs) (£)</i>	<i>Average total payments (£)</i>
2008-09	313	144,984,359	463,209	994	242,190,356	243,652
2009-10	349	106,465,010	305,057	1,068	196,185,439	183,694
2010-11	454	193,153,391	425,448	1,373	376,956,348	274,549
Total	1,116	444,602,760	398,390	3,435	815,332,143	237,360

Total value of clinical negligence claims funded by legal aid and settled as periodical payments 2008-09 to 2010-11

<i>Year of settlement</i>	<i>Legally aided claims on behalf of a minor</i>			<i>All legally aided claims</i>		
	<i>Number of claims</i>	<i>Total damages + costs paid (£)</i>	<i>Average total damages + costs paid (£)</i>	<i>Number of claims</i>	<i>Total damages + costs paid (£)</i>	<i>Average total damages + costs paid (£)</i>
2008-09	104	521,565,382	5,015,052	126	579,971,849	4,602,951
2009-10	100	475,373,847	4,753,738	107	492,964,405	4,607,144
2010-11	101	507,527,119	5,025,021	116	547,988,200	4,724,036

Total value of clinical negligence claims funded by legal aid and settled as periodical payments 2008-09 to 2010-11

Year of settlement	Legally aided claims on behalf of a minor			All legally aided claims		
	Number of claims	Total damages + costs paid (£)	Average total damages + costs paid (£)	Number of claims	Total damages + costs paid (£)	Average total damages + costs paid (£)
Total	305	1,504,466,348	4,932,677	349	1,620,924,454	4,644,483

Note:

For periodical payment orders (PPOs) total damages have been added as if the claim had settled on a lump sum basis to the actual costs payments.

Source:

National Health Service Litigation Authority (May 2011)

Yvonne Fovargue: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much the NHS Litigation Authority paid in damages to successful claimants in each of the last three years; and how many and what proportion of cases in which the Authority paid damages to claimants in each such year were settled or lost (a) at trial and (b) within six weeks of trial. [58021]

Mr Simon Burns: The information to show how much the NHS Litigation Authority paid in damages to successful claimants in each of the last three years is in the following tables.

Number of clinical negligence claims closed with damages 2008-09 to 2010-11

Year of closure	Number of claims	Damages paid (£)
2008-09	2,986	278,038,411
2009-10	3,758	267,332,564
2010-11	5,259	499,478,033
Total	12,003	1,044,849,007

Number of clinical negligence claims settled as periodical payments 2008-09 to 2010-11

Year of settlement	Number of claims	Total damages (£)
2008-09	131	552,136,757
2009-10	128	504,736,479
2010-11	130	547,337,006
Total	389	1,604,210,242

Notes:

1. Data in relation to how many and what proportion of cases in which the authority paid damages to claimants in each year were settled or lost (a) at trial and (b) within six weeks of trial can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

2. Data on damages pertaining to date of settlement can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Source:

NHS Litigation Authority May 2011

Yvonne Fovargue: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many and what proportion of (a) all legally-aided claims and (b) all claims brought by minors were made to the NHS Litigation Authority on behalf of a minor and funded through legal aid in each of the last three years. [58022]

Mr Simon Burns: Information on legally aided claims brought by minors as a percentage of all legally aided claims received by year is shown in the following table provided by the NHS Litigation Authority.

Number of clinical negligence claims funded by legal aid received 2008-09 to 2010-11

	Legally aided claims on behalf of a minor	All legally aided claims	Legally aided claims on behalf of a minor as percentage of all legally aided claims
2008-09	520	1,532	34
2009-10	446	1,341	33
2010-11	414	1,333	31
Total	1,380	4,206	33

Source:

National Health Service Litigation Authority (May 2011)

Yvonne Fovargue: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was paid in legal costs by the NHS Litigation Authority to successful claimants in each of the last three years; what proportion of such payments were in respect of (a) base claimants' costs, (b) success fees and (c) disbursements in each such year; and in respect of the cases in which claimants costs were paid in each of the last three years, what the number and proportion of cases that were settled or lost (i) at trial and (ii) within six weeks of trial as a proportion of cases in which the Authority paid costs to claimants in each of those years. [58023]

Mr Simon Burns: The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

NHS: Personal Injury Claims

Yvonne Fovargue: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the total recovered by the NHS was in respect of recovery of treatment costs in personal injury claims for each case type in each of the last three financial years; how many cases this represented in each case type in each such year; and what the total costs were that were not recovered as a result of the maximum cap on recovery. [58002]

Mr Simon Burns: The information requested is in the following tables:

1: NHS Recoveries by liability type

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
			£
Clinical negligence	180,440	607,134	1,341,236
Employer	5,960,820	13,661,251	17,710,402
Motor	123,351,651	130,673,295	131,352,977
Other	225,610	340,993	581,020
Public	5,259,012	12,633,411	18,012,614
Liability not yet known	23,091	62,137	51,933

1: NHS Recoveries by liability type

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Total	135,000,624	157,978,221	169,050,181

2: Volume of NHS Recovery payments by liability type

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Clinical negligence	64	218	475
Employer	7,636	15,942	20,171
Motor	145,564	151,439	147,244
Other	161	324	467
Public	6,354	13,962	18,947
Liability not yet known	25	63	71
Total	159,804	181,948	187,375

3: Total costs not recovered as a result of the maximum cap on recovery

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
			10,500,891
			9,827,847
			10,153,651

Notes:

1. and 2. The data reflect the total value of NHS Recoveries (including Ambulance Charges) received by the Compensation Recovery Unit (CRU) relating to the NHS Injury Costs Recovery scheme for Trusts in England between 1 April 2008—31 March 2011 and the volume of cases these recoveries relate to. More than one payment may be received per case and each is counted separately. Cases where no payment was made are not included.

Data are shown by year of payment.

3. The data reflect the total In Patient costs that were not recovered as a result of the maximum cap on recovery relating to Trusts in England. This reflects cases where a final settlement has been received within the relevant financial year, the NHS charges have been fully recovered, the maximum cap has been reached and the difference between the overall treatment costs and recovery value calculated.

NHS Chaplaincy Services

Valerie Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has for the future of NHS chaplaincy services. [57959]

Paul Burstow: The Department recognises the important role played by chaplains in supporting the national health service to deliver patient-centred services. The second phase of the independent Palliative Care Funding

Review has asked for views on which core components of dedicated palliative care, including spiritual care, should be funded, wholly or partly, by the NHS as a statutory responsibility and which by society. Ministers will consider the recommendations of the review when they receive its final report, which is expected this summer.

Passive Smoking: Children

Michael Dugher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department plans to take to protect children from exposure to passive smoke. [57996]

Anne Milton: The Government's Tobacco Control Plan for England, "Healthy Lives, Healthy People: A Tobacco Control Plan for England", published on 9 March 2011, sets out a range of Government action, including action to protect children from exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke.

Although the exposure of children to second-hand tobacco smoke has come down in recent years, we want this to reduce further. We want smokers to change their behaviour so as to make sure that they do not harm those around them, particularly children exposed to second-hand in the home or in family cars. We will work with national media to raise awareness of the risks in exposing children to second-hand smoke.

The Department's new marketing strategy for tobacco control, which will be published this summer, will set out further details of how we will support efforts to encourage people to recognise the risks of second-hand smoke and to make their homes and private cars smokefree.

A copy of the Tobacco Control Plan has already been placed in the Library.

Primary Care Trusts: Manpower

Clive Efford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff were employed in each primary care trust in (a) administrative and (b) frontline service posts in (i) May 2010 and (ii) May 2011; and if he will make a statement. [57857]

Mr Simon Burns: The following table gives the number of staff in the groups requested in 2010 and 2011. The information was taken from the NHS Information Centres annual workforce census for the years requested.

NHS hospital and community health services: NHS staff in England and in primary care trusts (PCTs) by main staff group as at 30 September each specified year¹

	2009		2010		Headcount		
	All NHS Staff	All frontline staff	NHS infrastructure support	All NHS Staff	All frontline staff	NHS infrastructure support	
England	1,277,459	1,040,992	236,103	1,176,313	942,615	233,342	
of which							
Ashton, Leigh and Wigan PCT	5HG	1,720	1,188	532	1,674	1,153	521
Barking and Dagenham PCT	5C2	722	517	205	153	35	118
Barnet PCT	5A9	1,341	1,022	319	1,261	971	290
Barnsley PCT	5JE	2,368	1,762	605	2,438	1,826	612
Bassetlaw PCT	SET	485	336	149	499	347	152

NHS hospital and community health services: NHS staff in England and in primary care trusts (PCTs) by main staff group as at 30 September each specified year¹

		2009			2010			Headcount
		All NHS Staff	All frontline staff	NHS infrastructure support	All NHS Staff	All frontline staff	NHS infrastructure support	
Bath and North East Somerset PCT	5FL	1,140	922	218	1,101	889	212	
Bedfordshire PCT	5P2	1,444	1,070	366	1,466	1,079	387	
Berkshire East PCT	5QG	1,218	1,059	159	1,212	1,032	180	
Berkshire West PCT	5QF	1,681	1,366	315	1,761	1,419	342	
Bexley Care Trust	TAK	622	501	121	153	27	126	
Birmingham East and North PCT	5PG	2,290	1,573	717	2,400	1,615	785	
Blackpool PCT	5HP	856	657	199	835	619	216	
Bolton PCT	5HQ	1,865	1,413	452	1,895	1,423	472	
Bournemouth and Poole Teaching PCT	5QN	1,212	1,018	190	1,149	981	164	
Bradford and Airedale Teaching PCT	5NY	2,561	2,018	542	2,582	2,059	523	
Brent Teaching PCT	5K5	864	575	289	873	571	302	
Brighton and Hove City PCT	5LQ	192	12	180	205	15	190	
Bristol PCT	5QJ	1,662	1,032	630	1,670	1,014	656	
Bromley PCT	5A7	1,182	939	243	1,079	838	241	
Buckinghamshire PCT	5QD	1,802	1,380	418	340	151	188	
Bury PCT	5JX	1,021	668	353	1,009	646	363	
Calderdale PCT	5J6	712	461	251	779	504	275	
Cambridgeshire PCT	5PP	2,914	2,471	436	369	71	298	
Camden PCT	5K7	1,381	742	639	1,410	709	701	
Central and Eastern Cheshire PCT	5NP	2,007	1,582	425	1,919	1,547	372	
Central Lancashire PCT	5NG	2,849	2,100	749	2,733	1,986	747	
City and Hackney Teaching PCT	5C3	1,076	833	243	1,073	794	279	
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly PCT	5QP	2,760	2,137	603	2,873	2,229	623	
County Durham PCT	5ND	687	57	630	503	69	434	
Coventry Teaching PCT	5MD	1,619	1,261	358	1,665	1,341	324	
Croydon PCT	5K9	1,070	738	332	290	79	211	
Cumbria Teaching PCT	5NE	2,541	1,941	600	2,452	1,887	565	
Darlington PCT	5J9	2,719	2,367	352	2,952	2,466	486	
Derby City PCT	5N7	1,185	718	467	988	682	306	
Derbyshire County PCT	5N6	5,072	3,213	1,856	5,003	3,453	1,548	
Devon PCT	5QQ	4,076	3,152	924	3,793	2,838	955	
Doncaster PCT	5N5	1,756	1,294	462	1,692	1,206	486	
Dorset PCT	5QM	3,037	2,199	838	3,102	2,224	878	
Dudley PCT	5PE	1,485	1,036	449	1,478	989	489	
Ealing Pa	5HX	1,250	881	369	1,234	879	355	
East Lancashire Teaching PCT	5NH	2,729	1,949	780	2,615	1,837	778	
East Riding of Yorkshire PCT	5NW	1,343	1,083	251	1,263	1,028	229	
East Sussex Downs and Weald PCT	5P7	1,666	1,236	430	1,686	1,220	466	
Eastern and Coastal Kent PCT	5QA	4,196	3,239	957	4,197	3,232	965	
Enfield PCT	5C1	966	689	277	900	613	287	
Gateshead PCT	5KF	920	782	138	2,706	2,287	419	
Gloucestershire PCT	5QH	3,320	2,837	483	3,262	2,813	449	

