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Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 28 November 2017

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Our first item of business today is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader is the Most Rev Leo Cushley, the Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh.

The Most Rev Leo Cushley (Archbishop and Metropolitan of St Andrews and Edinburgh): Dear friends, as we all know, 30 November, which is just around the corner, is St Andrew's day. It is our national day, just as the English choose to celebrate St George, the Irish St Patrick and the Welsh St David. The Welsh found a local lad to celebrate as their national patron; the English have an Armenian soldier, who was popular among the crusaders of the high middle ages; the Irish chose a Briton, maybe from what is now Scotland; and the Scots have a Galilean fisherman.

Who got the best patron? The English picked someone who was brave and chivalrous, the Welsh picked someone who was holy, the Irish picked someone who was fiery and outspoken, and we picked a fisherman. Why a fisherman? I have a theory and it has nothing to do with smokies. Get comfortable, because here it comes.

The English used to have St Peter as their national patron and he was the first Pope. At that time, the Scots had St Columba as their national patron, who was a good local choice, but not quite up to competing with the first Pope, so the Scots changed their national patron to St Andrew. Andrew was not the first Pope, but he was the first man to be called to follow Jesus and, in the middle ages, that counted for something.

More than 1,000 years ago, Andrew's relics were brought to the town that is now known as St Andrews, and the kings and people of this country built a cathedral in his honour there. I am told that, for centuries, St Andrews cathedral was the largest building in Scotland and pilgrims came from all over Europe to visit it.

Today, we are still proud of Andrew, but in a vague, distant way. Yet he, the university town, his name and his flag all remind us of something that has been here for many centuries doing a lot of good for a lot of people, which is the civilizing influence of fair laws, just courts, a belief in objective truth, standards of behaviour, mutual

respect and helping others who need a hand. That is probably the best thing about having Andrew as a national patron: no matter one's beliefs, there are still one or two of those things that we can all agree are worth holding on to and that are good for us all.

St Andrew, patron of all Scots, pray for us.

Urgent Question

14:04

Council Reserves

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution what his response is to news that councils are using their reserves to fund services.

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution (Derek Mackay): Decisions on the use of reserves are rightly the responsibility of councils to take, when it is prudent and sustainable to do so. As today's Audit Scotland report states,

"There is no prescribed minimal level of usable reserves."

However, as of 31 March 2017, local authorities' usable reserves amounted to £1.9 billion, which represents more than 18 per cent of the total funding that is being provided to councils by the Scottish Government this year. That excludes Orkney and Shetland, which have additional and extensive oil-related reserves.

Jackie Baillie: Last year, councils cut £524 million from services and used £79 million of their reserves simply to balance their budgets. We are talking about cuts to schools for our children, cuts to social care for our elderly and cuts to basic services such as road repairs. The Scottish National Party has made some £1.5 billion of cuts to council budgets since 2010. Councils are now in danger of exhausting their reserves—in a couple of years' time, councils such as Moray, Clackmannanshire and North Ayrshire will have nothing left. On top of that, 7,000 jobs have been cut from local government. If local government is such a priority for the cabinet secretary, why is the Scottish Government continuing to cut vital services?

Derek Mackay: The Scottish Government increased support for local services by around £400 million in our most recent budget. If we deduct the sums by which Labour authorities chose not to increase the council tax, that number is reduced but, overall, the support provided for local services through health and social care integration, the ability to raise the council tax and the multiplier ensured that more resources went to local services.

In addition, I would say that local government has been treated very fairly in the tough and challenging times that we have experienced at the hands of the right-wing United Kingdom Conservative Government, which has reduced our resources for discretionary public expenditure in

Scotland. We have treated local authorities very fairly within an extremely challenging framework.

Members should not just take my word for it. The Scottish Parliament information centre says that that is the case. If we look at the past couple of years and take into account the complex nature of health and social care integration, councils' ability to raise the council tax and the change in the multiplier, we can see that, in the budget that I presented to Parliament, local government got an even better settlement than any increase that we might have had in discretionary funding.

I accept that we are all operating in a challenging fiscal environment. That is why we need to have a mature debate on the choices that we have going forward and to recognise the pressures on our public services. I will continue to be as supportive as I can to Scotland's public services, not least local government.

Jackie Baillie: I am always happy to have that mature debate, but the cabinet secretary must recognise that, when he cuts a lot and gives a little back, it is still a cut in real terms.

Contrary to what the cabinet secretary said on the radio today—I listened carefully—the local government share of the overall Scottish budget has fallen. Mr Mackay is right to say that the cuts from the UK Government have reduced the amount of money that is available, but SPICe tells us that, taken over the past three years, the cuts from the Tories amount to 1.5 per cent. Over the same three years, the SNP's cuts to local government funding amount to 4.6 per cent. The SNP has taken Tory austerity and more than doubled it in passing it on to local government. What we have here is SNP turbocharged austerity.

In almost two weeks' time, the cabinet secretary has an opportunity to change course and properly fund local government. The question for all of us is whether he will be Santa or Scrooge.

Derek Mackay: I noticed that Jackie Baillie did not respond to my comment: if local authorities felt that they did not have enough resources, why did Labour authorities—including Jackie Baillie's Labour local authority, West Dunbartonshire Council—choose not to increase the council tax by 3 per cent? Authorities across the country received an increase in resources. That is the fact of the budget that I presented to Parliament. The Labour Party opposed those extra resources going to local services.

In her analysis, Jackie Baillie excludes the money from council tax increases and the effect of the multiplier and health and social care integration. In presenting her figures to Parliament, she discounts real money. Scotland's local services have been served very well and very fairly by the decisions of the Scottish Government,

which has protected local services in the face of austerity from the right-wing UK Tory Government, whose most recent decisions have made the situation even more challenging. [*Interruption.*] The members on the Tory benches moan and groan, but I look forward to their question, because I have some very interesting figures on how the Tories treat local government in England.

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The block grant from Westminster is going up in real terms. Therefore there is no justification for the Scottish Government to reduce local government budgets. Will the Scottish Government commit those funds to support and assist local councils with their commitments in the next financial year?

Derek Mackay: Alexander Stewart has just made the latest spending commitment from the Tories and asks whether I will commit any Barnett consequential specifically to local government as opposed to the health service or any other service that the Tories might be interested in. Yet again the Tories are all over the place on tax and spend. You cannot have tax cuts and more expenditure at the same time. The Tories are choosing to spend resources time and again. The Tories wonder why local government is feeling pressure, but councils are feeling pressure because of Tory cuts coming from the Westminster Government. The further pressure that local government feels is a consequence of the Westminster Government.

The £2 billion that Alexander Stewart referred to is not a real-terms increase in the discretionary funds for our public services—we cannot spend it on council services. However, I am not surprised that the Tory front benchers do not understand that fact.

I am interested to hear the Tories saying today that their priority is local government. I have said that the Scottish Government has tried to protect local government from the reduction that we have endured, but the real-terms reduction in Scottish local government is about 5.5 per cent over a seven-year period. However, the reduction for local government in England is 28.3 per cent in real terms. Where the Tories are in power, their impact on local services is devastating and they are trying to devastate Scotland's public services, too. That is why we are having a mature and reasonable debate about the powers that we have at our disposal to protect our public services across the board from a right-wing chancellor who is pursuing austerity as a matter of ideology.

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): The cabinet secretary may be aware that Councillor Walter Wilson, who resigned a few days ago because of the extreme right-wing views of his Conservative colleagues and the cuts that they were contemplating, was criticised by the leader of

Moray Council for causing alarm, yet today, the leader of Moray Council is talking about being a few years away from bankruptcy, which will certainly cause alarm among local people. Will the cabinet secretary ask his officials to explore with Moray Council why it is the only council in Scotland to talk in such terms?

Derek Mackay: I have met several council leaders and I am happy to continue holding such meetings. I meet regularly with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to consider the future settlements. I engage with COSLA on matters of distribution. The Government will try to be supportive.

Richard Lochhead has fairly characterised the administration in Moray. As I have said, the Scottish Government will be helpful. However, some people should apply some pressure to the right-wing Tory Government in Westminster as well, because the reductions that the Scottish Government and the country are facing in real-terms spend on local services comes from the direction of the Tory party.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): The cabinet secretary has criticised councils for complaining about their financial position if they did not choose to use their flexibility to increase council tax. However, is it not clear that the many of us who have long criticised council tax as a fundamentally unfair tax need to take responsibility for that? The cabinet secretary is in a position to decide how much revenue should be raised fairly and progressively through reform of income tax and how many councils should be put under pressure to use an unfair council tax change to raise their revenues. Is it not clear that people on his salary and people on my salary need to pay more income tax next year than we did this year if we want to fund our local services properly?

Derek Mackay: Patrick Harvie touches on the point that I made about the discussion that we are having on the role of income tax in Scotland's budget. I am happy to engage with all political parties, stakeholders and the public on that and I am actively doing so. I look forward to presenting the budget, with our tax proposition, on 14 December. That debate is live and kicking.

Alcohol and Drugs Strategies

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a statement by Aileen Campbell on refreshing Scotland's alcohol and drugs strategies. The minister will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions during it.

14:15

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): Next year marks the 10th anniversary of "The Road to Recovery: A New Approach to Tackling Scotland's Drug Problem", which signalled a landmark change in the way in which Scotland dealt with problem drug use, setting out a new vision in which all drug treatment and support services were based on the principle and hope of recovery.

During those 10 years, much has been achieved. We have an impressive and growing recovery network in Scotland, which has proven invaluable in promoting a civic and cultural shift in attitudes towards problem drug use. In treatment services, we have seen a shift in attitudes through the introduction of recovery-oriented systems of care. We have implemented innovative harm-reduction measures, such as the world's first take-home naloxone programme. We have also established ambitious waiting times targets for access to alcohol and drugs treatment. Those all come against the backdrop of almost a decade of record investment. Since 2008, we have invested £689 million to tackle problem alcohol and drug use.

The main principles behind "The Road to Recovery", which had cross-party support, still remain relevant. However, 10 years on, we must be alert to the changing nature of Scotland's drug problem and how we respond to new and emerging challenges. Our understanding of the underlying causes of addiction and substance use has developed, aided by an ever-growing evidence and research base. There is a greater understanding of the effects of deprivation, poverty and adverse childhood experiences in driving the reasons why so many in our communities turn to drugs or alcohol as a way to escape painful trauma and experiences.

That is why my intention is to bring forward a combined alcohol and drugs treatment strategy in spring next year. Although there are clear differences between the two, the root causes and the fundamental culture of the responses by services have too much in common to be kept apart. The legal status of alcohol means that there is much that is different in policy terms around availability and accessibility. Indeed, the United

Kingdom Supreme Court judgment on minimum unit pricing for alcohol, which is an example of the different levers that we have at our disposal for preventative interventions, marked a landmark moment in our ambition to turn around Scotland's troubled relationship with alcohol. Therefore, I still plan to bring forward in early 2018 a refreshed alcohol strategy that sets out my plans for preventative action.

Turning to treatment and recovery support, the focus of our efforts must be on improving the experience for patients and their families. With rising numbers of drug and alcohol deaths, evidence of the devastating consequences of problematic substance misuse is clear across Scotland. Those substances are significant contributors to the early deaths and excess mortality in Scotland. We know from the work of NHS Health Scotland, the Scottish Drugs Forum and the Glasgow Centre for Population Health that a generation was made more vulnerable in part by the economic and social decision making of the 1970s and 1980s. The people who were impacted are now reaching an age when multiple social and health issues are meeting years of problem substance misuse, with devastating consequences.

However, I fully recognise the importance of resources for treatment, which is why the £20 million per annum that was announced as part of our new programme for government is crucial for the refresh. It represents £60 million of additional funding over this parliamentary session to help to deliver improved services that will be delivered with the person, not the addiction, at their heart and to enable a greater consistency of quality services across Scotland. The funding will also support alcohol and drug partnerships and services across Scotland as we instil the principles of the seek, keep and treat work, which I will say more about shortly.

Our refreshed strategy and the resources behind it must be innovative in approach, guided by evidence of what works and informed by people with experience, whether practitioner or patient. To stand any chance of delivering the impacts that we seek, the strategy must be authentic and must empower the people who seek to make improvement. The growing demands that are placed on health services by ageing drug and alcohol users require, in particular, services that are realigned to appropriately and collaboratively link into other areas, including mental health and primary care. That will remove some of the current stresses that are placed on the system by emergency and unplanned hospital admissions.

We must continue our recovery-oriented systems of care approach. Recovery must prevail as the mainstay of our policy, with care centred

around the person and connecting into work on homelessness, employability, mental health and family support. The refreshed approach must be viewed as providing an opportunity to enable support to reach out to those who are most vulnerable but who cannot access the sustained help that they need with health and wider social issues. That is vital, because we know that being in treatment offers protection against a drug-related death.

There is a strong sense that that is also true for alcohol, but I want to ensure that the evidence base is robust, which is why I have asked Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems to lead work to enhance our understanding of the circumstances and contributory factors of alcohol-related deaths. That work will develop actions to further develop the evidence base on alcohol death prevention and treatment services.