NHS hospital and community health services: NHS staff in England and in primary care trusts (PCTs) by main staff group as at 30 September each specified year¹

		2009			2010			Headcount
		All NHS Staff	All frontline staff	NHS infrastructure support	All NHS Staff	All frontline staff	NHS infrastructure support	
Great Yarmouth and Waveney PCT	5PR	884	683	201	925	738	187	
Greenwich Teaching PCT	5A8	898	690	208	912	601	311	
Halton and St Helens PCT	5NM	1,835	1,390	445	1,768	1,311	457	
Hammersmith and Fulham PCT	5H1	659	456	203	209	100	109	
Hampshire PCT	5QC	3,774	2,989	785	3,627	2,857	770	
Haringey Teaching PCT	5C9	775	623	152	830	677	153	
Harrow PCT	5K6	546	376	170	535	373	162	
Hastings and Rother PCT	5P8	899	728	169	944	783	161	
Havering PCT	5A4	1,871	1,412	459	1,790	1,393	397	
Heart of Birmingham Teaching PCT	5MX	1,489	1,097	392	1,569	1,147	422	
Herefordshire PCT	5CN	1,646	1,110	536	1,603	1,258	345	
Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale PCT	5NQ	1,225	907	318	1,182	870	312	
Hillingdon PCT	5AT	744	576	168	849	666	183	
Hounslow PCT	5HY	656	545	111	117	14	103	
Hull Teaching PCT	5NX	1,420	1,038	382	1,095	772	323	
Isle of Wight NHS Pa	5QT	3,418	2,902	516	3,499	2,960	539	
Islington PCT	5K8	1,101	826	275	1,114	841	273	
Kensington and Chelsea PCT	SLA	843	574	269	2,461	2,091	370	
Kingston PCT	5A5	594	461	133	99	28	71	
Kirklees PCT	5N2	1,653	1,231	422	1,503	1,095	408	
Knowsley PCT	5J4	1,189	1,136	342	1,456	1,124	322	
Lambeth PCT	5LD	1,047	736	311	1,046	708	338	
Leeds PCT	5N1	3,799	2,794	1,005	3,612	2,615	997	
Leicester City PCT	5PC	1,477	977	500	1,150	945	205	
Leicestershire County and Rutland PCT	5PA	3,176	2,207	955	3,204	2,151	1,037	
Lewisham PCT	5LF	936	697	239	680	468	212	
Lincolnshire Teaching PCT	5N9	3,050	2,232	797	3,532	2,635	875	
Liverpool PCT	5NL	3,223	1,968	1,255	3,109	1,862	1,247	
Luton PCT	5GC	734 †	548	175	740	547	1B3	
Manchester PCT	5NT	2,893	1,925	968	3,043	2,031	1,012	
Medway PCT	5L3	1,609	1,209	400	1,659	1,174	485	
Mid Essex PCT	5PX	1,309	997	312	1,293	958	335	
Middlesbrough PCT	5KM	255	37	218	219	31	188	
Milton Keynes PCT	5CQ	1,543	1,199	344	1,574	1,176	398	
Newcastle PCT	5D7	1,646	1,222	424	320	30	290	
Newham PCT	5C5	1,303	1,025	278	1,240	951	289	
Norfolk Pa	5PQ	3,524	2,893	624	3,235	2,693	539	
North East Essex PCT	5PW	1,617	1,267	350	1,304	974	330	
North East Lincolnshire Care Trust Plus	TAN	1,701	1,258	438	1,602	1,151	446	
North Lancashire Teaching PCT	SNF	1,793	1,257	536	2,147	1,652	495	
North Lincolnshire PCT	5EF	602	481	121	567	441	126	
North Somerset PCT	5M8	603	417	186	642	435	207	

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		2009			2010			Headcount
		<i>All NHS Staff</i>	<i>All frontline staff</i>	<i>NHS infrastructure support</i>	<i>All NHS Staff</i>	<i>All frontline staff</i>	<i>NHS infrastructure support</i>	
North Staffordshire PCT	5PH	1,301	912	389	1,253	874	379	
North Tyneside PCT	5D8	723	652	69	2,175	1,902	273	
North Yorkshire and York PCT	5NV	4,489	3,482	996	4,633	3,655	966	
Northamptonshire Teaching PCT	5PD	3,466	2,902	549	2,641	2,039	589	
Northumberland Care Trust	TAC	1,611	1,300	311	1,640	1,306	334	
Nottingham City PCT	5EM	1,666	1,297	369	1,665	1,311	354	
Nottinghamshire County Teaching PCT	5N8	3,492	2,392	1,092	3,395	2,343	1,044	
Oldham PCT	5J5	1,188	878	310	1,263	935	328	
Oxfordshire PCT	5QE	2,703	2,332	371	2,810	2,457	353	
Peterborough PCT	5PN	1,511	1,189	322	1,444	1,135	309	
Plymouth Teaching PCT	5F1	2,495	1,819	672	2,513	1,829	680	
Portsmouth City Teaching PCT	5FE	2,813	2,036	777	684	38	646	
Redbridge PCT	SNA	465	277	188	420	233	187	
Redcar and Cleveland PCT	5QR	1,176	1,071	101	1,186	1,064	117	
Richmond and Twickenham PCT	5M6	645	500	145	1,196	1,019	177	
Rotherham PCT	5H8	1,805	1,201	604	1,699	1,154	545	
Salford PCT	5F5	1,726	1,202	524	1,829	1,274	555	
Sandwell PCT	5PF	1,498	1,046	452	1,423	969	454	
Sefton PCT	5NJ	1,566	954	612	1,520	926	594	
Sheffield PCT	5N4	2,405	1,947	458	2,432	1,987	445	
Shropshire County PCT	5M2	1,261	916	345	1,234	895	339	
Solihull Care Trust	TAM	1,660	1,344	316	1,698	1,447	251	
Somerset PCT	5QL	2,643	1,980	663	2,779	2,093	686	
South Birmingham PCT	5M1	3,766	3,020	746	3,753	2,948	805	
South East Essex PCT	5P1	1,123	861	254	1,188	884	297	
South Gloucestershire PCT	5A3	714	575	139	718	581	137	
South Staffordshire PCT	5PK	2,469	2,130	339	2,437	2,109	328	
South Tyneside PCT	5KG	772	604	168	184	5	179	
South West Essex PCT	5PY	2,044	1,664	379	2,123	1,655	468	
Southampton City PCT	5L1	1,957	1,725	232	3,990	3,629	361	
Southwark PCT	5LE	907	677	230	850	611	239	
Stockport PCT	5F7	1,346	892	454	1,274	831	443	
Stockton-on-Tees Teaching PCT	5E1	187	36	151	214	40	174	
Stoke on Trent PCT	5PJ	2,034	1,555	479	2,006	1,561	445	
Suffolk PCT	5PT	2,133	1,727	400	2,201	1,790	404	
Sunderland Teaching PCT	5KL	1,653	936	717	518	39	479	
Surrey PCT	5P5	4,188	3,458	723	3,891	3,169	713	
Sutton and Merton PCT	5M7	1,130	920	210	1,092	894	198	
Sutton and Merton PCT	5M7	1,130	920	210	1,092	894	198	
Swindon PCT	5K3	897	722	175	811	657	154	

NHS hospital and community health services: NHS staff in England and in primary care trusts (PCTs) by main staff group as at 30 September each specified year¹

		2009			2010			Headcount
		All NHS Staff	All frontline staff	NHS infrastructure support	All NHS Staff	All frontline staff	NHS infrastructure support	
Tameside and Glossop PCT	5LH	1,268	935	333	1,198	890	308	
Telford and Wrekin PCT	5MK	906	549	357	889	553	336	
Torbay Care Trust	TAL	1,395	971	421	1,340	905	435	
Tower Hamlets PCT	5C4	2,014	1,514	500	1,889	1,282	607	
Trafford Pa	5NR	909	733	176	857	668	189	
Wakefield District PCT	5N3	1,647	1,403	244	1,661	1,412	249	
Walsall Teaching PCT	5M3	1,379	1,023	356	1,363	1,017	346	
Waltham Forest PCT	5NC	148	14	134	140	20	120	
Wandsworth PCT	5LG	1,635	1,115	520	321	141	180	
Warrington Pa	5J2	1,010	800	210	923	733	190	
Warwickshire Pa	5PM	1,939	1,454	485	1,967	1,509	458	
West Essex Pa	5PV	1,177	876	301	1,206	870	336	
West Kent Pa	5P9	2,314	1,665	649	2,245	1,572	673	
West Sussex Pa	5P6	3,738	2,632	1,092	3,769	2,657	1,100	
Western Cheshire PCT	5NN	1,390	938	452	1,165	770	395	
Westminster PCT	5LC	1,211	1,026	185	303	89	214	
Wiltshire PCT	5QK	2,277	1,747	530	2,214	1,699	515	
Wirral PCT	5NK	1,760	1,295	465	1,745	1,332	413	
Wolverhampton City PCT	5MV	2,600	1,998	602	2,616	2,035	581	
Worcestershire PCT	5PL	2,691	2,212	179	2,689	2,210	479	

¹ The new headcount methodology for 2010 data is not fully comparable with previous years data due to improvements that make it a more stringent count of absolute staff numbers. Further information on the headcount methodology is available in the Census publication here: www.ic.nhs.uk/webfiles/publications/010_Workforce/nhsstaff0010/Census_Bulletin_March_2011_Final.pdf
Data are from the annual September Census. Comparable May data are not available for the requested years.