We know that the cohort that is most at risk and vulnerable is often furthest away from services, which is why the refresh will develop our seek, keep and treat philosophy to services. We must actively seek out that hard-to-engage cohort through assertive outreach, advocacy or new innovative approaches. We know that retention among that cohort can be improved. Much is already being done to ensure service quality, but it is clear that there is a need to consider whether the range of services on offer can keep more people in treatment by responding to their care needs in a way that addresses all aspects of their wellbeing. We also know that it is imperative to treat people appropriately by providing person-centred care and support alongside social and clinical interventions. Increasing evidence points to factors such as social isolation and stigma as major barriers to continued engagement.

Seek, keep and treat will be the guiding principle for additional investment to secure change. I expect services to be redesigned to be more active in identifying those who are disengaged from treatment. People should be discharged only for the right reasons and should be appropriately supported as they move on their treatment journey. We will seek to measure levels of retention and treatment outcomes that are consistent with that approach.

We must consider ways in which services can provide wide-ranging support to keep people engaged. That must include an acceptance that some individuals will not be ready to immediately embark on a journey of recovery or abstinence, an acceptance that some will stumble and relapse—numerous times in some cases—and agreement that that must not preclude them from receiving high-quality support and treatment when they return.

Earlier today, I met alcohol and drug partnerships and health and social care partnerships to begin to give shape to a shift that is cognisant that those services currently face high demand and pressure. That is why the resources that I outlined earlier are important to enable a move to invest in models that work.

Transformation will take time, commitment and energy. It will also require our health and social care systems to assess their current practices, to reflect on their effectiveness and to be innovative and open to change if evidence points to a need to improve.

The recent efforts to introduce a safer consumption facility in Glasgow are an example of how ambitious and innovative responses are being generated at the front line. There, we see stigma being challenged and a huge public health problem being responded to in a way that meets the needs of that population. The law does not currently allow that facility to proceed, but we must not let that be the final word on the matter. I have written to my UK counterpart to ask for discussions on how the Scottish Parliament can obtain the powers to allow us to meet a significant public health challenge.

Treatment can no longer be just clinical; it must also address deep-rooted social and economic circumstances that people face. It is therefore fundamental that we join the dots better between health and social care partnerships and alcohol and drug partnerships, and that we ensure that the provision of addiction services according to robust local needs assessment is a priority that is set out in their respective delivery plans. That will require cross-portfolio, cross-cutting and cross-discipline working. It will require my ministerial colleagues and I to align our work and collaborate across the areas of housing, mental health, justice and employability.

I also aim to engage thoroughly with people with lived and living experience of addiction and with families and people at the front line who dedicate their lives to doing what they can to support and help those with addictions. The strategy must be based on strong evidence and research, but it must also be authentic and relevant to all those who interact with it. It must be focused and it must drive the improvements that we desperately want. However, we should not lose sight of the improvements that have been made and the need to continue with good work that has been impactful.

There are no quick solutions. Lives are complex, and they can be chaotic. People may have suffered great trauma. The issues that we see in an ageing and vulnerable population are long standing and deep rooted. Developing a refreshed approach to respond will be a challenge, but we

will not shy away from that challenge. Individuals, families and communities that can be devastated by addiction should expect no less.

Just as parties united 10 years ago to back an approach to substance misuse, I intend to work with colleagues across the parliamentary divide and bring back to the chamber a refreshed strategy in spring next year.

The Presiding Officer: The minister will now take questions.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I start by thanking the minister for advance sight of her statement. It is important, though, that the Scottish Government does not try to rewrite history around drug and alcohol policy in Scotland. Let us start with the Government's £15 million cut to Scotland's alcohol and drug partnerships. That has had a hugely destabilising effect, and I would have expected an apology from the Government today on that issue.

The Conservatives see how the issue needs to be addressed and we have long called for a cross-party approach. What assurances can the minister give that the new strategy will indeed provide some truly radical thinking designed to tackle the cultural and societal issues? Will she agree to establish a cross-party MSP working group on the issue, ahead of the strategy being published?

Aileen Campbell: The new strategy will be aimed at ensuring that we explore all options available to us, so that we can deliver a strategy that is cognisant of the new landscape that we face and have an enhanced understanding of the current challenges across the country. However, we will not put to one side the impact that "The Road to Recovery" has had—I outlined in my statement the fact that it has had an enormously positive impact on many aspects of life for those who have addiction challenges.

We certainly will not rule out any other innovative ideas. I set out one idea that has been taken forward by the Glasgow health and social care partnership, and I intimated in my statement that I intend to write to the United Kingdom Government. If that is something that Miles Briggs would like to support, so that we can get the powers here in Scotland to have bold, ambitious and exciting ways of treating substance misuse through a public health lens, I would certainly welcome that.

It should be recognised that, since 2008, we have put record funding into alcohol and drug partnerships, and we are committed to ensuring that we work with them on the refreshed approach. That does not ignore the fact that there are financial challenges across all of public life, but that is why £20 million has been made available to enable innovative models of work to deliver

improvements for the most vulnerable people in our society, and that is why we should welcome this opportunity to refresh our approach.

I look forward to working with MSPs across the chamber and will give consideration to an MSP working group.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): I, too, thank the minister for advance sight of her statement. Scotland has a long history of drug and alcohol misuse, which damages far too many lives, families and communities and costs billions of pounds every year. Drug deaths in Scotland are now the highest in Europe per head of population and, last year, alcohol-related deaths rose by 10 per cent. When the Government publishes its combined strategy next year, radical action will be required, but it will also have to be fully resourced, particularly support for those battling addiction. Will the minister say what assessment has been made of the impact of the 24 per cent cut in support for addiction services and of cuts in local government funding for such services?

Aileen Campbell: I thank Colin Smyth for his continued interest in the subject. I remind him that, since 2008, we have put record levels of investment—£689 million—into tackling problem alcohol and drug use. It is also important to remember that the total financial resources available in any given year are significantly higher than the contribution that is provided by the Scottish Government, as they include direct contributions from the national health service and other statutory partners. However, we recognise the financial challenges that exist in public life, which is why I reiterate that the £20 million is important and will enable us to develop new ways of approaching some particularly difficult and challenging cohorts of drug users in Scotland—those who unfortunately present in the drug death statistics that we see every year. That is why I have committed to refreshing our approach, because we need to do something that enables us to tackle that problem and that challenge head on.

There are particular reasons why there is a problem in Scotland. NHS Health Scotland did some analysis of what is happening in Scotland in the context of drug deaths in the here and now and pointed to economic and social policies of the 1970s and 1980s, which exacerbated feelings of isolation and neglect. Lessons should be learned, to ensure that the austerity policies that the current UK Government is shamelessly pursuing do not store up problems for 30 years' hence.

There are lots of ways in which we can improve services. That is why resources are important, as is engagement with front-line practitioners, to ensure that we have a strategy that is authentic and relevant and that effectively tackles the challenges that we have in Scotland.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests: I am a member of the management board of Moving On Inverclyde.

I welcome the minister's announcement of the new strategy and new funding. Will she say whether the new strategy will examine and seek to address how different statutory and non-statutory organisations work together to ensure that treatments are truly person centred and are regularly reviewed so that they remain appropriate?

Aileen Campbell: As I said in my statement, I met ADPs and integration joint boards today and discussed the challenges and issues at local level and how they impact on local planning and delivery. The discussion will continue to develop over the coming weeks and months and will help to inform the strategy.

The work on the strategy offers us an opportunity to join the dots more effectively, not just for the immediate, front-line treatment of drug addiction but so that we can have an impact on wider service delivery, with links to homelessness, employability and mental health provision.

On reviewing treatment, the Information Services Division is currently developing the drug and alcohol information system—DAISy. NHS Scotland is developing a monitoring and evaluation framework. Both pieces of work will enable us to get a bigger and better picture of the way in which addiction manifests itself across the country, and that evidence will enable us to take forward the best and most effective approaches to tackling addiction in Scotland.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): We now know that, according to the Scottish National Party Government, policies in Westminster some 40 or 50 years ago raised Scotland to the position of having the highest level of drug-related deaths in Europe; it has nothing to do with anything that the SNP has done over the past 10 years, even though drug-related deaths have doubled since 2006 and 80 per cent of those people were under 50.

The minister's statement focused on treatment, but what does the Scottish Government plan to invest to help to prevent substance misuse and poor relationships with alcohol?

Aileen Campbell: Brian Whittle does the research and analysis by NHS Health Scotland a real disservice—

Brian Whittle: It is a Government body.

Aileen Campbell: It is with no great happiness that we say that some drug deaths today are, in part, the result of policies that were pursued in the 1980s. That is the reality, and we would all do well

to listen and to reflect on the fact that economic policies in the 1980s have an impact on public policy and social policy in the here and now. That should be a lesson for the Conservative Party, which, in Westminster, continues to pursue harsh austerity measures—I make the point with no great satisfaction, as I said.

The Tories would do well to listen to the calls of not just the SNP but every other political party in this Parliament to halt the roll-out of universal credit and to end austerity policies, because all that such policies do is store up problems for the future—as the examples of the past show.

We will continue to do what we can to pick up the pieces and to support vulnerable people, who deserve to be seen through a public health lens and to have support services delivered to them in a holistic way so that they can go on to contribute to society.

Brian Whittle does a disservice to the research and analysis that others have undertaken, lending their expertise to us to enable us to develop a strategy that will help many people in Scotland.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): I could not give a toss about the party politics of this—[*Interruption.*]

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): That was unparliamentary language.

Neil Findlay: I could not give a toss about the party politics. Drug and alcohol addiction is one of the greatest issues that communities across Scotland—most notably the poorest communities that we all represent—face.

People are dying years before their time. The streets are awash with illegal drugs and organised criminals are growing fat on the profits of misery. Is it not time for a radical change in direction? If not, we will back here in another ten years with so many more sons and daughters having become a grim statistic as a result of our collective failure.

Aileen Campbell: That is why we have come to the chamber to engage on this. I am not somebody who shies away from engaging with other people, regardless of party politics. The reason why I want to take this refresh forward is because of the drug-related death statistics that have been published, because they are not just statistics; they represent individuals who have lost their lives, individual families who have suffered, loss of potential, and huge devastating blows to the communities those individuals came from. That is why I am focused on making sure that we get this strategy right, why we have £20 million extra going into services and why I will continue to focus my work on engaging with people who are constructive in their approach to creating a strategy that we can ensure delivers for those people who are in the greatest need of help.

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): I refer members to my entry in the register of interests. I am a registered mental health nurse who holds an honorary contract with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

As the minister set out in her statement, the proposal for a safer consumption facility fell recently. It was an ambitious, innovative proposal by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. I note that she has written to the UK Government seeking a change in the law to allow such a facility to proceed. If the UK Government refuses to act, will she request that the necessary powers be devolved to Scotland so that this Parliament can make the decision?

Aileen Campbell: Absolutely. We support Glasgow city health and social care partnership's proposal, particularly in the light of the increasing number of HIV cases in the city. However, as I mentioned in my statement and as Clare Haughey outlined, the law in Scotland does not allow us to proceed with the proposal. We are grateful to the Lord Advocate for providing advice on that. Drugs legislation is currently reserved and we are waiting to hear back from the UK Government before making any decisions. If we are unable to take the proposal forward, we will make the case that responsibility for drugs policy should rest with this Parliament.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): I thank the minister for early sight of her statement and for her reply to the previous question. She rightly identified the unacceptable number of drug-related deaths at the moment. There is currently an HIV outbreak in Glasgow, with 105 new cases identified since October. A large proportion of those presenting have a hepatitis C co-infection, which is a problem throughout Scotland. The enforced closure of the busiest sterile injection equipment supply facility in the country has led to a significant decrease in the number of clients accessing such equipment. The minister touched on the Lord Advocate's advice. It is clearly a health rather than a justice issue. Would she accept that, rather than refreshing something that is clearly failing, a radical overhaul is required, including consideration of decriminalisation?

Aileen Campbell: I appreciate the way in which John Finnie has articulated the issues. The HIV outbreak in Glasgow is a matter that gives me great concern. The needle exchange service closure is an on-going issue. Humza Yousaf and I are continuing our engagement with Network Rail and Glasgow city health and social care partnership to achieve a satisfactory solution to the issue.

John Finnie would do well to engage with some of the ADPs. Those with which I spoke earlier were at great pains to say that they did not believe

that the road to recovery strategy had failed and that we should not disregard its achievements. I outlined where there have been huge improvements throughout Scotland, and the ADPs were keen to make sure that we do not disregard that good work, which refreshed how we approach drug taking in Scotland. There is an opportunity for us to be bold and ambitious, but we have to be cognisant of the fact that improvements have been made through the strategy. We will continue to work through front-line practitioners with those who have lived and living experience on what more can be done to improve services throughout the country to ensure that people are at the heart of service design and delivery.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): The minister and I attended a very moving service on Thursday evening, organised by the Family Addiction Support Service, which was really a remembrance service for those who have died as a result of alcohol and drugs. The minister mentioned a £60 million fund. Will some of that be available to support families, as well as mental health services, homelessness services and so on?

Aileen Campbell: Like John Mason, I pay tribute to FASS for its work to support families across the city of Glasgow and beyond who are coping with the impact of addiction, and for its tribute at the service last week to those who have lost their lives.

John Mason rightly outlined the need to ensure that we engage with families. Part of the intention of the strategy is to ensure that we do not just listen to clinicians or practitioners but engage meaningfully with those with lived and living experience of addiction. We should also ensure that we engage with their families, who often have to deal with the consequences of the addiction or are left devastated by the impact on a loved one. We have engaged and continue to engage with organisations such as FASS, Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs and others that will be able to contribute to the development of the strategy.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): Does the minister accept that we cannot begin to build an effective strategy while her Government will not accept the failures of its administration? The Government defunded drug and alcohol services by a similar amount to that which it is presenting today as new money. On its watch, we saw a 23 per cent increase in drug deaths last year alone, making us the worst in Europe, and it continues to send people to prison instead of treatment for drugs possession. After 10 years, is this really the starting point that the minister would have chosen for her Government's new strategy?

Aileen Campbell: I reiterate that, since 2008, we have invested significantly—£689 million—in tackling problem alcohol and drug use. The problem is not as straightforward as the way that Alex Cole-Hamilton articulates it. The trend of rising drug-related deaths has been in evidence since 1996, so it is difficult to see how there is a direct correlation between funding levels and drug death trends.

Alex Cole-Hamilton would do well to recognise that, as I outlined in a previous response, the total financial resources available in any year is significantly higher, given additional contributions from health and other statutory partners, as well as the direct contribution from Government.

We look forward to engaging with parties across the chamber to develop our new strategy. We recognise the opportunity provided by the additional resource to ensure not only that we refresh our approach and are bold and ambitious, but that what we do delivers the impact that we need for this vulnerable group of people in Scotland.

Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): Will the minister outline how people with lived experience of substance abuse will be able to inform the new strategy?

Aileen Campbell: There is a good case for ensuring that we actively engage with those who have lived and living experience. That has been the hallmark of our partnership for action on drugs in Scotland group, which has been looking to tackle the issues around stigma.

We held a recovery community gathering in Glasgow in July, which was the first time that we had brought together recovery communities from across the country so that they could influence and have a direct input into the work that the Government is taking forward. That engagement will continue and we will continue to seek out ways in which the new strategy can reflect the voices of people with lived and living experience.

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Given the continuing public debate surrounding the efficacy of Scotland's methadone programme, will the minister confirm whether the new strategy will review the use of methadone in treating addiction?

Aileen Campbell: It is important that we do not characterise that as wholly negative. Replacement therapy is one approach that has allowed harm reduction to take place and people to have functioning lives. Families recognise the positive impact that replacement therapy has had on people who require support.

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): But methadone deaths are up.

Aileen Campbell: Members want me to ensure that there is direct engagement with people with lived and living experience so, although there is heckling from the Conservatives, I will continue to work and engage with people who are telling me about the positive impact that replacement therapy has had on their lives—by reducing harm in communities across the country, by reducing the criminality that other members have talked about and by enabling us to allow those who require support to embark on a journey of recovery when it is appropriate for them to do so.

Alex Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): I welcome the minister's statement and her commitment to cross-party working, which we must have on this issue. She is absolutely right to say that we cannot disregard the successes of certain programmes, and there have been very good examples of success up and down the country. However, there is a need for new thinking. I will suggest to the minister four areas, although there are many others—

The Presiding Officer: I am sorry, Mr Neil, but four areas sounds like a rather long question.

Alex Neil: I will mention nothing more than the headlines, Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer: Very briefly, please.

Alex Neil: First, we need to look at what more we can do to prevent children, in particular those who live in poorer communities, from becoming involved with drugs. Secondly, we need to evaluate the impact of the methadone programme and look at alternatives that have been tried in other countries. Thirdly, we need to do more in relation to prisoners. Finally, we need to do much more in poorer communities, because we all agree that there is a link between poverty and drug and alcohol abuse. We need to tackle the problem at source by reducing levels of poverty and deprivation.

We all need to do some new thinking in all those, and other, areas. [*Applause.*]

Aileen Campbell: I thank Alex Neil for making those points. We will continue to engage with him on the four headlines that he mentioned.

He mentioned the issue of children, which is important. We have continued to focus on ensuring that we support that vulnerable group of young people, as we do not want a life of substance abuse to be predetermined for them. We need to take a life-course approach to the issue.

I have set out some of the innovative thinking—which no member has asked about today—such as the seek, keep and treat approach, which involves assertive outreach to seek out people who are harder to reach and who cannot engage

with services because of certain barriers. It is important to keep them engaged, because that gives us the best chance of preventing a drug-related death. That approach is certainly bold and ambitious, but no member has, in their question, acknowledged that point or developed it further.

I mentioned NHS Health Scotland's analysis of drug-related deaths, which states that there is a huge link between drug misuse and poverty in Scotland. We will certainly look at poverty as an issue. It is interesting that Conservative members decided to clap when Alex Neil made that point. They should take a close look at some of the policies that their UK counterparts are carrying out in Westminster.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): Ten years!

Aileen Campbell: I hear Brian Whittle talking about 10 years. For how many years will he and his Government continue to pursue harsh austerity measures and consign generations of children across the whole of the UK, not just in Scotland, to poverty? How many problems is his party storing up for 30 years from now, and who will be left to pick up the pieces?

Equally Safe

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-09205, in the name of Angela Constance, on making Scotland equally safe.

14:50

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance): Violence against women and girls is one of the most devastating and fundamental violations of human rights. It has to stop, and we all have to take meaningful action to stop it.

This debate marks the annual 16 days of action to tackle gender-based violence around the world. The theme of this year's 16 days is leave no one behind, which I take to mean two things. First, no women or girls should endure any form of gender-based violence, and we need to ensure that we include every part of our society in our efforts to end such violence. Secondly, that we all, in this Parliament and in our society, have a responsibility to take action to end violence against women, and it is time for everyone to realise that we are collectively responsible for eradicating violence against women and girls and the underlying attitudes and inequalities that perpetuate that violence. We must work together and we must leave no one behind.

I want to make clear from the outset that it is men who must change their behaviour and their choices. Men must join the many women who are already taking action in this space to send a very clear message. In every space that men occupy, they must act to support women's equality and stand up to violence, harassment and abuse.

We have all been moved by the stories told through #MeToo on social media, which has prompted thousands of women to disclose that they too have been victims of sexual harassment or assault. I pay tribute to and acknowledge the bravery of those women and men who have raised their hands and said, "Me too." It is not easy and we cannot forget that there are many more who have not shared their experiences publicly. Each individual is entitled to deal with their own experience in their own way. If #MeToo has achieved anything, it is indeed to shine a spotlight on men's violence against women; it has emphasised that we cannot take our foot off the gas and it has brought home the reality that no institution is immune from the scourge of sexual harassment.

Tackling violence against women and girls is the role of every individual, every community and every institution in Scotland and the Scottish Government is committed to leading a collective

response and playing our part to make that happen. That is why, on Friday, we published a delivery plan to identify and implement the practical steps that will take us towards ending this violence for good. The delivery plan sets out 118 actions we intend to take from now to 2021 to ensure that we can make progress towards a Scotland where women and children live free from violence and abuse and the attitudes and inequalities that perpetuate them.

Our work in this area has a deliberate and decisive focus on prevention. That is why we will be running a number of campaigns, including on the new domestic abuse offence, as well as on sexual harassment and sexism. Feminist organisations such as Scottish Women's Aid, Rape Crisis Scotland, Engender, Close the Gap and Zero Tolerance rightly challenge us all to do more as well as to raise awareness and understanding across society.

Ensuring that our young people have the right attitudes and an understanding of consent is critical for the future. That is why we are expanding the Rape Crisis Scotland sexual violence prevention programme to all 32 local authorities in Scotland.

On Friday, I was delighted to visit St John Ogilvie high school in Hamilton, which is the first of eight schools that we will be supporting over the next few years to develop a holistic approach to tackling gender-based violence. It was fantastic to hear directly from the students how committed they are to these issues, and I believe that the school will blaze a trail, which I hope many others will follow.

We must ensure that we build on the work that we are doing to give our children and young people the best start in life. That is why the delivery plan has a strong focus on education for young people, on improving the experience of the justice system for children, and on strengthening links with our work on child protection. Just recently, I was privileged to meet a group of young people called the everyday heroes, who have been working closely with us to shape equally safe. Their recommendations for action will be published in early 2018 and I will be responding to them. They are fantastic young people and I encourage members across the chamber to engage with that group of young people, as their voices should be heard and their views listened to.

We need to harness the power of all our educational facilities and we must make sure that our further and higher education campuses are free of this violence. I want to take this moment to mention the tragic case of Emily Drouet. Just 18 years old and in her first year at university, she was found dead in her flat in March last year, having taken her own life. She was experiencing

domestic abuse by her partner. That serves to remind us that colleges and universities, like every other institution and community, have their share of men's violence against women.

We need to do more, and that is why we will work with universities and colleges to support them in using the learning from our equally safe in higher education project at the University of Strathclyde to ensure the safety of students from gendered violence and to embed better understanding of these issues in their curricula.

I pay tribute to Fiona Drouet, Emily's mother, who has campaigned, along with the National Union of Students, for universities to tackle these issues on campus and to provide better support for students. My colleague Shirley-Anne Somerville, the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, has offered to meet Fiona. I know that she will give careful consideration to the important matters that have been raised by that heartbreaking case.

Raising awareness and embedding understanding are important, but the bigger challenge is delivering a societal shift such that women no longer occupy a subordinate position to men. This Government has a strong track record. A gender-balanced cabinet, the establishment of an Advisory Council on Women and Girls and the introduction of legislation to lock in the gains on ensuring equal representation on public boards are just a few of the important steps that we are taking.

This is a matter of human rights that are enshrined within the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which states that we have a duty to provide women, on equal terms with men, with the right to participate in Government and in public office at all levels.

We take our responsibility to uphold those rights seriously. To do so demands action to ensure that women are properly represented in our political and public institutions and more widely in senior and decision-making positions. Of course, we know that we are not there yet in terms of equal representation. Just less than 35 per cent of members of the Scottish Parliament in this session and 30 per cent of MPs are women. At the current pace of change, it will be another 25 years before we reach the point at which 50 per cent of elected members in local government are women.

We all know that we have a lot more to do. That is why the delivery plan sets out a series of steps that we believe will help make progress towards advancing women's equality in a range of spaces—economic, civic, social and cultural.

We want women to feel safer in every space that they wish to inhabit. Part of doing that is about

holding men to account for their behaviour in real and online spaces. That is why we will work with local community safety partners to link equally safe to their work and hold a round-table meeting with experts to look at what more we can do to tackle the pernicious online abuse and misogyny that women often experience when using social media.

Prevention is vital if we are to reduce and ultimately end violence against women and girls, but we also need to act here and now to ensure that those who are experiencing violence and abuse get the help and support that they need.

We want to ensure that public services work together effectively to support victims and survivors and put the rights of victims and survivors at the heart of their approach. We recognise the important role that local specialist third-sector services play, which is why we are providing three years of funding for those organisations to enable them to plan for the future.

We are investing significant funding in tackling violence against women and girls. For this year, I have committed nearly £12 million from my portfolio to support services and tackle the underlying issues that create the conditions for violence. The £20 million that has been invested by my colleague the Cabinet Secretary for Justice over the past three years to strengthen the justice response to tackling violence against women has been used to good effect to reduce criminal court waiting times, strengthen advocacy support across the country for victims of sexual violence and develop the capacity of perpetrator programmes.

As I said at the outset, it is men who need to change their behaviour and their choices if we are to end violence against women and girls. If they do not do so, it is right that they receive a robust response from justice services. That is why we are strengthening the law on domestic abuse by making coercive and controlling behaviour a criminal offence, so that it reflects the reality of domestic abuse. We have already passed the Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Act 2016, which modernised the law on domestic and sexual abuse and created a specific offence of sharing private intimate images without consent.

We need to ensure that men who are willing to change their behaviour get the support that they need, so we will expand the Caledonian programme to ensure that male offenders can receive those interventions.

A lot has been done. We are doing important work in the area and I welcome the broad cross-party consensus on the agenda. However, there is much more to be done and we cannot rest until violence against women and girls is a thing of the

past. As Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the executive director of UN Women, once said,

“the price of no change is unacceptable.”

I am sure that we all concur with that. It has been thrown into sharp focus by recent events. The Government commits to moving forward and working tirelessly to ensure that every woman and girl in Scotland lives free from violence.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the global 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence; commends the many activists and organisations, both in Scotland and across the world, providing front-line support for survivors, raising awareness of the problem and working tirelessly to challenge the underlying attitudes and inequalities that perpetuate violence against women and girls; calls on men everywhere to stand shoulder to shoulder with women in sending a clear message that violence against women and girls is never acceptable; reaffirms its support for Equally Safe, Scotland’s strategy to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls and welcomes the publication of the Equally Safe delivery plan, and agrees that it is for every individual, community and institution to stand up to abuse and harassment, hold perpetrators to account for their behaviour and work together to build a Scotland where everyone can live equally safe.

15:01

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate and support the Scottish Government’s motion. I particularly like the line in the motion calling

“on men everywhere to stand shoulder to shoulder with women in sending a clear message that violence against women and girls is never acceptable”.

Certainly, this man stands shoulder to shoulder with everybody in the chamber on that.

Sunday marked the international day for the elimination of violence against women—an annual campaign that has run for more than 15 years. It also marked the start of 2017’s 16 days of activism against gender-based violence campaign. That is an opportunity for us as parliamentarians not only to increase public awareness but to take stock, evaluate progress and redouble our efforts. In so doing, we will no doubt hear many sobering statistics. We know, for example, that last year Police Scotland received on average more than 160 calls a day reporting domestic violence; that there has been a 66 per cent rise in the number of reported rapes and attempted rapes since 2010; and that almost 200 women and girls were forced into marriage in Scotland over a four-year period, with more than a third of those forced marriages taking place in my own city of Glasgow.