Notes:

1. Frontline NHS staff (Including medical and dental staff, nursing staff, ambulance staff and support staff) have some significant contact with patients. Frontline staff excludes NHS infrastructure support staff, who have little significant or no patient contact. A small number of staff whose classification is unknown have also been excluded.

2. NHS infrastructure support staff includes administrative senior managers, managers, clerical staff, human resources, finance, information technology, and other areas of work which do not involve patient contact.

Source:

The NHS Information Centre for health and social care Non-Medical Workforce Census.

The NHS Information Centre for health and social care Medical and Dental Workforce Census.

Clive Efford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many former primary care trust employees have been re-employed or redeployed in preparation for the implementation of GP commissioning in each primary care trust area; and if he will make a statement. [57858]

Mr Simon Burns: Primary care trust (PCT) staff numbers are reducing in accordance with our administrative efficiency targets and the expectation is that these staff will not be re-employed. The impact assessment published alongside the Health and Social Care Bill estimated the numbers of staff likely to be made redundant, the upfront cost of this and the cost-saving in the longer term.

Should it be necessary to re-employ PCT staff in the interests of service continuity during the transition to general practitioner consortia, any moneys paid under the Mutually Agreed Resignation scheme will be clawed back in accordance with the terms of that scheme.

Special Needs: Health Services

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps his Department is taking to ensure that new GP consortia will provide annual health checks for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities; what arrangements he plans to put in place to consider the specific health needs of such people; and if he will make a statement; [58063]

(2) what arrangements his Department has put in place to ensure that the boards of NHS trusts consider the specific health needs of people with profound and multiple learning disabilities; and if he will make a statement; [58064]

(3) how services will be commissioned for people with complex needs under his Department's proposals for the NHS; and if he will make a statement. [58065]

Paul Burstow: Subject to the NHS Listening Exercise and the passage of the Health and Social Care Bill, the NHS Commissioning Board will commission national

and regional specialised services with commissioning consortia responsible for commissioning other complex services. Through consortia, general practitioners (GPs) and other clinicians will have new opportunities to shape the way that health services are designed and delivered. Taking into account the increasing range of NICE Quality Standards, consortia will work closely with secondary care and other health care professionals, and with community partners, to design joined-up services, and optimal care pathways, that make sense to patients, families and the public. They will have the freedom to seek the commissioning support they need to do this.

We will ensure that there is particular emphasis within the 'pathfinder' programme on testing ways of ensuring that consortia quickly develop knowledge and expertise in relation to more complex and specialist services. We will also ensure that the NHS Commissioning Board has a particular focus on promoting quality improvement in relation to more complex or specialist services. This will include exploring joint commissioning with local authorities, for instance in relation to care and support for children (including looked after children and children living in families with multiple problems), people with long-term mental health conditions, and people with learning disabilities.

In addition, local authorities and commissioning consortia will be required to prepare a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). This is to ensure that each area develops a comprehensive analysis of the current and future needs of their area (including those relevant to health, social care, public health). Based on the JSNA, the members of the Health and Wellbeing Board will be required to develop a joint health and well-being strategy for their area.

Arrangements for annual health checks for people with learning disabilities are currently covered by a Directed Enhanced Service, which forms part of the overall contractual framework for GP practices. Under the future commissioning arrangements proposed in the Health and Social Care Bill, the NHS Commissioning Board would be responsible for commissioning services from GP practices and for negotiating any changes to GP contracts.

Spinal Cord Injuries: Rehabilitation

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will assess the rehabilitation requirements of people with spinal cord injuries who are not treated in specialist spinal cord injury centres; and if he will make a statement. [57961]

Paul Burstow: Most spinal injuries are caused by road traffic accidents and sports injuries. The Spinal Injuries Association estimate that around 40,000 people are currently living with a spinal cord injury in the United Kingdom.

Around 825 people are treated each year in the 11 United Kingdom specialist spinal injuries centres. These are based in Belfast, Cardiff, Glasgow, Middlesbrough, Oswestry, Sheffield, Southport, Stanmore, Stoke Mandeville, and Wakefield.

Patients with a spinal injury will be referred to a specialist centre following initial treatment at a local hospital.

Commissioning arrangements for specialised services, such as spinal injury services, have been strengthened by the publication in July 2006 of "Health Reform in England: Update and Commissioning Framework". The framework was informed by the "Review of Commissioning Arrangements for Specialised Services", under the leadership of Professor Sir David Carter, former Chief Medical Officer for Scotland.

Through specialised commissioning groups, primary care trusts work collectively to plan, commission and monitor specialised services for those with spinal injuries.

It is the responsibility of health professionals to assess the rehabilitation of all those living with spinal injuries.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Charitable Donations

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what steps he is taking to encourage charitable giving by Ministers in his Department. [57123]

Chris Grayling: All our Ministers are involved in charitable activity in their own constituency but that charitable giving is a private and personal issue.

We have doubled DWP's commitment to volunteering through our "Community 10,000" initiative to enable DWP staff to actively contribute to local voluntary and community organisations as part of this Government's wider civil service initiative. In addition this Department supports the civil service's official charity, The Royal National Lifeboat Institute and a Payroll Giving scheme is available to all employees.

Children: Maintenance

Margaret Curran: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate has been made of the potential savings to the Exchequer for charging (a) the parent with care and (b) the non-resident parent for (i) calculation fee, (ii) arrangement and collection fee and (iii) application fee when applying to use the Statutory Child Maintenance scheme under the proposals set out in the Green Paper on child maintenance. [57999]

Maria Miller: The impact of charges on the Exchequer will depend on the level at which they are set. We intend to publish detailed proposals and draft regulations in due course. Those will then be subject to a further period of consultation and, subsequently, affirmative regulations will be subject to debate in the House. The impact assessment accompanying consultation on the draft regulations will set out the financial implications of the proposed charging regime.

Crisis Loans

Mr Byrne: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions with reference to his Department's impact assessment on proposals for the localisation of crisis loans and community grants, when he expects to publish his Department's assessment of the costs and benefits of the proposals. [46399]

Steve Webb: Our proposal is to replace Community Care Grants with local provision. Crisis Loans will be replaced by a combination of local provision and payments on account of benefit. Local provision will be the responsibility of local authorities in England and the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales. Payments on account will be delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions.

We published a call for evidence on the proposals for local provision on 17 February which contained consideration of the benefits of local delivery. If there are new administrative burdens on local authorities they will be funded by the Department for Work and Pensions in the usual way.

Disability Aids: Motor Vehicles

Mr Brine: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what information his Department holds on the number of people found to have wrongfully received support in respect of an adapted motor vehicle in (a) England and (b) Winchester and Chandler's Ford in the most recent period for which data is available; [54791]

(2) what assessment he has made of the eligibility criteria for the awarding of adapted cars for claimants of disability living allowance; [54792]

(3) how many people claiming the higher rate mobility component of disability living allowance received an adapted motor vehicle in (a) England and (b) Winchester and Chandler's Ford in the latest period for which figures are available. [54797]

Maria Miller: Support for adapted motor vehicles is available through the Motability scheme. The Department works closely with Motability but it is an independent charity and is wholly responsible for the administration of the Motability scheme. Specific questions relating to the operation of the scheme should be directed at Motability and can be sent to: Declan O'Mahony, Director, Motability, Warwick house, Roydon road, Harlow, Essex, CM19 5PX.

Motability has advised that the rigorous assessment process and criteria they use for determining support for adapted vehicles has meant that they have never identified any incidences of scheme customers receiving support they were not entitled to. Support for vehicle adaptations is provided through Motability's own charitable fund or the Specialised Vehicles Fund, which Motability administers on behalf of the Department.

The Specialised Vehicles Fund provides financial assistance to those severely disabled scheme customers who require complex vehicle adaptations that allow them to enter a car as a passenger while remaining seated in their wheelchair or enables them to drive their car whilst remaining seated in their wheelchair. The Department is satisfied that the criteria Motability use to sift applications to the Specialised Vehicles Fund helps severely disabled people who face barriers to living independently including those who are seeking or in employment or education.

Disability Living Allowance

Margaret Curran: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of the number of children, excluding existing applicants,

whose premium entitlement in respect of disability will be reduced from £52 to £25.95 a week under the universal credit in each of the next five financial years. [57941]

Chris Grayling: Departmental modelling estimates that, once fully implemented, approximately 100,000 children would have a lower entitlement as a result of the reform of disability benefits under universal credit. However, these households will receive full cash protection against this change to ensure that there are no cash losers at the point of transition. Estimates on a year-by-year basis during the transition period are not available.

Margaret Curran: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what steps his Department plans to take to gather evidence of overlapping payments made to recipients of the disability living allowance mobility component in residential care homes. [58225]

Maria Miller: DWP officials have been reviewing the available evidence and gathering more to determine the extent to which there are overlaps in provision for mobility needs of people in residential care homes.

When the work is complete we will make a final decision on the way forward. Any changes will be rolled into the introduction of Personal Independence Payment from April 2013.

Our intention is not to reduce the mobility of residents in care homes but to remove any overlaps in provision.

Mrs Ellman: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of the number of disability living allowance claimants with an indefinite award who will be granted a short-term award as a result of changes to the benefits system. [58228]

Maria Miller: Currently there is no systematic process for regularly reviewing disability living allowance (DLA) awards and the majority of DLA recipients—70%¹—have an indefinite award, which means it may not be reviewed unless the individual reports a change in their condition or circumstances. As a result, some people are currently receiving an incorrect amount of DLA. This undermines the credibility of the benefit.