Those figures serve as a stark reminder of the scale of the problem that we face. In fact, incidences are likely much higher due to non-reporting. However, statistics tell only a small part

of the story. They cannot possibly convey the horror of being violently abused in your own home, the betrayal of being sexually assaulted by someone whom you know or the trauma of being forced into a marriage while you are still in school uniform. Survivors have shown tremendous strength and resilience, and I echo the thanks that the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities expressed to the activists and organisations that support them—Scottish Women’s Aid, Rape Crisis Scotland, Victim Support Scotland, Barnardo’s and many others.

The Scottish Conservatives stand with the Scottish and United Kingdom Governments as they work to eradicate gender-based violence at home and abroad. We know, for example, that

“One of the major challenges to efforts to prevent and end violence against women and girls worldwide is the substantial funding shortfall.”

That is why Department for International Development’s recent commitment to provide up to £12 million over three years to the United Nations trust fund in support of actions to eliminate violence against women and the Scottish Government’s additional £1 million for the equally safe strategy are particularly welcome. The additional UK aid, which was announced last week by our new Secretary of State for International Development, Penny Mordaunt, is expected to help some 750,000 women and girls around the world. The Prime Minister often talks about the good that Government can do; that, it seems to me, is a first-class example.

Also welcome was the news in October that the disclosure scheme for domestic abuse in Scotland—Clare’s law—has led to more than 900 people being told over the past two years that their partner has an abusive past. Ruth Davidson and my Scottish Conservative colleagues pushed hard for that scheme to be introduced north of the border after it was rolled out in England and Wales in 2014. That initiative is another piece in the jigsaw offering extra protection to women who are at risk of domestic violence, and it is positive to see it working so effectively.

However, as the cabinet secretary rightly said, there is much more to be done. The Scottish Government is rightly finding ways to tackle the scourge of gender-based violence, but that process is impeded if the agencies on the ground are ill-equipped to cope with increasing demand. The “Thematic Review of the Investigation and Prosecution of Sexual Crimes” raised a number of concerns in that regard, with victims of sexual violence variously reporting that the court system is “degrading and terrifying”, and that their ordeal in court was worse than the rape itself. The review found that, after taking the brave step to report the crime, a high number of victims

“disengage during the criminal justice process”.

That is not good enough, and Parliament must urgently monitor progress by the Crown Office in order to address such criticisms.

The theme for 2017’s campaign against gender-based violence is leave no one behind—an imperative to support those women and girls who are most vulnerable to gender-based violence, including ethnic minorities, those living with disabilities, migrants and refugees, and those in humanitarian crises as a result of conflict or natural disaster. It is concerning, therefore, that respondents to the consultation on the equally safe delivery plan feel that it has fallen short in relation to whom it should cover, including women and girls with additional vulnerabilities.

I make that point not to criticise or to condemn, but as a member of the Scottish Parliament for the Glasgow region, which is currently the only asylum dispersal area in Scotland. Last week, I met and spoke to the British Red Cross, which assisted more than 2,500 refugees and asylum seekers in Glasgow in 2016, some of whom are women who have experienced violence in their country of origin or on their journey to the UK. On arrival, their level of vulnerability can be heightened by intense difficulties in accessing services. Those are women who are very much at risk of exploitation and abuse, but the national framework to eliminate gender-based violence does not fully identify their additional vulnerabilities or adequately respond to them. The Scottish Government has recognised stakeholder feedback that the delivery plan needs to be improved in that area. Perhaps the cabinet secretary could shed further light on the issue when she winds up for the Government later this afternoon.

On female genital mutilation, too, the Scottish Government could—and, in our view, should—go further. Even though FGM has been explicitly illegal since 1985, there has never been a successful prosecution in Scotland. The national action plan on female genital mutilation commits to raising awareness of FGM among teachers and medical practitioners; to add to the national guidance for child protection; and for Police Scotland to issue internal guidance on so-called “honour-based violence”, which is a phrase that I do not like at all. Those are positive steps, and I welcome them, but why not go further, as the Scottish Conservatives have called for, and introduce court-ordered FGM protection orders, a mandatory reporting duty, lifelong anonymity for victims, a criminal offence of failing to protect one’s daughter, and not just ad hoc but statutory guidance for professionals? All those measures have been implemented south of the border. Why not here too?

It is fair to say that we have made good progress on tackling gender-based violence in recent years, but evidently we have further to go and there is more to be done yet. In that spirit, we support the Government's motion this afternoon.

15:08

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):

This afternoon's debate is important. I am pleased that it is taking place during the United Nations' 16 days of activism to end violence against women and girls.

Although the motion has a largely domestic context, the significance of this week reminds us of the global importance of the campaign and the plight that is faced by women and girls across the world who experience daily threats of violence and sexual exploitation. Gender-based violence is constant. In times of conflict and in times of peace, it will try to damage, destroy and demean women and girls. At the heart of it is inequality. Societies in which women and girls continue to be unequal in social, economic and political realms in which they are powerless, limited or restricted cannot fully challenge and change such a culture.

The 16 days of activism support the empowerment of women and girls and challenge the political leadership to take action. The voice from this Parliament must be clear and unequivocal that, although we are addressing the challenges at home, we do so in solidarity with all women and girls across the world. This year's theme—leave no one behind: end violence against women and girls—encapsulates that responsibility.

We believe that we live in a tolerant, inclusive society, and those are the values that we promote. However, the reality of our society is that gender inequality still exists in the workplace, in the home and in the worlds of sport and education. Such inequality in our society is a root for the growth of gender-based violence.

In recent years, we have seen increases in the reporting of rape, sexual assault and domestic violence. Almost 11,000 sexual offences were reported last year, which is a rise of 5 per cent on the previous year. I know that Police Scotland and other agencies have made significant efforts to support the reporting of those crimes, and that can be used as an argument or explanation for the increase. However, I fear that we are seeing a shift in the type of crime that is being committed, with a greater focus on intimate and personal crimes being committed against partners, friends and acquaintances who are overwhelmingly women, and many of those crimes are not reported.

As part of the 16 days of activism, Rape Crisis Scotland has been providing snapshots. Yesterday, it tweeted:

"On 9th October 2017, 246 people received support from local rape crisis centres."

This year, the Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre of Perth and Kinross held an exhibition to celebrate its 10th year. It included a fantastic exhibition called "Inside Outside", and both were informative, engaging, moving and ultimately hopeful. It showed the trauma of rape, sexual assault and sexual exploitation and the resilience and recovery that RASAC supports. Part of the group's work is in schools, challenging gender stereotypes and expectations, discussing consent and working to change the culture that young people are experiencing.

Last week, we heard the announcement of the chair of the expert group on preventing sexual offending among children and young people, with an emphasis on prevention. That welcome appointment provides a focus for a difficult discussion.

Alongside the research, people are working every day with children and young people to address these issues, and they need to be supported. I was pleased to hear the cabinet secretary talking about specific funding for work in schools.

Barnardo's Scotland has emphasised the need for children and young people of all ages to have access to high-quality education around health and wellbeing, including healthy relationships and gender equality. The review of personal and social education is on-going, and it gives us the opportunity to address gender inequality. Barnardo's, Children 1st and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children also make strong points about child sexual abuse and exploitation, which the cabinet secretary might wish to address.

The recent focus on exposing sexual harassment and assault in the film industry, the media and politics demonstrates the protectionism that justifies that type of behaviour. The resultant #MeToo social media campaign showed that such behaviour is widespread. The typically weaker position of women in the workplace, which leads to fears about position, employment and status if women speak out, indicates that we have some way to go to achieve equality.

We see international examples of other societies that are more equal in terms of gender challenging those norms at an early age. If anything, our society—largely, though not exclusively, through marketing and commercialisation—has increased gender identity expectations on our children and young people.

The emphasis is more on difference than it is on equality, and that underpins the power structures in which we live.

Equally safe is a welcome strategic direction to address those challenges. Recognising all forms of violence against women and girls offers a holistic approach to the problem. The action plan is welcome, but it must be properly resourced and widely disseminated and adopted. The work on domestic abuse is also welcome, and, as the bill progresses through the Parliament, I hope that we can strengthen it and address the availability of specialist courts so that women can access meaningful justice.

Nevertheless, there are concerns that the strategy is too focused on one area and needs to look more widely. Sexual exploitation is one area in which we could be bolder. My colleague Rhoda Grant has shown her commitment to tackling the issue and will talk more about the proposals that were in her member's bill during the previous parliamentary session. There is interest in the issue across the chamber, and that is welcome.

The briefing from Zero Tolerance expressed disappointment that the equally safe delivery plan does not set out clear actions for how Scotland would prevent all forms of commercial sexual exploitation, especially of vulnerable women and young girls. Zero Tolerance highlights that around half of the women who are involved became involved aged 18 or younger and that as many as 80 per cent of those women who are working in flats, saunas or parlours are not originally from the UK. I fear that those are forgotten women and that we do not do enough to disrupt the industry, which has clear links to human trafficking. Not enough support is provided for women who have language barriers, drug and alcohol addiction problems and mental health problems, and there is not enough support for the women who are looking to escape from that life.

I look forward to this afternoon's debate and the speeches from MSPs.

15:14

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): It is a privilege to speak in such an important debate.

I welcome the equally safe delivery plan, which was published last week. We are debating that plan during the global campaign for 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. Gender-based violence encompasses the whole continuum of violence that is perpetrated against women and girls, from sexual harassment to domestic abuse, from rape to sexual assault and from commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking for that purpose to so-called honour crimes.

The theme of this year's campaign is leave no one behind: end violence against women and girls. The year in which we can speak to and pursue the aims of that theme with no caveats and no whataboutery will be the year in which we know that society has truly acknowledged and understood the magnitude of men's violence against women and girls, and it will be the year in which we can move forward.

It is important to be clear that we are not there yet: we have not achieved gender equality, and violence against women and girls, wherever it is on the scale, is both a cause and a symptom of that inequality. There will not be a woman in or outside this place whose life has not been negatively affected by that in some way or another. It might not be all men, but it is all women.

The equally safe delivery plan is to be welcomed. It builds on successes that have already been achieved and on actions that are already under way, and it sets out 118 diverse and bold actions across four priority areas, which range from the expansion of Rape Crisis Scotland's sexual violence prevention programme in schools to the piloting of the equally safe employer accreditation scheme, which is aimed at tackling gender-based violence in the workplace.

I have spoken before in the chamber of my concerns about commercial sexual exploitation, and I reiterate my position that, as long as sexual access to women and girls can be bought and sold as though we were objects, there can be no real equality and no real social justice.

I was glad to read that, as part of the delivery plan, the Women's Support Project will deliver its challenging demand programme to raise awareness of commercial sexual exploitation and to build capacity in organisations to address the issue. I also welcome the Scottish Government's commitment in the plan to consider how it could enhance support for service providers that are supporting harm reduction and exit for those who are engaged in prostitution. At the same time, however, I am worried that the action points do not go nearly far enough and do not tackle the issue at its root cause, which is male demand.

Primary prevention is, rightly, a key priority of the strategy, which seeks to ensure that interventions are early and effective and that they maximise the safety of women and girls. However, when it comes to commercial sexual exploitation, I am sorry to say that the action points appear to fall a bit short of the mark. The focus in the delivery plan appears to be on supporting women in prostitution to exit

"to reduce the harms associated with this kind of violence"

rather than on preventing women from being exploited in the first place and tackling the root causes. Where the delivery plan refers to

“the issues that can lead to someone becoming exploited in this way”,

it feels a bit vague and non-committal. Most significantly, the delivery plan conspicuously fails to acknowledge the single root cause of commercial sexual exploitation, which is male demand.

Another priority of the delivery plan is to ensure that

“Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response”.

However, when it comes to commercial sexual exploitation, there is no clear action point under that priority. The Scottish Government is clear that commercial sexual exploitation is a form of violence against women, so the next logical step is, surely, to criminalise those who perpetrate that violence. Male demand—the root cause of commercial sexual exploitation—must be explicitly and robustly addressed. As long as it is legal to purchase sexual access to our bodies, men will continue to perpetrate that violence against women with impunity and our fight for real equality and justice will remain heavily compromised. If we do not act, we will not achieve our end goal of eradicating violence against women, we will not hold perpetrators of violence against women to account and we will not radically change attitudes towards women, which we all acknowledge is needed.

The Scottish Government recently commissioned the review “Evidence Assessment of the Impacts of the Criminalisation of the Purchase of Sex”, the results of which were inconclusive. In the absence of clear empirical evidence, we must be guided by what we deem to be right or wrong and by our own convictions on the issue. That point is made in the review, which states:

“Ultimately, the absence of conclusive evidence is likely to require decision-making based on political standpoint and consideration of the policy context and framework in which any potential intervention is required.”

If our political standpoint is that prostitution is a form of violence against women and girls, the next logical step is clear to me. In this place, we will not always get unambiguous and objective evidence that tells us what to do. Sometimes, we have to put our heads above the parapet and fight for what we simply believe to be the right thing.

15:20

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): I am, once again, pleased to speak in a debate to mark the

UNiTE campaign’s 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.