We want to ensure that personal independence payment awards remain correct. We will do this by making awards for a fixed term, except in exceptional circumstances. The length of award will be based on the individual's needs and the likelihood of their health condition or impairment changing. As the award duration will be based on an assessment of the individual, I am unable to predict the outcome of the assessment and how many individuals with a current DLA award will receive a shorter-term award of personal independence payment.

¹ "Analysis of Disability Living Allowance: DLA Awards", Department for Work and Pensions, March 2011.

Mrs Ellman: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what income threshold will apply to people (a) with and (b) without disabilities for the payment of universal credit. [58234]

Chris Grayling: There is no single level of income beyond which universal credit will no longer be paid. Universal credit claimants will have a maximum amount

reflecting personal circumstances such as housing costs, responsibility for dependent children and other needs. This maximum amount will be reduced to take account of certain types of earned and unearned income and income from capital.

As we said in the recent policy briefing note

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/ucpbn-1-additions.pdf>

for disabled people who have limited capability for work or limited capability for work and work-related activity, there will be an additional element included in the maximum amount. We have also said that there will be a disregard of net earnings of up to £7,000 a year in such cases.

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the answer of 9 May 2011, *Official Report*, columns 1002-3W, on the disability living allowance, for what reasons he does not plan to publish the findings of the review into funding for the mobility needs of people in residential care; and when he expects the work to be complete. [58072]

Maria Miller: There is no formal review. Officials in the Department for Work and Pensions have been reviewing mobility needs and available support for residents of care homes. When this work is completed soon we will make a decision on the way forward. What is important is that we get the policy right. Any changes will be rolled into the introduction of personal independence payment from April 2013.

Disposable Income

Mr Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate has been made of the level of personal disposable income in real terms in each year since 1981. [57568]

Chris Grayling: Estimates of equivalised household disposable incomes are available in the Households Below Average Income (HBAI) series, produced by the Department for Work and Pensions, which is why the question has been transferred from the Cabinet Office to the Department for Work and Pensions.

The Households Below Average Income (HBAI) series uses disposable household income, adjusted using modified OECD equivalisation factors for household size and composition, as an income measure as a proxy for standard of living. This data is at a household not individual level.

Table 1: Median equivalised household income 1990-91 to 2009-10, in 2009-10 prices

	£ per week	
	Before Housing Costs	After Housing Costs
1981 (UK)	254	206
1987 (UK)	292	236
1988-89 (UK)	313	256
1990-91 (UK)	321	261
1991-92 (UK)	322	263
1992-93 (UK)	323	264
1993-95 (UK)	328	270
1994-95 (GB)	323	262

Table 1: Median equivalised household income 1990-91 to 2009-10, in 2009-10 prices

	£ per week	
	Before Housing Costs	After Housing Costs
1995-96 (GB)	323	263
1996-97 (GB)	338	277
1997-98 (GB)	344	282
1998-99 (GB)	349	288
1999-2000 (GB)	360	300
2000-01 (GB)	371	312
2001-02 (GB)	389	329
2002-03 (UK)	396	341
2003-04 (UK)	396	343
2004-05 (UK)	400	348
2005-06 (UK)	404	353
2006-07 (UK)	405	355
2007-08 (UK)	406	357
2008-09 (UK)	409	354
2009-10 (UK)	413	356

Notes:

1. FES figures are for the United Kingdom, FRS figures are for Great Britain up to 2001-02, and for the United Kingdom from 2002-03. The reference period for FRS figures is single financial years. FES figures are two combined calendar years from 1990-91 to 1992-93 and two financial years combined for 1993-95.
2. All estimates are based on survey data and are therefore subject to uncertainty. Small differences should be treated with caution as these will be affected by sampling error and variability in non-response.
3. Figures have been presented on a Before Housing Cost and an After Housing Cost basis. For Before Housing Costs, housing costs (such as rent, water rates, mortgage interest payments, buildings insurance payments and ground rent and service charges) are not deducted from income, while for After Housing Costs they are.
4. Disposable incomes have been used to answer the question. This includes earnings from employment and self-employment, state support, income from occupational and private pensions, investment income and other sources. Income tax, payments, national insurance contributions, council tax/domestic rates and some other payments are deducted from incomes.
5. Incomes are presented in 2009-10 prices and have been rounded to the nearest £ sterling.
6. The majority of these statistics are publicly available in the Households Below Average Income Report on the DWP website: <http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=hbai>

Sources:

1. Family Expenditure Survey (FES) 1990-91 to 1993-95
2. Family Resources Survey (FRS) 1994-95 to 2009-10

Employment and Support Allowance

Mr Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many (a) men and (b) women claimed income-related employment and support allowance for themselves and a partner in the latest period for which figures are available. [57695]

Maria Miller: The information requested is given as follows.

	Income-related employment support allowance claimants with a partner, by gender at November 2010	
	All income-based	With partner payment
All persons	322,450	51,080
Female	142,800	15,880

Income-related employment support allowance claimants with a partner, by gender at November 2010

	All income-based	With partner payment
Male	179,650	35,200

Notes:

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.
2. Employment and support allowance (ESA) replaced incapacity benefit and income support paid on the grounds of incapacity for new claims from 27 October 2008.
3. Benefit type—The type of ESA is defined as pay status at the caseload date—this may differ to the status at the start or end of the claim.
4. Data in this table are for those receiving income-based ESA, but includes a small number of people entitled to both contributory and income-based ESA.
5. Figures for partners are only shown where an increase is in payment for a dependant adult.

Source:

DWP Information Directorate: Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study 100%.

Employment Schemes: Mental Illness

Grahame M. Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions whether the Work programme will support people with mental health problems into work; and if he will make a statement. [57477]

Chris Grayling: The work programme will cater for a wide range of customer groups, including many with disabilities and health issues, including mental health issues.

Harder to help customers will be able to access the programme early if appropriate and we will pay providers more to support them. For example, if a provider supports a customer moving from incapacity benefits to employment and support allowance into sustained employment, they can earn almost £14,000.

We have not told providers what they must do to support customers except that they should provide a truly personalised service that addresses their customers' specific challenges, including through partnership work with local health care providers. They will be free to innovate to find new and more effective ways of overcoming a range of disadvantages, including those with mental health conditions.

Many customers with disabilities are eligible for in work support through Access to Work, and those referred to the Work programme will remain eligible for the elements of this which providers couldn't reasonably be expected to offer.

English Language: Education

Mrs Ellman: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what discussions (a) he and (b) the Minister for Employment have had with (i) the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills and (ii) the Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning on the proposal to only offer free courses in English for speakers of other languages to those in receipt of active benefits. [57942]

Chris Grayling: Ministers and officials in the Department for Work and Pensions worked closely with their counterparts in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to develop the Government's strategy on

skills for sustainable growth. For people who do not have the necessary English language skills to find work, the Government recognises the importance of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) training in helping them gain employment and to contribute to society. It is equally vital that where people are required to engage in the labour market as a condition of receiving benefits that appropriate support is in place. The Government's priority is therefore to focus the available resources of publicly-funded ESOL provision on people whose lack of English is preventing them from finding work.

Housing Benefit

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will estimate the cost to the Exchequer of exempting from the total household benefit cap households where any member is in receipt of (a) disability living allowance, (b) personal independence payment, (c) attendance allowance, (d) constant attendance allowance, (e) employment and support allowance and is in the support group, (f) employment and support allowance and is in the work-related activity group, (g) carer's allowance and (h) any element or other component of universal credit paid in respect of a disability in each of the next five financial years. [57886]

Chris Grayling: The spending review 2010 announced that from 2013 we will introduce a cap on the total amount of benefit that working-age people can receive so that households on out-of-work benefits will no longer receive more in welfare payments than the average weekly wage for working households. The benefit cap is intended to promote fairness between those in and out of work and to increase incentives for people to move into work or increase their hours of employment.

On its introduction we estimate that household benefit payments will be capped at around £500 per week for couple and lone parent households and around £350 per week for single adult households.

We are looking at ways of easing the transition for families and providing assistance in hard cases.

If the benefit cap were applied in full, as described in the supporting documentation for the spending review 2010 the savings to the Exchequer are estimated to be £225 million in 2013-14 and £270 million in 2014-15.

The household benefit cap as announced excludes households where someone is in receipt of (a) disability living allowance, (d) constant attendance allowance. Claimants receiving (b) personal independence payment will be treated the same way as claimants receiving disability living allowance for the purposes of the benefit cap.

Estimates suggest that excluding households where a member is in receipt of (c) attendance allowance or (e) employment and support allowance and is in the support group would have a negligible impact on the overall savings from the benefit cap.

Excluding households where a member is in receipt of (f) employment support allowance in the work-related activity group is expected to reduce savings to approximately £210 million in 2013-14 and £225 million 2014-15. Figures are not available for 2015-16 and beyond.

Excluding households where a member is in receipt of (g) carers allowance is expected to reduce savings to approximately £210 million in 2013-14 and £255 million 2014-15. Figures are not available for 2015-16 and beyond.

Note that estimates above are based on the current benefit system including changes announced in the spending review 2010, but excluding universal credit.

Information on section (h) is not available as the estimated savings from the benefit cap in universal credit will depend upon final detailed design issues regarding the treatment of in-work households.

Analysis of those affected by the benefit cap has been modelled using survey data—as such there is a degree of uncertainty around the results.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will estimate the cost to the Exchequer of exempting from the total household benefit cap households where no adult is subject to any work-related requirements for universal credit or out-of-work benefits under the provisions of the Welfare Reform Bill in each of the next five financial years. [57887]

Chris Grayling: The spending review 2010 announced that from 2013 we will introduce a cap on the total amount of benefit that working-age people can receive so that households on out-of-work benefits will no longer receive more in welfare payments than the average weekly wage for working households. The benefit cap is intended to promote fairness between those in and out of work and to increase incentives for people to move into work or increase their hours of employment.

On its introduction we estimate that household benefit payments will be capped at around £500 per week for couple and lone parent households and around £350 per week for single adult households.

If the benefit cap were applied as described in the spending review the savings to the Exchequer are estimated to be £225 million in 2013-14 and £270 million in 2014-15.

If households where no adult is subject to any work-related requirements were excluded from the benefit cap, savings would fall to approximately £190 million in 2013-14 and £230 million in 2014-15. Figures for 2015-16 and beyond are not available.

Analysis of those affected by the benefit cap has been modelled using survey data—as such there is a degree of uncertainty around the results.

Note that estimates above are based on the current benefit system including changes announced in the spending review 2010, but excluding universal credit. The estimated savings from the benefit cap in universal credit will depend upon final detailed design issues regarding the treatment of in-work households.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will estimate the cost to the Exchequer of exempting from the total household benefit cap couples with dependent children who would not be affected by the benefit cap if they lived in separate households in each of the next five financial years. [57888]

Chris Grayling: The information requested is not available. We would have to make complex assumptions about housing costs, caring responsibilities and family composition of a couple living apart in order to estimate the cost to the Exchequer.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will estimate the cost to the Exchequer of excluding from the amount liable for the total household benefit cap (a) child benefit, (b) child tax credit, (c) childcare costs and (d) any amount of the universal credit awarded in respect of children in each of the next five financial years. [57889]

Chris Grayling: The spending review 2010 announced that from 2013 we will introduce a cap on the total amount of benefit that working-age people can receive so that households on out-of-work benefits will no longer receive more in welfare payments than the average weekly wage for working households. The benefit cap is intended to promote fairness between those in and out of work and to increase incentives for people to move into work or increase their hours of employment.

On its introduction we estimate that household benefit payments will be capped at around £500 per week for couple and lone parent households and around £350 per week for single adult households.

If the benefit cap were applied as described in the spending review the savings to the Exchequer are estimated to be £225 million in 2013-14 and £270 million in 2014-15.

Estimates suggest that excluding (a) child benefit from the calculation of the household benefit cap would reduce savings to approximately £115 million in 2013-14 and £140 million 2014-15, while excluding (b) child tax credit would reduce savings to approximately £40 million in 2013-14 and £50 million in 2014-15. Figures are not available for 2015-16 and beyond.

Working tax credit recipients (including those receiving child care support through WTC) are excluded from the benefit cap, therefore excluding support paid for (c) child care costs through working tax credit from the benefit cap will have no impact on the overall savings.

The information requested in section (d) is not available as the estimated savings from the benefit cap in universal credit will depend upon final detailed design issues regarding the treatment of in-work households.

Note that estimates above are based on the current benefit system including changes announced in the spending review 2010, but excluding universal credit.

Analysis of those affected by the benefit cap has been modelled using survey data—as such there is a degree of uncertainty around the results.

Ms Buck: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of the additional cost to the public purse of exempting from the total household benefit cap households that would be worse off in work once childcare costs are taken into consideration in each of the next five financial years. [57926]

Chris Grayling: The total amount of childcare costs depends on individual families' circumstances and therefore we are unable to make an accurate assessment of the

proportion of households affected by the benefit cap that would be worse off in work.

Ms Buck: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of the additional cost to the public purse of exempting from the total household benefit cap households where someone has left work due to (a) redundancy or illness and (b) reasons relating to the care of a child in each of the next five financial years. [57927]

Chris Grayling: The information requested is not available.

The costing model used to estimate the effects of the benefit cap is based on data from the 2008-09 Family Resources Survey (FRS). The FRS does not record information on whether an out-of-work member of a household left work due to redundancy or illness or for other reasons relating to the care of a child.

Margaret Curran: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will estimate the cost to the Exchequer of excluding from the amount liable for the total household benefit cap any amount of the universal credit paid in respect of a disability in each of the next five financial years. [57940]

Chris Grayling: We have announced that households which include a member who is entitled to disability living allowance or personal independence payment will be exempt from the cap.

The specific information requested, is not available as the estimated savings from the benefit cap in universal credit will depend upon final detailed design issues regarding the treatment of in-work households.

Industrial Injuries

Mr Crausby: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many workplace injuries where exposure to high temperatures was a contributory factor were reported to the Health and Safety Executive in each of the last six years. [57953]

Chris Grayling: A total of 209 injuries have been reported to the Health and Safety Executive where exposure to high temperatures was stated as a contributory factor, as outlined in the following table. These relate to reported injuries to workers where the 'agent of injury' has been coded as 16.01 'Physical phenomena, excessive heat in atmosphere including from the sun', injuries which can occur working both indoors and outdoors.

	<i>Fatal injuries</i>	<i>Total injuries</i>
2004-05	—	36
2005-06	—	31
2006-07	1	55
2007-08	—	15
2008-09	—	33
2009-10	—	39

Mr Crausby: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many prosecutions of employers the Health and Safety Executive has brought for failure to

manage high temperatures in the workplace in each of the last six years. [57954]

Chris Grayling: From 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2010, the Health and Safety Executive took one prosecution as a result of employers' failures to manage high temperatures in the workplace. The employer was found guilty and ordered to pay fines totalling £30,000.

Motability

Graeme Morrice: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what discussions his Department has had with representatives of Motability on Aspect Conversions Ltd; [57254]

(2) whether his Department has any oversight of Motability's Premier Partner Supplier scheme. [57731]

Maria Miller: The Department works closely with Motability but it is an independent charity and is wholly responsible the administration of the Motability scheme. Specific questions relating to scheme policy or the operation of the scheme should be directed at Motability and can be sent to: Declan O'Mahony, Director, Motability, Warwick House, Roydon Road, Harlow, Essex CM19 5PX.

Motability: Finance

Mark Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much funding his Department provided for the Motability scheme in each of the last 10 years. [57847]

Maria Miller: Motability is an independent charity and is wholly responsible for the administration of the Motability scheme. Motability is largely self financed and the only funding the Department for Work and Pensions gives the scheme relates to the Specialised Vehicles Fund, which Motability administers on our behalf. Information on the amount of funding allocated to Motability in respect of the Specialised Vehicles Fund and its administration in each of the last 10 years is contained in the following table.

Funding for the Specialised Vehicle Fund and its administration over the last 10 years

	<i>Specialised Vehicles Fund</i>	<i>Administration</i>
		£000
2001-02	6,597	2,200
2002-03	6,997	2,200
2003-04	7,772	2,600
2004-05	8,375	2,700
2005-06	8,615	2,800
2006-07	9,087	2,800
2007-08	12,700	2,960
2008-09	17,036	2,960
2009-10	17,036	2,208
2010-11	17,036	1,208

Note:

The Specialised Vehicles Fund provides financial assistance to those severely disabled scheme customers who require complex vehicle adaptations that allow them to enter a car as a passenger while remaining seated in their wheelchair or enables them drive their car while seated in their wheelchair.

Poverty: Children

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what recent assessment he has made of the likely effect of recent changes in child benefit on the number and proportion of children living in poverty by 2015. [56792]

Justine Greening: I have been asked to reply.

Changes to child benefit are one of a number of changes the Government have made to the tax and benefits system. These changes also include substantial increases above indexation of the child element of the child tax credit in April 2011 and April 2012. Treasury analysis shows that modelled tax and benefit reforms announced since Budget 2010 may have a small reduction in child poverty in 2011-12 and 2012-13.

The Government have recently published their first Child Poverty Strategy, which covers the period 2011-14, and sets out the Government's vision for every child to have the opportunity to realise their potential and stabilise the lives of particularly vulnerable families.

Mr Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what steps he is taking to reduce child poverty in (a) the London borough of Bexley and (b) London. [57354]

Maria Miller: The national child poverty strategy, published on 5 April this year, sets out how we will reduce child poverty across the UK. In addition to setting out how national reforms—such as the introduction of universal credit—will help reduce child poverty across the UK, the strategy also sets out local areas' key role in tackling child poverty. Through decentralising power, reducing bureaucracy and greater local accountability we are giving local areas the freedom they need to tackle the particular root causes of child poverty in their area; for example the first phase of community budgets aimed at tackling families with multiple problems are being implemented in 16 local areas including eight London boroughs.

The universal credit will support those who do the right thing, who take a full-time job to have an income which lifts them out of poverty. Our proposed design should enable most families with children who have a parent in full-time employment to have an income that lifts them out of poverty. The same should apply for lone parents who work at least 24 hours a week or more. The six contractors for London were announced in April and the programme will be rolled-out in London over the coming months.

The strategy also sets out the Child Poverty Core Offer of sector-led support that is available to all local authorities to help them implement their duties to reduce child poverty under Part II of the Child Poverty Act. As part of the Government's wider goal to free-up policy delivery to target local need, we will continue to push power away from the centre to local government, communities and voluntary sectors, to help those families in difficulties make their voices heard.

Retirement: Age

Rachel Reeves: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) if he will estimate the number of (a) women and (b) men who would be affected by increasing the state pension age for men and women

from 65 to 66 between 2020 and 2022 and bringing forward the proposed increase in the state pension age to 67 years old in 2036 by 18 months; [57639]

(2) if he will estimate the savings to the Exchequer which would arise from increasing the state pension age from 65 to 66 between 2020 and 2022 and bringing forward the proposed increase in the state pension age to 67 years old in 2036 by 18 months; [57638]

(3) if he will estimate the maximum delay in additional time for a (a) man and (b) woman to wait to receive a state pension in the case where the state pension age for both men and women increased from 65 to 66 between 2020 and 2022 and the proposed increase in the state pension age to 67 years old in 2036 was brought forward by 18 months. [57640]

Steve Webb: The number of women and men who would be affected by increasing the state pension age from 65 to 66 between 2020 and 2022 and bringing forward the legislated increase to 67 by 18 months is 2.9 million and 2.9 million, respectively.

The maximum delay for both men and women compared to the currently legislated timetable in the case where the state pension age for both men and women increased from 65 to 66 between 2020 and 2022 and the proposed increase to 67 in 2036 was brought forward by 18 months would be of 12 months.

Increasing the state pension's age from 65 to 66 between 2020 and 2022 would result in savings of £19.7 billion (in 2010-11 prices) between 2020-21 and 2025-26. This is significantly less than the savings of £30 billion (in 2010-11 prices) between 2016-17 and 2025-26 resulting from the Pensions Bill 2011 timetable.

Bringing forward the proposed increase in the state pension age to 67 by 18 months from the legislated timetable would result in savings of £11 billion (in 2010-11 prices) between 2032-33 and 2035-36.

State Retirement Pensions: Barnsley

Michael Dugher: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how many women in Barnsley East constituency born between 6 March 1954 and 5 April 1954 will be required to wait an additional two years before claiming a state pension under his plans to accelerate the state pension age; [58126]

(2) how many women in Barnsley East constituency born between 6 December 1953 and 5 October 1954 will be required to wait an additional 18 months to claim a state pension under his plans to accelerate the state pension age. [58127]

Steve Webb: We estimate that in Barnsley East constituency there are approximately 480 women, born between 6 December 1953 and 5 October 1954, who will have an increase in state pension age of 18 months or more. Of these, approximately 50 women, born between 6 March 1954 and 5 April 1954, will have an increase in their state pension age of two years.