As something that transcends borders and cultures, gender-based violence is a global issue that affects millions of people every year. The horrific situations that millions of women and girls around the world find themselves in are almost too difficult to comprehend, which is why I am pleased that we can come together as MSPs to speak honestly about the issues that lie ahead in what can sometimes seem an insurmountable task.

This year’s theme—leave no one behind—hints at the scale of the global problem and reinforces the need to commit to a world that is free from violence for all women and girls and to reach those who are most underserved and marginalised in countries that are often blighted by war, natural disasters and a societal attitude towards women that can render them socially and economically vulnerable.

Data from a survey that was carried out in 87 countries between 2005 and 2016 showed that 19 per cent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 had experienced physical or sexual violence by a partner in the 12 months prior to the survey. Female genital mutilation, too, remains a global problem. The practice has declined by 24 per cent since around 2000, but, in countries where it remains prevalent, it is estimated that more than one in three girls aged between 15 and 19 still undergoes that unnecessary procedure.

I am pleased that extra UK aid was announced at the weekend, which will assist 750,000 women and girls over the next three years by increasing access to crucial services such as legal assistance, healthcare and counselling. I also welcome the UK’s push to eradicate gender-based violence through its 127 programmes to tackle such abuse in its many forms, through prevention of and response to domestic violence, acid attacks, FGM and child, early and forced marriage. I am proud that the UK Government is playing a leading role in tackling those issues around the world. It is only by raising awareness and taking serious action that we will continue to make progress against gender-based violence.

Domestically, there is still a perpetual problem to deal with, and I fully support the Scottish Government as it works to eradicate violence against women and girls. I welcome the additional £1 million of funding that has been announced for the equally safe budget as a means of teaching schoolchildren the importance of consent and healthy relationships and creating consistency across our local authorities as Rape Crisis Scotland’s sexual violence programme is rolled out further.

There are worrying trends in domestic violence. The latest statistics show that there has been a 1 per cent rise in the number of incidents to nearly 59,900 in 2016-17. In addition, nearly 2,000 rapes or attempted rapes were reported to the police in Scotland last year, which represented a 4 per cent rise from the previous year and a 66 per cent rise from 2010-11. Although I recognise that that is down to an increase in reporting, I note with concern the need for continued improvement in access to support services.

I was, of course, pleased that Archway Glasgow recently received a funding boost of £445,000, which will allow the sexual assault referral clinic to expand its opening hours until midnight five days a week, but I would like to highlight the scope that exists for the model to be replicated across the country. When Archway was opened, almost a decade ago, it was signalled as the first of many clinics across Scotland that would give victims access to a one-stop shop where all the services that were needed could be easily accessed. I urge the Scottish Government to look at rolling that model out further.

Furthermore, when it comes to FGM—an issue that is believed to affect 170,000 girls across the UK—although I will always support a consensual approach, it is important that we work together and improve how we respond to and prevent the practice in our country. No one wants to see that barbaric practice take place in Scotland. I repeat the comments that I made back in a debate on FGM in February. I urge the Scottish Government to take on board calls for initiatives that already take place in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, including statutory reporting for professionals, protection orders and the creation of a new criminal offence for parents and guardians who tolerate and facilitate FGM.

In closing, I will draw attention to some of the local initiatives in my area that help to drive greater public understanding and generate a national conversation. In Glasgow, supporters attending a Glasgow Warriors match at Scotstoun next month will be invited to sign the white ribbon Scotland pledge as part of the city's 16 days of activism. That request will, no doubt, give food for thought to thousands of people who otherwise may never have heard about the 16 days campaign.

There is a lot of positive and decisive work being done both locally and nationally as we bid to eradicate gender-based violence. I warmly welcome the Scottish Government's extra funding and the honest discussions and speeches that we have heard and will hear from members today. Gender-based violence is not an easy subject, but I am pleased that it has been brought to the

chamber for debate today and I hope that we will all continue to tackle it head on.

15:26

Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): As a woman, it is my right, in terms of entitlement and morality, that I should not be subjected to violence, domestic abuse, rape, sexual assault, commercial sexual exploitation or honour-based violence—just as that is the right of the one in three women worldwide who are sexually or physically assaulted over their lifetime.

The 16 days of activism against gender-based violence ends on human rights day for a reason, which is that women are every bit as human and as deserving of respect and equal treatment. Women deserve rights: the right to dignity, the right to protection and the right to the freedoms to believe, to learn, to express, to move and to marry whom they please. Until women have those freedoms in every community across the planet, we will continue to recognise the 16 days campaign every year.

Women are human and they are entitled to the fundamental freedoms inherent to all humanity. That may be stating the obvious, but globally, almost 40 per cent of all murders of women are committed by male partners. In Scotland, just over 50 per cent of the female victims of homicide were killed by their partner or ex-partner, while that was true for just 6 per cent of male victims. That sobering figure highlights the fact that Scotland is not exempt from violence against women or the scourge of gender-based abuse.

One of the real strengths of the 16 days campaign is that it starts with local activism—it could start in a small village in rural Scotland—and can be discussed in the Scottish Parliament, yet we join with activists across the world to say that gender-based violence is not inevitable, but is abnormal, and we condemn it.

In 1999—eight years after the first 16 days of activism campaign was launched in 1991—Kofi Annan commented:

“Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation. And it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development, and peace.”

I am glad that the Scottish Parliament is joining women across the planet to condemn the trellis of inequality on which grows the poisonous, suffocating ivy of violence and abuse, beneath which men shelter comfortably, knowing that their deeds will go unpunished, but women die at the hands of their partners.

Like other members, I utterly condemn the cultural and community norms that ascribe lower status to women and which make violence acceptable. I condemn the domestic partners who believe that their abuse is justified and okay because everybody else does it, because they could not control themselves or because of inebriation and drug use. I condemn the way that we continue to fail women in need because help is not there when it is desperately needed, either because the public justice system across the world is broken, corrupt and dysfunctional or because women do not believe that it will make a jot of difference if they speak up. What is worse than a person knowing that they need help, yet knowing that, if they ask for help, it will not come?

For every woman whose voice we have heard during the #MeToo campaign, and for every woman whose story we have read with great gratitude for their bravery in speaking up, there are hundreds of thousands more who live in fear or who live with the consequences of violence. That violence is for one reason: it is because they are women. The acts of violence differ, but, at the end of the day, the campaign is about the women whose only crime is to be born a woman in a world that still sees fit to abuse and attack them.

I pay tribute to the invincible Ash Denham for her fearless definition of prostitution as violence against women and her unswerving determination to end commercial sexual exploitation. I pay tribute to Rhoda Grant and to other MSPs, including Ruth Maguire, who have continued to pursue that campaign and who will pursue it until they have succeeded in protecting the people whom Claire Baker called the “forgotten women”. I fully agree with Ruth Maguire that caring for women who exit the sexual exploitation industry is fundamentally important, but that does not deal with the core problem. We are raising that problem today, we have raised it in every day of the 16 days campaign, and we will raise it every single day until we have succeeded in solving it. The real problem is male violence against women. It must end, but it will end only if we identify the core problem. I join with women across the world today to say that we utterly condemn the violence that is perpetrated.

15:32

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

The debate is an annual event that marks the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. Violence against women is rooted in women's inequality. Every time that we take a step to counter that inequality, it feels like a new front opens up. This year we have been faced with revelations from every walk of life of the sexual harassment of women in the workplace. The

practice is used by some men to undermine women and to put women in their place—one where they cannot progress in their career without providing sexual favours and where they should always remain submissive to men.

Until a couple of months ago, a woman who spoke out about harassment would have been quickly denounced. Her career would have been over and she would have been marked as a trouble maker or a prude. It may be a step forward that that is no longer the case, but the revelations show vividly the despicable behaviour that has gone unchallenged for far too long. We need true equality to ensure that that cannot happen to another woman, and the change in culture must be led by men as well as by women. The vast majority of men are horrified by such behaviour, and they must speak out now. Sexual abuse is not a woman's problem; it is a problem with some men.

Our society must stop giving out mixed messages. We must stand for total equality and have zero tolerance for all aspects of violence against women. It is surely a mixed message to say that it is okay for men to buy a woman in prostitution but not okay for men to demand sexual favours to enhance a woman's career. Both are wrong and both should not be tolerated. That stark inequality demeans women. Until we put it right, we will continue to be plagued by violence against women, which is a symptom of an unequal society.

When we look at other countries, it is clear that those that prohibit the purchase of sex create more equal societies. Those societies have equal pay and equal maternity and paternity leave, and are much fairer societies because of that. Basic human respect for our fellow humans breeds kinder societies and the willingness to work together for the greater good.

It is no coincidence that domestic abuse starts with financial control. That is followed by degrading behaviour and physical and sexual violence. It is a process that perpetrators use to gain control of their victim. As a society, we must not tolerate that in any guise. No human should have control over another human, and we must build fair and respectful societies.

In Scotland, we have prided ourselves on our measures to combat violence against women—indeed, we are legislating again, this time on coercive control—but we still have a long way to go. Ireland—north and south—has made the purchase of sex illegal, and that has led to more trafficking of women to Scotland to feed prostitution. We warned of that at the time.

We need to deal with prostitution in a way that has equality at its core. Currently, our laws

penalise those who are forced into prostitution and do nothing whatsoever to protect them. They are penalised and criminalised, while those who feed the industry walk away scot free. It is simply not good enough only to say that prostitution is wrong and a form of violence against women and to do absolutely nothing at all to stop it.

The equally safe strategy makes it clear that violence against women includes commercial sexual exploitation, which includes prostitution, lap dancing, stripping, pornography and trafficking. The party policy of a majority of the members of the Scottish Parliament is to criminalise those who buy sex and to decriminalise those who sell sex. Prostitution feeds off poverty, which is growing. Poverty makes people vulnerable, and they struggle to survive. Prostitution also feeds off abuse. It is no coincidence that those who work with survivors of childhood sexual abuse find that many of those survivors have also been prostituted. Their treatment as an object for someone else's gratification in their childhood leads them into the same as an adult.

Some argue that every aspect of prostitution should be decriminalised and that pimps and brothel keepers should be free to abuse without sanction. If prostitution were legalised, would it be okay for a careers adviser to recommend it as a job? Would it be okay to sanction somebody if they turned down work as a prostitute?

It is predominantly women who are exploited, but some men are, too. However, it is clear that it is always men who do the exploiting. I ask every member to consider whether prostitution is okay for them, their parents, their partner or their children, and to do something that I heard Linda Thompson from the Women's Support Project tell an audience to do, which really brought the reality of prostitution home to me. She told us all that, when we left that gathering, we should take note of the next 10 men we met. She said, "What would it take for you to sell sex to them? How desperate would you need to be? What price would you accept? Now tell me that it is a choice—a simple transaction between buyer and seller. Frankly, if it is not good enough for you and yours, it is not good enough for anyone."

15:38

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): Like many other members, I am very pleased to speak in the debate. As Rhoda Grant said, it calls for men to speak out. As Ruth Maguire said, all men may not be affected by the subject that we are talking about, but all women and girls certainly are. Therefore, I am very happy to lend support to the cabinet secretary's motion.

The motion mentions

"the global 16 Days of Activism".

It is quite clear that the problems that colleagues have alluded to are worldwide ones.

We are talking about gender-based violence. I almost feel that I should start every speech of this nature by apologising for my gender. However, it is important that men speak out.

I welcome the publication of the Scottish Government's delivery plan, which will go some way towards addressing underlying attitudes. However, a lot of work still requires to be done, of course.

I am very grateful to the various organisations for their briefings. Children 1st has been quoted a couple of times. It talked about the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill, to which my colleague Rhoda Grant referred. I am a member of the Justice Committee and see that bill as one way in which we will make things a little better. Children 1st has said that that bill

"represents a vital step forward in tackling gender-based violence and in recognising the impact of this type of violence on children."

Of course, it is not simply the spouse or partner who is affected by such violence, but the entire household, and it can often go beyond that. A lot of good work has been undertaken by the Scottish Government and by the third sector. Many members have heard me speak in such debates before, and my point of reference is the police service in the mid-1970s. My word, what a transformation we have seen—and all for the good. The approach is so much better, and that is because organisations now recognise the far-reaching impact of violence against women and girls.

That transformation is continuing. There are a number of subjects that some of us would not have felt comfortable talking about in days past, but the exposure of issues such as female genital mutilation and the growing awareness of the signs of human trafficking have changed that. If I write it down, I always put heavy inverted commas around the phrase "honour-based violence", because I find it a deeply offensive term, but some people use it as if adding in a couple of words offsets the word "violence".

The focus has to be on prevention, protection and recovery, and professional training is key to that. I want to mention—not for the first time—judicial training, or the lack thereof. I understand that the voluntary element of that training is part of the problem. It is crucial for the judiciary to understand the relationship between the criminal law and the civil law, and how closely they interrelate. We all talk about access to justice and how justice should be there for the victims of domestic violence, and the mere involvement of

the criminal justice system or civil legal system should not further victimise those individuals.

We talk about women and girls, but children of both genders are affected. There are some structural and systemic problems in that regard. A number of colleagues have talked about the role that education plays, particularly in relation to respect. We can achieve a lot by treating everyone with respect, without qualification and without having to describe that further. Key to that is the teaching of consent and the growing awareness that consent is being disregarded. Of course, such education has to be age appropriate, but the issue must be addressed. We cannot have any part of the Highlands and Islands, or any other area, where the issue is not tackled head on, because the problems are universal.