Universal Credit

Ms Buck: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what recent estimate he has made of the number of second earners who will be subject to higher

withdrawal rates under universal credit who are in couples without children. [54194]

Maria Miller: Departmental modelling estimates that the majority of the estimated 300,000 second earners reported in the Impact Assessment to experience an increase in their withdrawal rate under universal credit are in couples with children. This is unsurprising given that over 90% of second earners with affected withdrawal rates are in couples with children. Less than 50,000 of the second earners who see an increase in their withdrawal rate are in childless couples.

Winter Fuel Payments

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the answer of 12 May 2011, *Official Report*, column 1340W, on winter fuel payments, what the birthday date for qualification for winter fuel allowance will be for (a) men and (b) women in each of the next 15 years following enactment of the proposals set out in the Pensions Bill 2011. [57646]

Steve Webb: The age at which winter fuel payments can be received is increasing in line with the women's state pension age.

Following Royal Assent, the changes to state pension age set out in the Pensions Bill 2011 would mean that the next 15 years of qualifying birth dates for winter fuel payments will be as set out in the following table. The dates are the same for men and women.

<i>Winter fuel payment qualifying dates</i>	
<i>Winter</i>	<i>Must be born on or before this date to qualify</i>
2011-12	5 January 1951
2012-13	5 July 1951
2013-14	5 January 1952
2014-15	5 July 1952
2015-16	5 January 1953
2016-17	5 May 1953
2017-18	5 August 1953
2018-19	5 November 1953
2019-20	5 February 1954
2020-21	26 September 1955
2021-22	25 September 1956
2022-23	24 September 1957
2023-24	22 September 1958
2024-25	21 September 1959
2025-26	27 September 1960

EDUCATION

Children: Hearing Impairment

Valerie Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what financial support his Department (a) has provided in each of the last three years and (b) plans to provide in 2011-12 and 2012-13 for hearing access equipment for deaf children in Walsall; [56361]

(2) what financial support his Department (a) has provided in each of the last three years and (b) plans to provide in 2011-12 and 2012-13 for speech and language therapy services for deaf children in Walsall; [56362]

(3) what financial support his Department (a) has provided in each of the last three years and (b) plans to provide in 2011-12 and 2012-13 for specialist education support services for deaf children in Walsall. [56363]

Sarah Teather [*holding answer 19 May 2011*]: Funding data specifically for hearing access equipment; for speech and language therapy services; and for specialist education support for deaf children is not collected by the Department. However, the available information on the net expenditure planned by Walsall local authority on the provision of education for pupils with special educational needs in the last three years is shown in the following table:

	<i>Planned (net) provision for pupils with SEN in Walsall</i>		
	<i>2008-09</i>	<i>2009-10</i>	<i>2010-11</i>
Walsall	2,194,262	2,826,359	3,272,071

The Department is currently collecting the s251 Budget data for the 2011-12 financial year. The information will not be publicly available until later in the year, when it will be published as Official Statistics.

Departmental Charitable Donations

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to encourage charitable giving by Ministers in his Department. [57120]

Sarah Teather: This is a personal matter for individual Ministers.

Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education

Craig Whittaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps his Department is taking to ensure that children are trained in emergency life support skills including cardiopulmonary resuscitation. [57923]

Mr Gibb: Within the non-statutory programmes of study for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, pupils are taught about basic emergency procedures and where to get help. They learn to develop the skills to cope with emergency situations that require basic first aid procedures, including resuscitation techniques.

The 2010 Ofsted report found that three quarters of schools surveyed provided good or outstanding PSHE.

We have announced our intention to hold an internal review of PSHE education to determine how we can support schools to improve the quality of all PSHE teaching, including giving teachers the flexibility to use their judgement about how best to deliver PSHE education. Further details will be announced shortly.

Schools: Standards

Damian Hinds: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what research his Department has conducted on the cost-effectiveness of packages of education, care and health support in (a) non-maintained and (b) maintained special schools. [55554]

Sarah Teather: It is for local authorities to determine the cost effectiveness of the school to be named in a child's statement of special educational needs. In determining the school to be named a local authority

will take into account whether the placement is suitable to meet the child's age, ability aptitude and type of SEN; whether the placement is compatible with the efficient education of other children with whom the child will be educated; and whether the placement is an efficient use of local authority resources, which will include the cost effectiveness of the placement. The fees charged by non-maintained special schools will vary with the individual needs of each child and are contractual matters to be decided between the school and local authority. Maintained special schools are currently funded in accordance with an authority's local funding formula determined in discussion with its schools forum. The first part of a two part consultation on school funding reforms closed on 25 May 2011 and full details are available on the Department's website at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm?action=conResults&consultationId=1756&external=no&menu=3>

Separation

Sheila Gilmore: To ask the Secretary of State for Education in what geographic area the funding his Department has allocated for relationship support services with respect to family separation over the next four years will be spent. [57636]

Sarah Teather: The funding the Department has allocated to relationship support services is for England only.

Special Educational Needs

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assistance his Department provides to parents of children with learning difficulties. [54954]

Sarah Teather [*holding answer 12 May 2012*]: We set out in the Green Paper, "Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability", the main ways we are supporting parents of children with learning difficulties: every local authority in England has a duty to arrange a parent partnership service to give parents advice and information about their child's special educational needs; the Department is directly funding parent carer forums in every local authority area which enable parents to shape local services for disabled children; and, we have also recently distributed £6.5 million in grants to the voluntary and community sector to provide local support to communities including parents of children with learning difficulties.

BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS

Advantage West Midlands

Mr Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills when he expects to make a decision on the future ownership of the Ansty Business Park in Coventry following the closure of Advantage West Midlands. [52061]

Mr Prisk: Each regional development agency (RDA), including Advantage West Midlands (AWM) has developed a detailed plan for the disposal and treatment of its assets and liabilities and scrutiny of these is continuing.

We have agreed aspects of AWM's assets and liabilities plan and are still in discussions about others, including the future of the Ansty Business Park. In line with my previous answers on this issue disposals will be made in a way that secures best value for the taxpayer and minimises costs. It will be for AWM to set out a strategy for disposing of individual sites and assets.

Apprentices

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how much funding he has allocated to support (a) apprenticeship places, (b) advanced apprenticeship places and (c) higher apprenticeship places in 2011-12. [41086]

Mr Prisk: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 8 February 2011, *Official Report*, columns 208-09W, to his question asking what funding has been allocated for (a) apprenticeship places, (b) advanced apprenticeship places and (c) higher apprenticeship places in 2011-12; and what funding was allocated in each such category in (i) 2009-10 and (ii) 2010-11. [38196]

The Apprenticeships programme is demand led. Government does not plan apprenticeship places by level but provides funding and forecasts the overall number of places that may be afforded. We rely on employers and providers to work together to offer sufficient opportunities to meet local demand, taking advantage of the greater freedoms and flexibilities that we have created in the further education system.

In 2009-10, the planned expenditure on participation in apprenticeship training was £1,042 million¹. The apprenticeship budget for the 2010-11 financial year is £1,328 million²: £780 million for 16 to 18-year-olds; £548 million for 19+. We expect to spend over £1,400 million in the 2011-12 financial year: £799 million for 16 to 18-year-olds; £605 million for those aged 19 and over³.

The total volume of apprenticeship starts in 2009/10 was 279,700. This is an increase of 16.6% compared to 2008/09. Of these there were:

190,500 apprenticeship (Level 2) starts—a 20.2% increase on 2008/09;

87,700 advanced apprenticeship (Level 3) starts—a 7.9% increase on 2008/09;

1,500 higher level apprenticeship (Level 4+) starts—a large increase on 2008/09.

We have ensured there is sufficient funding in place to train over 350,000 apprentices in England in the 2010/11 academic year. For the 2011/12 academic year, our indicative forecast is to fund over 360,000 apprenticeship places. The levels that these places are at will be determined by the level of skills employers actually need in their business.

Provisional data shows that there were 119,800 apprenticeship starts in the first quarter of the 2010/11 academic year. Of these there were:

76,300 apprenticeship (Level 2) starts;

42,300 advanced apprenticeship (Level 3) starts; and

1,200 higher level apprenticeship (Level 4 or higher) starts.

We are committed to improving, expanding and re-shaping apprenticeships so that Level 3 becomes the level to which learners and employers should aspire. We will also ensure there are clear routes into apprenticeships

to widen access to the programme, and clear routes into higher level skills training including, but not exclusively, Level 4 apprenticeships.

¹ LSC grant letter for 2009-10

<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-statementofpriorities200910-nov08.pdf>

² 16-18 figs: DCSF 16-19 Statement of Priorities and Investment Strategy 2010-11; 19+figs: SFA Funding Letter

³ 16-18 figures: 16-19 Funding Statement, YPLA (December 2010); 19+ figures: Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth, BIS (November 2010)

Business: Higher Education

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills pursuant the answer of 27 January 2011, *Official Report*, columns 485-6W, on business: higher education, how much funding was allocated to encouraging partnerships between universities and businesses in each of the last five years; how much such funding has been allocated through (a) the Research Council Pathways to Impact, (b) HEFCE's Research Excellence Framework, (c) the Higher Education Innovation Funding and (d) as a result of ongoing collaboration between the Research Councils and the Technology Strategy Board for each of the next three years; and if he will make a statement. [46993]

Mr Willetts [*holding answer 15 March 2011*]: Research Council Pathways to Impact are not a system for allocating separate funding. The first Research Excellence Framework assessment will be completed in 2014, it will inform research funding allocations from 2015. In respect of higher education innovation funding, I refer you to my answer of 21 January 2011, *Official Report*, column 977W.

The scale of Research Council activity aligned with the Technology Strategy Board over the three years 2008-11 was £200 million. Research Councils and the Technology Strategy Board are committed to continue to work together; detailed decisions on future collaborative funding will be made by them in due course.

Business: Loans

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what assessment he has made of the effect on small and medium-sized enterprises of the failure of banks who are party to the Merlin Agreement to meet their lending targets under that agreement. [57976]

Mr Prisk: The Merlin Agreement was about setting stretching lending targets to the banks to make sure that they make available the credit that businesses need to grow. This is particularly important for small businesses, and this is why we have insisted on individual figures for SMEs.

The Bank of England reported the banks' first quarter performance against the Merlin Agreement on 23 May. Lending to SMEs in the first quarter was £16.8 billion against a quarterly 'stretch' target of £17.2 billion (the 'capacity' target would imply a figure of £19 billion). This is disappointing and, although lending to small firms will not follow a linear pattern month on month, the banks must do more to ensure that they meet their commitment over the next few months.