The plan highlights the children's rights and wellbeing impact assessment. That is most welcome because, as others have said, we need an evidence-based approach to decision making. I also welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to consider incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. I should perhaps declare an interest in that regard, as I have proposed a member's bill—the children (equal protection from assault) (Scotland) bill—to give children the same protection that we would have. I therefore welcome the Scottish Government's comments.

It is essential that children's rights are fully respected. There was legislation last year on the sharing of images, and it is important that we understand that technology advances and that the ways in which people visit violence or intimidation on others have changed.

In relation to our on-going work on the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill, a phrase in the stage 1 report jumped out at me. It referred to

“the powerful and moving private testimony”

of the people who gave evidence on coercive behaviour. It can be a challenge for people to understand that, and I come back to what I said about the judiciary and the legal people, who need to understand that something as seemingly well-meaning as a children's access visit can be used to continue and perpetrate abuse. That is well documented. Casework also records the trauma that is visited thereafter on grandparents who seek to mediate in those circumstances.

A lot of positive things are happening. Reference has been made to the growing reporting of crimes against women. Going back to my comments about policing in the 1970s, I reiterate that there is a recognition that the police have different approaches now, that there is support in place and that third sector organisations are there to support people who come forward.

Access to justice is hugely important, and I hope that our discussion about the issue today takes things one stage forward.

15:44

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): I remind members that before my election to the Scottish Parliament I was a member of the ministerial task force on violence against women and girls and helped to author parts of “Equally Safe”, the national strategy that we are debating today.

I thank the Government for an excellent motion. I very much support the necessarily gendered nature of this debate, and I am proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with Adam Tomkins and other men who have given excellent speeches today, as allies in the global struggle against violence against women and girls.

In January 2015, the world lost Dr Carl Djerassi, a lifelong feminist and inventor of the contraceptive pill. I have mentioned him in the chamber before; it was my pleasure to spend an afternoon with him when he got his honorary degree from the University of Aberdeen. I was astonished to learn that, while he was conducting his research during the 1950s, prior to the release of Enavid, the first iteration of the pill, he came under pressure from politicians and senior managers to develop an oral contraceptive for men. Such was the recognition of what the pill could do for the liberation of women, by putting family planning under women's control for the first time, that the visceral reaction from the patriarchy was to stop his work.

That is an example of the control that men have sought to exert over women for time immemorial. There is a spectrum of control, which starts with cultural constraints on women that men fight to retain and ends with the worst forms of violence, about which we have heard today.

We live in more enlightened times, but we are still learning how far we must still travel if we are to break up that spectrum of control. In the year that has elapsed since the 2016 international day for the elimination of violence against women, new frontiers of our struggle have emerged. One such frontier was recently laid bare to us in the revelations that came out of Hollywood about the sexually exploitative behaviour of several movie moguls, who, to put it simply, used their power and status to abuse women.

Allegations of that nature have also fallen closer to home. It is vital that we in the Scottish Parliament recognise the manifestations of the spectrum that have been revealed in the shadows of this chamber. I welcome the Parliament's proactive response to allegations of harassment,

just as I welcome the tenets and aspirations of “Equally Safe”. We might not be talking about physical violence in the workplace in that context, but harassment is a tool of coercive control, abuse and exploitation, and as such should be considered in the context of this debate.

Such abuse is widespread. Some 23 per cent of women who were surveyed by Amnesty International said that they had experienced online abuse and harassment at least once, and nearly half said that the experience made them feel at physical risk. In 2014-15, Police Scotland recorded close to 60,000 incidents of domestic abuse. That is an astonishing and heartbreaking figure.

The problem shows no sign of relenting. Just last week, UN secretary general António Guterres said:

“Every woman and every girl has the right to a life free of violence. Yet this rupture of human rights occurs in a variety of ways in every community, particularly affecting those who are most marginalized and vulnerable.”

The value of the support services for victims that are provided by organisations such as Scottish Women’s Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland, with which I have worked for many years, is undeniable. It is vital that funding for those organisations continues, despite tightening budgets across the public and voluntary sectors. Such organisations are undoubtedly a key part of our response to violence against women and girls.

We need to change our culture and the way in which we bring up our children. We need to teach young people from an early age about respectful, appropriate relationships, and we need to model positive behaviour.

It is small wonder that, for many years, a range of stakeholders have challenged several domestic norms. They are right to point out that we will forever remain adrift of our aspirations to end violence against women if we legitimise the use of any kind of violence in the home. I am therefore heartily glad that in the year that has passed since we last debated the issue, an insurmountable majority has been forged across this Parliament for the ending of physical punishment of children in this country, through John Finnie’s proposed member’s bill.

As I have said in the past, we need a dual focus in this agenda. I will use the remainder of my remarks to focus on the end game, which is almost as important as ending violence itself—that is, trauma recovery. Adverse childhood experiences, and particularly the experiencing or witnessing of domestic violence, can have lifelong effects that can reduce life opportunities. If we can get trauma recovery right, we can build resilience and prevent the escalation of those problems to negative social outcomes. Article 39 of the UN

Convention on the Rights of the Child lays out the right of every child to recover, but we are a considerable distance from achieving that for all too many of our children.

An NSPCC report entitled “The Right to Recover” revealed that 15 of 17 Scottish local authorities analysed had no dedicated trauma recovery services for the under-fives. We cannot turn that reality around overnight, but we can look to models of best practice, such as the Barnhaus pilot, implemented by Children 1st in Edinburgh, which delivers trauma recovery and allows child witnesses to give witness testimony without being retraumatised. Most importantly, we can ensure that all our universal services deliver an approach that is trauma informed, with basic continuing professional development for existing staff on the impact of trauma on young lives.

By bookending that terrible reality in our culture in that way, we can begin to bring about meaningful and lasting progress towards the eradication of violence against women and children in our society. I am grateful for the Scottish Government’s efforts to foster consensus in its motion and it can be assured of our support tonight.

15:51

Ash Denham (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP): Over the past few months, countless women have come forward with their stories of gender-based harassment or violence. To our horror, but not to our surprise, women from Hollywood to Holyrood have spoken out about deep-seated power imbalances and attitudes that have induced assault, abuse, harassment and rape. It felt, and it still feels, as if we are on the cusp of a watershed moment: that society has at last been provoked enough—perhaps disturbed enough—to collectively confront those profound societal failings that have given rise to gender-based violence. I certainly hope so, but each of us must keep speaking up and keep the spotlight on the fact that the vast majority of violent crime victims are women, the vast majority of domestic abuse victims are women and the vast majority of those trafficked for sex are women. In speaking up and pushing towards a true watershed moment, we must act according to the theme of this year’s 16 days of activism campaign and leave no one behind.

I welcome the Scottish Government’s equally safe strategy and delivery plan because it attempts to tackle everything from changing and shaping attitudes through education, to ending social, cultural, economic and political imbalances faced by women, to enhancing health, justice and housing services in an effort to leave no woman or child behind. For example, £1 million in additional

funding has been provided to teach schoolchildren about consent. In addition, Rape Crisis Scotland's sexual violence prevention programme will be rolled out to a further 11 local authorities, and an equally safe accreditation scheme will be available for employers to become equipped to inhibit gender-based violence in the workforce. Those are steps towards solutions aimed at preventing violence against women and girls.

However, in tackling gender-based violence, we must continue to target the behaviour of the perpetrators. Last year, there were at least 150 victims of human trafficking in Scotland, about half of whom were women. Of those women, 92 per cent were trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. Today, in Edinburgh alone, according to a Google search, 138 women are available to purchase sex from and some can be delivered like a pizza to your door. However, women and girls are not commodities to be bought or sold, used and discarded.

A friend of mine, Evon Idahosa, works to eradicate sex trafficking in her home state of Edo in Nigeria, which is a source country for many of the women who are sex trafficked into Europe and into Scotland. She alerted me to a recent story involving Nigerian girls. She works in the area of trafficking because she believes, as I do, that those girls deserve better than the abuse, rape, violence and even murder that awaits them at the hands of traffickers, pimps and punters if they make the journey across the desert. The story is about 26 girls aged between 14 and 18 who were found dead, floating on a boat off the coast of Italy, having been sexually assaulted. I want us to remember those girls. We only know the names of two of them, but we know that another two were pregnant.

Twenty six is the size of a school class and it is almost the number of seats in one part of the chamber. That is 26 children—children with parents, siblings, talents and dreams of the life that they might have—found dead on a boat; on a silent, floating coffin in the Mediterranean. Imagine it. Imagine being sold to traffickers at just 14 years old. Imagine your terror as you realise that you may never see your home and family again. Imagine having to watch and listen as others are beaten and raped in front of you and knowing that there is no escape and you are likely to be next. Imagine being forcibly loaded on to an unsuitable boat in rough seas and then feeling the boat capsize and the water rush in. Imagine hearing the screams as the water crashes over you.

Trafficked girls are routinely treated like that—we know that—because they are seen as less than human. Girls like those are trafficked and prostituted so that their bodies can be used for the

gratification of not just one man but many men, or any number of men who can afford to pay.

Let us stop talking about the girls—what girls wear, what girls drink, what girls should and should not do—and instead start talking about the men. Let us talk about the men who rape, the men who hit and the men who buy underage girls to have sex with. Let us turn the focus on to men who abuse and men who are violent—not all men, but those men. Let us send a message to those men that those behaviours are not acceptable. Let us send the message that enough is enough, and that we are sick and tired of clearing away the dead bodies of girls as if they are less than human, as if they do not matter, as if any of this is somehow inevitable or excusable and as if we as a society will not be complicit if we keep those secrets and look the other way. Those girls were on that boat because the demand for young flesh exists in Europe and in Scotland. As long as a man can pay to abuse women and children with no threat of consequence, the cycle of abuse, in which women have neither equal safety nor equal protection, will continue, and the bodies will continue to pile up.

Our watershed moment is within our grasp. For the sake of so many women and children who need our support and our action, we cannot let it pass by. Let us leave no one behind. For the sake of the 26 dead girls on a boat and the many, many dead girls and women in Scotland, let us look seriously at challenging demand.

15:57

Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con): The debate is an important one. I hardly need say that, particularly following my colleague Ash Denham's speech. As the British deputy high commissioner in Kolkata, Bruce Bucknell, said at the recent international conference on anti-human trafficking initiatives, it is disappointing that we still have to discuss these issues in the year 2017. We are talking about crimes that should have been confined to the dustbin of history long ago.

As we have heard, significant UK Government action and investment has gone into tackling gender-based violence across the world. The Department for International Development has in place 127 programmes—almost double the number that it had in 2012—that tackle issues such as domestic violence, acid attacks and female genital mutilation.

The prevalence of physical and sexual violence is still high. Around one in five women in 87 countries worldwide experienced the problem in the 12 months prior to a study that was carried out in 2016. Today there are practices and attitudes across the world—including in our own country,

sadly—that can lead to violence against women. However, positive work is taking place to change some of those attitudes and behaviours. For example, UK aid is contributing to the raising voices programme in Uganda, which seeks to change the stigma, discrimination and attitudes around the acceptability of violence. Within communities that have benefited from the programme, women are now reportedly 52 per cent less likely to experience physical violence.

In spite of the UK taking a leading role in the world, we continue to face problems in dealing with the same type of violence here. As mentioned by my colleague Adam Tomkins, reports of domestic violence, rape and attempted rape have been rising in Scotland in recent years. Whether or not the rise in reported cases is down to victims' increased confidence in coming forward, the fact is that those types of crimes continue to occur. Let us hope that changing attitudes and behaviours will lead to a reduction in violence towards women as we move forward.

Some of these crimes can be complex and varied, and further measures may be required to deal with them. For example, it is understood that 170,000 women in the UK have undergone FGM, which is a particularly barbaric procedure with specific cultural roots. As the UK Government has recognised, that type of violence requires its own approach, which includes legislative change to offer effective tools for victims, community leaders and medical practitioners. My Scottish Conservative colleagues have today highlighted some of the benefits of those legislative improvements, which I also discussed in a debate on FGM at the beginning of the year.

In some ways, Scotland may lag behind the rest of the UK in combating that horrific practice. The UK Government has taken legislative steps to provide protection for girls who are potentially at risk from suffering from the procedure, and it is coming down hard on those who do not offer girls adequate protection or who actively seek to ignore the illegality of the practice.

Organisations such as Shakti Women's Aid, which is based in Edinburgh and has outreach staff across Scotland, work with communities where women are at greater risk of FGM or forced marriage, and with those who have already experienced it. I welcome that work and thank the organisation for it, but Scotland's justice system could do more to offer protection. That is why the Scottish Conservatives have today proposed possible ideas for reform, including court protection orders for victims and potential victims, mandatory reporting for professionals, and a new criminal offence of failing to protect daughters, among other proposals.

The Government announcement of extra funding is to be welcomed, but it should go hand in hand with addressing other types of crimes against women that are happening in Scotland, where tools to deal with the problem may be significantly lacking. I urge the Government to reflect on those proposals so that those who have suffered from unacceptable violence here are not left behind.

16:02

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): It is commendable that we are having this debate during the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. The Scottish Government has shown its commitment to safety for women and girls in Scotland through the equally safe plan and through investment in front-line services for those who have been affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence. However, combating gendered violence and inequality goes beyond any one Government portfolio—it cuts across many portfolios.

The mainstreaming of gender issues is key to protecting women and girls from abuse. One key way of mainstreaming the fight against gender-based violence is to link it with our education policies, and that is the focus of my contribution. Early years and education policies are crucial to preventing violence before it happens. I am happy to note that one of the main priorities in the “Equally Safe” document is that

“Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence.”

One of the most effective ways to prevent violent, unequal relationships is to explicitly and clearly teach children and young people how to develop healthy relationships with one another. That issue was raised recently in the Education and Skills Committee, which was looking at the personal and social education review that is being conducted by the Scottish Government. I am pleased to see that the PSE review is part of the equally safe delivery plan. The action point that I highlighted notes that the PSE review will allow the Government to better consider how consent is taught in the early years and in primary and secondary schools.

I believe that the PSE and sex education that we teach should go beyond the concept of mere consent. In considering young people's awareness, we should be discussing enthusiastic consent. In recent years, the discussion around sexual health has moved on to the idea of enthusiastic consent, which is about promoting a healthy, positive and open conversation. Enthusiastic communication should be present from the start of a relationship. In order for us to adopt that approach, in addition to promoting a

message of violence prevention, I would like more work to be done on a message of healthy relationship promotion, and young people and their parents must be involved in shaping the messages around that.

I am afraid to say that things are taking an unhealthy turn. In what world is it okay for boys to coerce girls into sending them nude photographs on Snapchat, Instagram or other social media? In what world is it okay for boys to send unsolicited images of their genitals to girls? When did this behaviour become normal? I am not sure, but in speaking to many young people about this, I am told that it is not just common—it is becoming normal behaviour. How does that engender healthy, respectful relationships? I recently met Barnardo's, which also contributed to the equally safe plan through the consultation. Barnardo's has produced a report with the centre for youth and criminal justice called "Over the Internet, Under the Radar".

We must recognise that online abuse needs direct action and I am going to call on online platforms to do considerably more to stop sanctioning that abuse and to work with law enforcement. The co-operation of social media platforms with police is nowhere near good enough—I have personal experience of that. I say to those platforms: stop protecting abusers by not releasing the information that you hold on the IP addresses of your users when that information is asked for in a police investigation.

This issue is close to my heart. I have been working with Young Scot and local colleges to promote awareness of online safety for young people, particularly around coercion and harassment in relation to sharing images online and the consequences of that behaviour. Today, I gave the green light to two drama scripts written by students of television production at North East Scotland College on issues around consent for image sharing and sexting. The scripts will be used by Young Scot in its "Digi, Aye?" campaign, which raises awareness around social media, consent, sexting and image sharing. These will be films by young people, for young people, getting messages on consent out on a platform that is used by young people. The method of messaging is as important as the messages and young people should be fully involved in the production of those messages if they are to be effective.

In my campaigning on this issue, I too have seen what Barnardo's has concluded, which is that there is inconsistent and unsure handling of the subject of online sexual violence, not least by parents who are struggling to know how to engage with their children on the issue. Equally safe and the PSE review should be sure to particularly consider how online relationships may require

different responses from and the further education of those working in our schools and public services. We must also support parents, who are key influencers—and, to be honest, need to know what they are dealing with and how best to handle it.

Just as our actions to combat gendered violence should not be isolated to one policy area, health and wellbeing education should not be isolated to one class or to one subject area. Those lessons should not exist in isolation. Schools should be able to respond effectively to incidents, such as those that arise around sexting. That means taking a "no wrong door" approach to teaching health and wellbeing in schools. A child should know that whichever staff member they choose to communicate with on these issues, that person will know how to support them.

I am heartened to see the connections being made with early years and education policies in the equally safe delivery plan. The fight against gendered violence and the promotion of positive messages around relationships must start in our schools from an early age.

16:08

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): I join the cabinet secretary in recognising all the many women and girls who have stood up against gender-based violence and encouraged others to come forward. Women across the globe have been standing up against the endemic nature of the violence against them, which we know cuts across socioeconomic backgrounds, continents and cultures. We also know that women from ethnic backgrounds and those with a disability are at particular risk. Domestic abuse, female genital mutilation, rape, child marriage, so-called honour killings—violence against women is a global problem and it requires a global perspective, as others have said.

Ntonya Sande's first year as a teenager would also be her first year of married life. Up to the moment that water swept away her parents' field in a district of Malawi, they had been scraping a living together. When a young man came to their door and asked for the 13-year-old's hand in marriage, the weather had changed everything for the family. There was not enough food to feed every mouth at the table. Ntonya gave birth to her daughter before she was aged 14. Child marriage is a global issue. Millions of girls are forced into child marriage. Millions of girls miss out on their education and their lives because of it. Iraq recently dropped plans to allow girls aged 9 to marry. Across the world, there is a big message to be received.

As others have said, it is arguable that the recent revelations on the sexual conduct of men represent a golden opportunity to make an even greater paradigm shift towards women's equality. If we create the conditions for victims to be listened to, and the victims see that things can change as a result of coming forward, we can make a greater shift towards women's lives being free from violence.

As Adam Tomkins and others have highlighted, the backdrop of statistics showing an increase in violence is depressing, but it focuses our minds. I support the motion and the campaign, equally safe, but explicitly missing from the motion is the root of the problem—men's power in society and the hold that they have with that power, as displayed in the relationships that exist between men and women. Men are still the dominant sex in almost every area of society. It is, of course, abuse of that power that is the problem. Knowing that that power is unlikely to be challenged and can be perpetuated means that those who hold the power can behave as they like, unchallenged. It is that fundamental thing that has to change for us to tackle the bigger and wider issues.

Power cannot be unaccountable; it cannot go unfettered; and it certainly should not be passed down the generations to other men. That is why we must see this as a watershed moment.

As Engender points out, access to resources is a fundamental aspect of gender inequality. Economic inequality increases the risk of a woman being a victim of violence, as it recreates subordination within the home, at work and in wider society. Many women are trapped. The average woman in Scotland still earns £182 less per week than a man due to occupational segregation. Globally, women are still paid far less than men—in some cases 60 to 75 per cent of men's wages.

There is hope of changing the status quo to ensure that there are more women in positions of power, but that will not be done simply by good men volunteering to give up that power. There will have to be women leading the fight alongside men.

Anne-Marie Slaughter, who was a policy aide to Hillary Clinton, said:

"The best hope for improving the lot of all women ... is to close the leadership gap ... Only when women wield power in sufficient numbers will we create a society that genuinely works for all women. That will be a society that works for everyone."

There are indeed 15 female world leaders currently in office, eight of whom are their country's first ever woman in power. They represent just 10 per cent of the 193 countries that

are registered by the United Nations. We can see the extent of the problem.

We have come a long way, but it is shocking to realise that it was only in 1989 that rape in marriage was outlawed in Scotland, two years before England and Wales. In fact the nature of violence against women shows that by far the most common perpetrators of violence against women are current and former husbands, partners or boyfriends. That might go some way towards explaining why abuse that affects women's lives so extensively is often underreported.

Some national studies have shown—I think that this figure was used already by another member—that up to 70 per cent of women have experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime. Seventy per cent is a shocking figure indeed.

We can see the response of women across Europe and the world to the revelations of Harvey Weinstein's alleged sexual assaults. In France, for example, 86,000 women posted comments on social media. It is worth mentioning that President Macron of France has just announced a new law against sexism, which will fine men who wolf whistle or are lecherous to women on French streets. Whatever we think about that, we can see that it is quite a strong response. He says that it is unacceptable that women feel uncomfortable in public spaces and that women must not be afraid to use those spaces.

I will close with a quotation from Sheryl Sandberg, who is the chief operating officer of Facebook, and, of course, a woman. She says:

"A truly equal world would be one where women ran half our countries and companies and men ran half our homes."

That may be true, but we would all like to start by seeing women and girls living their lives free from violence.

16:15

Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): As members have already reflected, the motion is important. It allows the Parliament not only to categorically recognise and mark our contribution to the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, but to underline our absolute understanding that violence against women is a fundamental violation of human rights. Across the entire chamber, we are committed to tackling it and I stand with everyone in the chamber in that regard.

The motion focuses on how we can make Scotland equally safe—the practical actions that we can all undertake and the responsibility that we all have. As members have highlighted, equally safe is Scotland's strategy to prevent and

eradicate violence against women and girls. That refers, of course, to violent and abusive behaviour that is directed at women and girls precisely because they are women and girls. I am saddened to say that that behaviour is predominantly carried out by men and often stems from systemic, deep-rooted women's inequality. It can include domestic abuse, sexual assault, commercial sexual exploitation and so-called honour-based violence, such as female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

I am particularly grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate because we men must take a leadership role in tackling those behaviours wherever they exist and, as a result, contribute to the overall aim of the equally safe strategy, which is to create

“a strong and flourishing Scotland where all individuals are equally safe and respected, and where women and girls live free from such abuse”.

That aim is underpinned by four priority areas, which are to ensure that:

“Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls

Women and girls thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically and politically

Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women and girls

Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response”.

We must also ensure that our court system, including family courts, listens to women and respects women's and children's rights. Judges must now, I believe, attend training on gender-based violence. They must address emotional abuse by men and should defend women and their children and get the facts.

The Government has committed extra funding. I note the proposals in the briefing from Children 1st. Although I agree with its comments, I also say that we must safeguard our children before they get through the court system and give them better court help. Those initiatives must also be reflected in social work and ensure that the rights of women and children are upheld.

We must resolve to stop violence against women and children. Although I have reflected on where we are going next, which is the right thing to do, we should never be complacent in our actions to tackle systemic problems of violence against women and children. Because we have invested and continue to do so, levels of funding to tackle violence against women and ensure that victims receive the support they need are at record levels.

I understand that, between 2015 and 2017 alone, £24 million has been invested from the equalities portfolio to support a range of projects and initiatives, including a range of front-line specialist services working with women and children who have experienced domestic abuse. That has come after the announcement, in March 2015, of an additional £20 million from the Scottish Government, to be invested over the period 2015 to 2018 in a range of measures to tackle all forms of such violence and to put in place better support for victims. It has also meant a boost in resources to courts and prosecutors by £2.4 million each year, to reduce court waiting times for domestic abuse cases, to ensure that there are no undue delays. That attitude should also be reflected in the courts, where women should be listened to.

The last area that I wish to look at is the one that I began with: recognising the wording of the motion. As we know, 25 November was the international day for the elimination of violence against women and marked the beginning of 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, which is an international campaign that originated from the first women's global leadership institute. Let the chamber say clearly that violence against women, girls and children, in any form, has no place in our vision for a strong, safe, successful Scotland. A society in which there is violence against women does not reflect the country of equality that we aspire to become. Regardless of the form that it takes, violence against women and girls can have both an immediate and a long-lasting impact on the women, children and young people directly involved. The equally safe programme places increased priority upon primary prevention.

To conclude, taking such an approach demands that Scottish society as a whole—beginning with our Parliament today and spreading out across the country—says clearly that we embrace equality and mutual respect, that together we reject all forms of violence against women, girls and children, and that women, girls and children should thrive as equal citizens socially, culturally, economically and politically.

16:22

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): Listening to today's debate, it is clear that we are united by our desire wholly and thoroughly to eliminate violence against women and girls and to work towards a Scotland in which everyone, regardless of their race, age, gender or sexuality, can live free from the fear of violence and discrimination. Unfortunately, however, that is not the reality in which we live at the moment. As the Scottish Government's strategy has brought to light, violence against women and girls is still very

much an issue, and it is one that we must continually work to eradicate and prevent at its roots.

As the strategy points out, women remain much more likely than men to experience serious forms of sexual assault and harassment. For example, 8 per cent of all adults in Scotland have experienced at least one type of sexual assault since the age of 16, but that statistic consists of 13 per cent of adult women and just 2 per cent of men. It is upsetting that younger women are also more susceptible to gender-based violence, with one in three 13 to 17-year-olds reporting some form of sexual violence from a partner in a study by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. We must work to protect all members of our society from harm, thinking about both support for victims and prevention, which is the only way in which we will stop such abhorrent crimes from occurring in the first place.

Equally safe is a bold statement of intent and a step in the right direction in its focus on prevention and the cultural shift that it demands. The strategy's recognition of gender inequality and societal attitudes as root causes of the problem is both a necessary and a welcome step on the path to eliminating violence against women and girls.

Unfortunately, societal attitudes are not as progressive as we would hope, and some remain truly shocking. For example, only three in five people in Scotland think that a woman is not at all to blame for being raped if she wears revealing clothes or is very drunk, and as many as 5 per cent of those surveyed in the 2015 ScotCen survey thought that the woman is entirely to blame for the crime if she is very drunk.

Another harrowing example from the same survey is that sexual assault was thought to be less serious when it is perpetrated by a partner or husband than when it is perpetrated by a stranger, with 88 per cent of respondents saying that the rape of a woman by a man she has just met is very seriously wrong compared to only 74 per cent saying the same thing when asked about a husband raping his wife.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): I do not know whether the member saw it, but the Traverse Theatre brought a production to the Parliament about what men say about women, which was equally shocking. Does the member have any practical suggestions for how we—especially as men within this place—can make progress on that issue?