The agreement with the banks was made mid-way through the first quarter, and this might have impacted on the figures. But it is too early to properly assess the impact of the Merlin Agreement on small businesses' ability to access bank finance.

We will therefore continue to monitor very closely whether the banks are making sufficient credit available to small firms before passing a definitive judgement on the impact of the agreement on small businesses.

The Government are clear that, if the banks fail to meet their commitments, the Government reserves the right to return to the matter and take further measures.

Business: Regulation

Mr Hollobone: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what recent progress has been made in implementing the one-in-one-out rule to reduce the level of business regulation. [58240]

Mr Prisk: On April 7 2011, the Government published the first in a series of publications entitled 'One-in, One-out: Statement of New Regulation', which will be published twice a year. The Statement of New Regulation showed that the Government's One-in, One-out rule has resulted in an overall reduction in the net cost to business and civil society organisations of -£3.207 billion.

When work started on the Statement of New Regulation, Departments proposed a total of 157 domestic regulatory measures, 119 of which would have imposed a cost to business. In the course of preparing the Statement of New Regulation the requirement for the estimates to be assessed and confirmed by the independent Regulatory Policy Committee was rigorously imposed, and Departments were challenged to defend particular regulatory decisions. The result was that the total number of proposed regulations dropped by 70% (from 157 to 46). Of the remaining 46 measures only 11 impose a net cost to business, 26 impose a zero net cost to business and nine reduce the net cost to business.

Businesses

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps he is taking to remove regulatory burdens from businesses. [57937]

Mr Prisk: The Government have set out a clear aim—to leave office having reduced the overall burden of regulation.

We have already taken a number of important steps towards this goal. For example, the Statement of New Regulation, published in April, showed that from an initial 157 proposed new domestic regulations, robust implementation of the one-in, one-out rule meant that the total number of regulations being implemented was reduced by 70% (from 157 to 46), of these only 11 imposed a net cost on business (£65 million) which was outweighed by a considerable reduction in burdens elsewhere (£3.3 billion).

We have also ended 'gold plating' of EU directives, introduced sunset clauses for new regulation and announced an unprecedented three-year regulatory moratorium from new domestic regulation for micro-businesses and new start-ups.

The 'One-in, One-out: Statement of New Regulation' is available here:

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/better-regulation/docs/ol11-p96a-one-in-one-out-new-regulation.pdf>

Businesses: Advisory Services

Anne Marie Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what recent estimate he has made of the number of business mentors. [56648]

Mr Prisk [*holding answer 7 June 2011*]: The Government want to improve access to and raise awareness of the diverse mentoring provision and expertise in the UK. To achieve this we have been working with the British Bankers' Association (BBA), UK trade bodies and mentoring organisations to develop a single web-based gateway. I understand that the BBA have identified approximately 50 key mentoring organisations which they hope will join the portal. These organisations have approximately 12,000 business mentors currently aligned to them.

BIS is working with the BBA to make a more comprehensive assessment of the number of business mentors and to engage mentoring organisations, business organisations, multi-national corporations and the banks to determine how to expand provision of business mentoring.

Consumers: Credit

Graeme Morrice: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills when he plans to publish the Government's response to the consultation on reforming the consumer credit regime. [58059]

Mr Davey: The Government will publish a summary of responses to the consultation in the summer, followed by a more detailed response in the autumn.

Departmental Manpower

Mr Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills if he will make it his policy to publish monthly information on changes in the numbers of his Department's employees categorised by (a) seniority, (b) number of employees taking voluntary redundancy, (c) natural wastage and (d) involuntary redundancy. [57603]

Mr Davey: The Government are committed to transparency and the availability of data and is currently exploring options for the more frequent publication of this type of workforce management information across the civil service.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish information on employment levels by responsibility level as part of the Annual Civil Service Employment survey as well as information on the overall number of leavers by Department including BIS. This can be viewed at:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=2899>

ONS publish information on employment levels across the civil service as part of the Quarterly Public Sector Employment Bulletin, which can be viewed at:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=13615>

Departmental Mobile Phones

Mike Freer: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what the name is of each contractor or supplier of (a) mobile telephone and (b) mobile data services to his Department. [56054]

Mr Davey: The Department currently uses Vodafone for its mobile telephone and mobile data services.

Education: Prisoners

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills with reference to Making Prison Work: Skills for Rehabilitation, how many and what proportion of offenders paid for learning in prison in the last year for which figures are available; and how many and what proportion he expects to pay for learning in prison following the implementation of the review's recommendations. [57462]

Mr Hayes: Data on the number offenders currently paying for their learning while in prison is not collected centrally.

"Making Prisons Work: Skills for Rehabilitation" made clear the Government's view that not all learning in prison should be free, particularly when there is an expectation elsewhere in the system that learners will contribute to costs. We have committed to considering the case for offenders, and employers, contributing to the costs of intermediate and higher level training, and to making sure arrangements for prisoners studying higher education are aligned with mainstream changes from autumn 2012.

It is not currently possible to estimate how many or what proportion of prisoners will pay for learning in prison until we have considered these issues further.

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills with reference to Making Prison Work: Skills for Rehabilitation, when he expects a loans system to be in place to enable offenders to pay for further education and higher education in prison. [57463]

Mr Hayes: For further education and training, "Skills for Sustainable Growth" set out the Government's intention to introduce loans, from the 2013/14 academic year, to help people access the funds they need to gain intermediate and higher level skills. Further information on those loans will be made available in a consultation document we intend to publish during June.

Loan arrangements are already in place to support prisoners studying full-time higher education. The Minister for Universities and Science, my right hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr Willetts), announced in his oral statement of 3 November 2010, *Official Report*, column 924, on higher education funding and student finance that part-time students will be entitled to a loan for tuition on the same basis as full-timers, and that the Government intends to implement these changes for the 2012/13 academic year. Access to loans for prisoners studying higher education on a part-time basis will be considered in conjunction with the other changes required to give effect to this.

Export Credit Guarantees: Egypt

Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what consideration he has given to the merits of auditing debts owed by Egypt to the Export Credits Guarantee Department; and if he will consider the merits of cancelling any debt owed by Egypt which was the result of loans made to governments which are considered undemocratic. [58226]

Mr Davey: No audit of debts owed by Egypt to the Export Credits Guarantee Department is contemplated. To date Egypt has not sought cancellation of debts owed to ECGD or any other export credit agency. Such matters would be decided multilaterally through the auspices of the Paris Club of official creditors.

Export Credit Guarantees: Trinidad and Tobago

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills pursuant to the answer of 14 October 2010, *Official Report*, column 361W, on export credit guarantees: Trinidad and Tobago; whether a claim has been made to the Export Credits Guarantee Department in respect of the cover on the sale of offshore patrol vessels to Trinidad and Tobago; and if he will make a statement. [58075]

Mr Davey: No claim has been received by the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Higher Education

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (1) with reference to the report of the Higher Education Funding Council for England on Diverse provision in higher education: options and challenges, if he will take steps to ensure that higher education courses provided by private providers are subject to the same standards of (a) transparency, (b) assessment and (c) measures of student satisfaction as publicly-funded higher education institutions; [57523]

(2) with reference to the report of the Higher Education Funding Council for England on Diverse provision in higher education: options and challenges, what steps he plans to take to maintain the reputation of higher education; [57524]

(3) with reference to the report of the Higher Education Funding Council for England on Diverse provision in higher education: options and challenges, if he will take steps to ensure that private providers of higher education have a duty to widen participation; [57525]

(4) with reference to the report of the Higher Education Funding Council for England on Diverse provision in higher education: options and challenges, whether private providers of higher education will be subject to the same quality assessment regime as publicly-funded higher education institutions; [57526]

(5) what assessment he has made of the report of the Higher Education Funding Council for England on Diverse provision in higher education: options and challenges in relation to private provision of higher education; [57527]

(6) if he will take account of the risks identified by the Higher Education Funding Council for England in its report on Diverse provision in higher education: options and challenges in further consultation on private provision of higher education; [57528]

(7) what discussions he has had with representatives of the higher education sector on the report of the Higher Education Funding Council for England on Diverse provision in higher education: options and challenges; [57529]

(8) if he will (a) undertake and (b) publish an assessment of the risks to the public higher education sector of the expansion of private higher education providers; [57574]

(9) if he will bring forward proposals to mitigate the risks associated with an expansion of private provision in higher education identified by the Higher Education Funding Council of England in its report on Diverse provision in higher education: options and challenges. [57575]

Mr Willetts: The future regulatory regime for all providers of higher education will be considered in the forthcoming White Paper. This will set out the Government's proposals to encourage a more diverse and competitive higher education sector alongside an appropriate regulatory regime, which ensures high standards and protects students. An impact assessment covering any proposed regulatory changes will be published alongside the White Paper.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE) report "Diverse provision in higher education: options and challenges" was sent to the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, my right hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Vince Cable), on 28 July 2010. The Department welcomed the report as a valuable contribution to our thinking on how to encourage high quality and diverse provision that offers students a wider choice. The Secretary of State and I requested that the report be made publicly available in the annual grant letter to HEFCE on 20 December 2010. HEFCE published the report in February and is available at:

<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/flexible/statement.htm>

The Secretary of State and I have not held specific discussions on the HEFCE report with representatives of the higher education sector.

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills when he plans to publish his White Paper on higher education. [57974]

Mr Willetts: We will publish our Higher Education White Paper shortly.

The White Paper will set out major reform of the English higher education system. Reform of this scale warrants careful consideration so we have decided to take time to develop it.

Investment: North East

Guy Opperman: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps his Department is taking to encourage investment in the North East. [57883]

Mr Prisk: The Government have invited both the Tees Valley and North Eastern Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to establish their governance arrangements bringing business and civic leaders work together to drive sustainable economic growth and create the conditions for private sector job growth in their communities.

These LEPs have been invited to submit proposals for Enterprise Zones which will benefit from:

A business rate discount worth up to £275,000 per business over a five year period;

All business rate growth within the Enterprise Zone for a period of at least 25 years will be retained by the local area, to support the Partnership's economic priorities and ensure that Enterprise Zone growth is reinvested locally;

Government help to develop radically simplified planning approaches for the Zone, for example, existing Local Development Orders;

Government support to ensure that superfast broadband is rolled out throughout the Zone, achieved through guaranteeing the most supportive regulatory environment and, if necessary, public funding.

Further to these incentives the Government will work with LEPs on additional options, to suit local circumstances, including consideration of:

Enhanced capital allowances for plant and machinery, in a limited number of cases and subject to State Aid, where there is a strong focus on manufacturing;

Tax increment finance to support the long-term viability of the area;

The North also benefited from £57 million in the first round of the Regional Growth Fund which provides funding for high-quality transport infrastructure, apprenticeships and support for science.

The Government introduced a National Insurance Contributions holiday starting on 22 June 2010 up until 5 September 2013 providing new businesses that start up outside of the Greater South East with a substantial reduction in their employer contributions.

UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) is the UK's national trade and investment promotion agency, and leads on delivering a whole-of-government approach to attracting high quality, high value investment to the UK. Support for inward investment in England, including the North East, is provided by a new national UKTI-led service outsourced to the private sector. As part of this national inward investment service, a UKTI Investment Services team in Durham will work with local partners, including LEPs, to attract high quality inward investment projects to the North East.

Knowledge Economy: Liverpool

Esther McVey: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps he has taken to encourage the growth of the knowledge economy in the Liverpool city region. [58156]

Mr Willetts: The Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has identified the knowledge economy as one of its four key priorities. A plan to accelerate key areas of the economy has been devised by the City Region's Knowledge Economy Group, comprising representatives from The Mersey Partnership, the university of Liverpool, Liverpool John Moores university, Liverpool Vision and some of the City Region's key knowledge

based businesses. Proposals in the plan could secure an additional 58,000 jobs and in excess of £217 million added GVA for the region's knowledge economy by 2022.

The LEP has received £45,000 from the BIS LEP Capacity Fund, to help local partners better understand their business environment and to identify the actions they need to take to drive their priorities forward.

A project to stimulate small and medium enterprises (SMEs) growth in Liverpool through media advocacy has been awarded to the *Liverpool Echo* from the Regional Growth Fund. This will result in grants of between £10,000 and £100,000 to SMEs (including those in the Knowledge Economy) together with mentoring and coaching.

Local Enterprise Partnerships

Mr Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what plans he has for the representation of micro-businesses on local enterprise partnerships. [58214]

Mr Prisk: As set out in the White Paper on Local Growth the Government will normally expect to see business representatives form half the board, with a prominent business leader in the chair. Furthermore, we encourage board members to be drawn from a breadth of experience from micro enterprises through to large businesses, and representing the key sectors in the Local Enterprise Partnership area.

Mr Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (1) how many and what proportion of companies on local enterprise partnership boards represent micro-businesses; [58215]

(2) how many and what proportion of companies on local enterprise partnership boards represent small businesses; [58216]

(3) how many and what proportion of companies on local enterprise partnership boards represent medium-sized businesses. [58217]

Mr Prisk: To date 13 Local Enterprise Partnership Boards have been recognised by the Government. These have a total of 83 private sector members of which 12% represent micro businesses (0-9 employees), 17% represent small businesses (10-49 employees) and 13% represent medium businesses (50-249 employees).

Medicine: Education

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what estimate he has made of the number of (a) undergraduate and (b) postgraduate places at each university for (i) nursing and (ii) allied health professional qualifications in (A) the last three years and (B) the next three years. [57918]

Anne Milton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the written answer I gave him on 4 May 2011, *Official Report*, columns 847-48W.

Micro-business Regulation

Chi Onwurah: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills if he will estimate the average wage of employees of micro-businesses of each (a) gender and (b) age group for those in (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employment. [48321]

Mr Prisk [*holding answer 23 March 2011*]: The Department for Business Innovation and Skills does not hold information on the average wages of employees working for micro-businesses. The Office for National Statistics produces official statistics on employees and earnings but are unable to provide data on these breakdowns.

Public Transport

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Transport on the effects of the (a) frequency and (b) cost of public transport services on (i) commuters and (ii) job seekers in (A) Coventry and (B) the west midlands. [51023]

Mr Davey: There have been no official discussions on these topics recently.

Regional Growth Fund

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what progress has been made on the second round of the Regional Growth Fund; and if he will make a statement. [57973]

Mr Prisk: Round 2 of the Regional Growth Fund (RGF) opened on the 12 April and will close at noon 1 July 2011. Just under £1 billion will be available in this round.

To support Round 2 there are currently a series of RGF roadshows travelling across England, chaired by Lord Heseltine and Sir Ian Wrigglesworth. These offer presentations on the Fund's objectives, clinics on the RGF application process and programme bids, and offer potential bidders an individual session to discuss their proposed bid. To date these events have been very well received.

Students: Fees and Charges

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what estimate he has made of the level of fees for part-time university courses in (a) 2011-12 and (b) 2012-13. [57975]

Mr Willetts: We do not hold information on average fee levels for part-time courses in 2011/12. The majority of institutions have not yet set their fees for part-time courses for 2012/13 so it is too early to tell what the average fees will be. From September 2012, eligible new part-time students will have access to loans to cover the full cost of their regulated tuition fee.

Students: Finance

Mr Lammy: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills pursuant to the answer of 3 May 2011, *Official Report*, column 717W, on students: finance, how much his Department spent on communicating student finance arrangements to prospective students, adjusted for inflation, in each year from 1999-2000 to 2010-11. [56290]

Mr Willetts: In the 2010/11 financial year £37,936 (£29,219 in 2000/01 prices) was spent on preparatory research for our current higher education student finance campaign. Thus far in 2011/12 £1.475 million has been allocated to this campaign which includes the £150,000 previously cited for the costs of employing an advertising agency.

For the 2010/11 financial year the Student Loan Company spent £1,650,243 (£1,271,040 in 2000/01 prices) communicating student finance arrangements to prospective students.

The following tables provide the figures adjusted for inflation in real terms at 2000/01 prices, the year from which the first figures are quoted.

<i>Financial year</i>	<i>Original Table</i>	
	<i>Department for Business, Innovation and Skills student finance publicity budget</i>	<i>Student Loans Company communications budget</i>
1999-2000	—	—
2000-01	90,000	—
2001-02	1,660,000	—
2002-03	2,025,000	—
2003-04	4,000,000	—
2004-05	2,000,000	280,598
2005-06	4,500,000	1,483,900
2006-07	4,100,000	1,097,092
2007-08	4,500,000	3,288,351
2008-09	4,000,000	2,851,560
2009-10	60,000	5,263,030

<i>Financial year</i>	<i>Expenditure adjusted for inflation in real terms at 2000-01 prices</i>	
	<i>Department for Business, Innovation and Skills student finance publicity budget</i>	<i>Student Loans Company communications budget</i>
1999-2000	—	—
2000-01	90,000	—
2001-02	1,623,677	—
2002-03	1,918,881	—
2003-04	3,686,365	—
2004-05	1,793,323	251,601
2005-06	3,963,102	1,306,855
2006-07	3,493,549	934,816
2007-08	3,727,581	2,723,910
2008-09	3,224,205	2,298,504
2009-10	47,553	4,171,214

The inflationary figures have been obtained using the 'gross domestic product time series' tool available on the HM Treasury website, which enables figures to be adjusted year on year for inflation, via this URL:

http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/data_gdp_fig.htm

Vocational Training

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what plans he has to address skills shortages nationally. [57977]

Mr Hayes: The coalition's skills strategy set out our plans to address the nation's skills shortages and realise our ambition to create a world-class skills base. We are addressing current weaknesses in the vital intermediate technical skills that are increasingly important as jobs become more highly skilled and technological change accelerates. We have already made significant progress in the short time since the skills strategy's publication.

We have placed apprenticeships at the heart of the system, expanding, improving and reshaping them so that technician level—Level 3—becomes the level to which learners and employers aspire. We are creating clear routes from apprenticeships to higher level training. Alongside apprenticeships there will be a wider and more flexible system of vocational qualifications that meets the needs of the economy.

In addition, we have established the Growth and Innovation Fund to support employers to be more ambitious about raising skills to reach their growth

potential. And we have refocused the role of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills to be a true vehicle for economic growth and social partnership, with employers, trade unions and others coming together to give effective leadership on skills. One of the UKCES's strategic objectives is to provide high quality labour market intelligence to enable the supply of skills to be matched with demand more effectively.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

Departmental CCTV

Philip Davies: To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities how many CCTV cameras are installed in and around the Government Equalities Office premises; and how much such cameras (*a*) cost to install and (*b*) cost to operate in the latest period for which figures are available. [56845]

Lynne Featherstone: The Government Equalities Office (GEO) is based within the Home Office's main premises at 2 Marsham street, therefore the responsibility for procurement, installation and running costs of such equipment falls to the Home Office and not GEO.

Ministerial Correction

Wednesday 8 June 2011

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

New Social Housing

The following are the answers given by the Minister for Housing and Local Government, the right hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Grant Shapps), relating to questions from the hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) during Communities and Local Government Question Time on 4 April 2011.

22. **Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): What estimate his Department has made of the likely number of new social housing starts between May 2010 and April 2015. [50362]

The Minister for Housing and Local Government (Grant Shapps): We are investing £4.5 billion in new affordable housing over the next four years, with the hope of producing 150,000 new affordable homes.

Kerry McCarthy: I thank the Minister for his reply, although I note that he referred just to affordable housing, not to affordable social housing. Given the imminent publication of the Government's child poverty strategy, what conversations has he had with colleagues

in other Departments about the impact of the lack of affordable social housing on achieving our child poverty targets?

Grant Shapps: The hon. Lady is right to draw the subject to the House's attention. It is sadly true that there were 45,000 fewer affordable social homes in this country following 13 years of her party's being in power. I have had extensive conversations with colleagues across Government to ensure that, in the next 13 years—or at least in the next four—a significantly greater number of social, affordable and all types of homes will be built across the social and regular housing sectors because this country needs homes, for which the new homes bonus will provide a significant boost.

[Official Report, 4 April 2011, Vol. 526, c. 737-38.]

Letter of correction from Mr Grant Shapps:

An error has been identified in an oral answer given on 4 April 2011. The correct answer should have been:

Grant Shapps: The hon. Lady is right to draw the subject to the House's attention. It is sadly true that there were 50,000 fewer affordable homes in this country following 13 years of her party's being in power. I have had extensive conversations with colleagues across Government to ensure that, in the next 13 years—or at least in the next four—a significantly greater number of social, affordable and all types of homes will be built across the social and regular housing sectors because this country needs homes, for which the new homes bonus will provide a significant boost.

ORAL ANSWERS

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