Oliver Mundell: The biggest thing that we can do as men is call out that kind of behaviour publicly when we see it and work on a cross-party basis, as we are doing in today's debate, to make it clear that such behaviour is not acceptable in

our country and that people who behave in that way do not have the support of ourselves or of society.

Having said that, I recognise that some things are getting better. Young people are less likely to victim blame, which points towards societal progression. Reporting rates for crimes involving violence against women and girls are rising, which is unfortunate, but we are making progress on a global scale. Movements such as the #MeToo campaign are helping to create an environment in which women feel more comfortable speaking out about their experiences. The fact that there has been marked improvement, however, does not mean that we can afford to rest on our laurels, as there will always be more that we can do to ensure that women and girls are protected from gender-based violence.

One issue that is close to my heart is the inequality in services and resources related to violence against women and girls in more rural areas of Scotland. A number of local organisations such as the Dumfries and Galloway domestic abuse and violence against women partnership are doing good work in my constituency. Such organisations are working hard, but they need more support to ensure that women who live in more rural areas of our country have the same support and access to services as women who live in more urban communities.

I welcome the fact that an August 2017 national scoping exercise of advocacy services for victims of violence against women and girls that the Scottish Government conducted openly identified some geographical gaps and noted that the urban-rural split was one of the key issues facing service provision. Women and girls in such areas face additional barriers to receiving help such as in having to travel for forensic examinations and in trying to maintaining confidentiality in small communities where everyone knows everyone. In some rural communities, there is also often little access to advocacy groups for some forms of violence against women and girls, such as human trafficking, prostitution and violence that specifically targets those in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities. That is a particular problem in areas in which there are limited specialist advocacy services.

Although it is commendable that violence against women and girls is being treated like the grave and harrowing issue that it is, and although things have been improving, more needs to be done to ensure that every woman in Scotland has access to the help that she needs regardless of how rural or urban a location she lives in. Until such issues are addressed, it will be impossible to ensure that Scotland is equally safe for all women.

16:29

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): On Saturday last, I had the privilege of speaking at the women's centre in north-west Glasgow, at an event to mark the launch of the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. I turned up with my wife and my wee boy, not in my capacity as an MSP but just as a member of the community supporting a local event. Cameron enjoyed the face painting, the bubbles and the goodie bag, and we had a lovely time there. It was a pleasant and humbling surprise when I was asked to say a few words at the event on a day that was in celebration of the empowerment of women. The theme that had been chosen was a celebration of women's strength, success and roles. On the walls, there were 20-plus pictures of women from the Maryhill area who have made huge contributions to the local community, including female leaders past and present. Many more women could have filled those walls, but it was wonderful to see.

I felt unusually sheepish and unsure about speaking, given that advances in female equality and empowerment are not usually—or ever—well served by middle-aged white men bumping their gums. However, I was asked to speak and it was a privilege to say a few words. The centre's chairwoman reassured me that it was important that I spoke and that men played their part. She said that the centre welcomed and respected men, despite many of the patrons having had turbulent and distressing experiences. To be fair, I know the staff and volunteers at the centre well—they do amazing work—but the reassurance from the chairwoman about the appropriateness of my saying a few words was welcome in the circumstances.

On reflection, that was a bit silly of me because, if this afternoon's debate has shown me anything—I did not know what I was going to say until I came into the chamber and listened to the debate—it is that I have a duty to show my solidarity with the women and girls who, for many generations, have suffered abuse and violence. I also have a duty to challenge my own complacency in thinking, because I am not a perpetrator and do not see the abuse, that everything must be okay. Because of my constituency case load, I know that that does not stack up, so I have to tackle my complacency. Further, I have a duty to pay tribute to those who are leading the fight in my local area to make people's lives better.

That experience also allowed me, ahead of this afternoon's debate, to reflect on the role of men more generally in the context of the campaign to end violence against women. In a powerful speech, Ash Denham called on us to turn our

attention to the men who rape and hit women, who buy children or who abuse and are violent to females. The learning point for me from this afternoon's debate is the converse of that—it is that we should turn our attention to the many men who do not carry out any of that abuse. Gillian Martin pointed to the boys who do not do that and to what they must do in order to play their part in society. We must turn our attention to the men who say that they do not abuse and ask them what they are doing to tackle the problem that exists because some men do.

We often see the white ribbon campaign as being a symbol of that approach. The white ribbon campaign is wonderful—this is no reflection on that campaign—but I will wear another ribbon for world AIDS day when I attend First Minister's question time on Thursday. Wearing a ribbon becomes the thing that people do when there are campaigns, but wearing a ribbon does not mean that they have engaged with the problem or the issue. The white ribbon does not challenge or call out unacceptable behaviour, so men—me included—must find the space and the environment to do that all year round. That is my challenge from this afternoon's debate.

In relation to the white ribbon campaign, I should mention that Glasgow Kelvin College, in Springburn, in my constituency, did something exceptional in May this year. The college signed up to become an accredited white ribbon college on the basis of not just signing a pledge but carrying out on-the-ground activism. The college engaged with staff, students and the local community and did something meaningful for the white ribbon campaign instead of just putting a ribbon on a lapel to show support but no more. I give credit to Glasgow Kelvin College for that.

Every man has a responsibility to do all that he can to make a difference, and I am setting myself a challenge. Rather than just turn up at an event at the women's centre in north-west Glasgow next year—I am sure that it will hold an event, as the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence comes around every year—I will organise, shape and support a number of events in the communities that I represent at which men can speak up in support of ending gender-based violence against women and girls. If I manage to do that, rather than just make a speech in a debate, as I have done this afternoon—I hope that it has been a humble speech, in which I have felt my way along—I will perhaps have done something that makes a bit of a difference.

I have really enjoyed the debate.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): We move to the closing speeches.

16:35

Claire Baker: The 16 days of activism for the elimination of violence against women and girls campaign was started in 1991 by the center for women's global leadership. In recognising gender-based violence as a human rights issue, over a couple of weeks the campaign encourages activity at local, national and international levels.

This afternoon's debate has been wide ranging, encouraging and passionate. Members have made perceptive and persuasive arguments on commercial sexual exploitation, FGM, forced marriage and education on consent. The debate has given Parliament an opportunity to add its voice to the campaign to end violence against women and girls. Members have spoken about the violence and abuse that are suffered by women and girls here in Scotland and around the world, some of which we see daily on the evening news, but much of which is hidden or so ingrained in society that it is hidden in full view.

Over these 16 days, we can also see examples of courage, challenge, resistance and calls for change from men and women and boys and girls who do not accept the way the world is, who do not accept that one gender is inferior and who do not accept the prevalence of violence and abuse in our everyday existence.

We received a number of briefings for the debate, including from Engender, the Zero Tolerance Charitable Trust, Children 1st, Barnardo's, the NSPCC and White Ribbon Scotland; I would like to thank those organisations for their expertise and the contribution that their knowledge has made to the debate.

I want to highlight some of the speeches that have been made. Alex Cole-Hamilton and Pauline McNeill talked about sexual harassment and emphasised that it is about the exercise of power and status rather than sex. That is the context in which we are having the debate—it is about how we value women, how women are represented and how we change our culture. I think that it was Alex Cole-Hamilton who talked about the importance of the way in which we bring up our children and said that we have a responsibility in that regard.

The points that were made about John Finnie's proposed member's bill, which seeks to give children equal protection under the law, are relevant to the debate but, as I mentioned in my opening speech, it is very difficult to take a non-gendered approach to modern parenting when so much of the marketing and commercialism that we deal with as parents are so gendered. It is very difficult to buy children's clothes or toys that are not gendered, and I think that that trend has increased in recent years. That means that the

difference between the genders is emphasised, rather than the fact that they are equal.

Pauline McNeill brought a global perspective to the debate when she talked about the millions of girls who are being forced into child marriage.

The recent debate about sexual harassment led me to question whether we are experiencing a shift. Do we have a golden opportunity in our time? There is a feeling that the story moves on and that something else catches the eye of the world. It is bizarre that we have been having a discussion about sexual harassment and assault while Donald Trump is the US president. We must continue to be vocal in working to close the leadership gap.

Political leadership is important. There is a feeling that those who control the way in which we learn our news and the forums in which we have such public debates are moving on to other issues, and it is important that we continue to highlight the damage that sexual harassment, sexual violence and sexual abuse cause to our society, and the way in which they hold us back. Pauline McNeill mentioned the steps that Macron has taken in France. In Canada, Justin Trudeau is very vocal about being a feminist. We need to hear more of that, and we need to increase the extent to which women's voices are heard in that dialogue.

Adam Tomkins effectively highlighted our responsibility to provide care and support for all refugees and recognised that many are here because they are fleeing violence. Women and girls who come from other countries that are war torn or from situations of great conflict have often experienced sexual violence and assault. In such situations, rape is used as a means of control and as a weapon. Our services do not always recognise the potential additional barriers around language and cultural understanding and we could put greater focus on that.

Rhoda Grant, Ash Denham and Ruth Maguire made powerful and perceptive speeches on commercial sexual exploitation. Ruth Maguire made some strong points about the need for radical change and her belief that there is a weakness in the delivery plan. She questioned how the document can recognise that commercial sexual exploitation is violence, yet say nothing about allowing the buyer to continue to exercise that right. The current legal system does not criminalise the buyer of sex, but how does that sit with the arguments that we are making about violence against women and girls? The arguments that we need a more robust and effective response and that we are not doing enough to prevent women from being exploited were well made.

Rhoda Grant made strong points about society's mixed messages and how commercial exploitation sits alongside arguments that women should be treated not as commodities but as equals and valued human beings. How can we promote those arguments for equality if we can see that society tolerates such behaviour? Her points about Ireland and other countries having changed the way in which they treat commercial sexual exploitation show that Scotland is in danger of falling behind and could become vulnerable to an increased level of trafficking because it is seen as a soft option by those who want to exploit women and girls in such a way.

Ash Denham made a very effective speech about human trafficking and recognising women and girls as a commonplace commodity in a global context. She described the horrific experience of the 26 dead girls—it is shocking to think of them being just teenagers of 14 to 18—and it is hard to imagine the horror of the exploitation that they had experienced and how cheap a girl's life is, particularly given that the incident happened off the coast of Italy, where many of us go on holiday. It was a very powerful speech.

All three members spoke about commercial sexual exploitation not being inevitable or excusable and said that Scotland must do more to disrupt the industry, recognise such exploitation as a crime and stop the trafficking and slavery.

Oliver Mundell made interesting points about public attitudes to rape and victims of sexual assault and how people see women as responsible for those crimes. The figures around public perception are shocking. I understand that such public perception in relation to a woman's clothing or inebriation levels related to both genders: the survey was not exclusive to men—both men and women responded to it. That highlights how difficult it can be to pursue cases through the criminal courts where they are often heard in front of a jury, given the number of prejudices that people hold regarding sexual assault.

Several members mentioned the increase in reports of rape, violence and sexual assault against women. We need a justice system that fully responds to that. Last week's report by the Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland highlighted the barriers that are faced by survivors in getting justice through the courts. Survivors found that giving evidence in court was a very negative experience and some described it as "worse than being raped". We must look at extending measures to support survivors and victims.

Finally, today we heard the news that David Goodwillie has lost his appeal in the civil rape case against him. That is testament to the courage

of Denise Clair in fighting for justice for nearly seven years. She had to go to a civil court to get justice. That is not acceptable. Following that case, we must consider how we can ensure that no other women have to pursue justice using that route, which is not appropriate for rape cases.

This afternoon's debate has been extremely worth while and a good expression of the Parliament's commitment to the issue.

16:44

Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con): I am pleased to close the debate for the Conservatives. I have sat here and listened to everyone's speeches and heard the passion and emotion in their words. That highlights that gender-based violence is not party political or an issue for one country, but something that affects everyone, everywhere.

I was lucky. I grew up in a safe household and I was brought up to be a confident young lady. I was never made to feel that being female was any less than being male. However, in the 55 years for which I have been alive, I can think of numerous people I know who have experienced rape or torture, or who have been victims of honour crimes—like other members, I hate that expression.

I am sad to say that one of my early experiences as a student nurse was with a lady who came in to give birth and who begged us not to discharge her. Her child was to be taken straight to the airport and abroad to experience the horror of female genital mutilation. Back then, there was nothing that we could do. We delayed her discharge as long as we could but, eventually, we had to let her go. I had the very sad job of taking that baby down to the car. As you can hear, I still feel really emotional about it, even now.

We have moved on, but not as far as any of us would like. Today is another step towards making Scotland equally safe for women and young girls, and the cabinet secretary has introduced some of the steps that we in Scotland will take. If we do that, I hope that FGM will never happen again in Scotland and that we never allow anybody to be taken out of Scotland to undergo that horror.

One reason why things have changed is that we have changed the stigma—not as far as we would like to, but it is easier now for women to come forward and tell what has happened. The police have done an immense amount of work to make a safer environment for a person who has been raped. However, as Oliver Mundell highlighted, the environment is not always as good in some rural areas, where people have to travel further and where identity cannot be hidden. We still have things to do.

I hope that the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill is going in the right direction. As it travels through Parliament, I hope that we will iron out the points that we debated the other week and that we make sure that nobody who comes forward and talks about what has happened ends up going home still in fear.

By recognising in the Parliament the 16 days of action against gender-based violence, we are showing how much our attitudes are changing and that we, as a country, must take not just a moral but a legislative stance. We have heard about some of the laws that have been introduced across the UK and those that we want to help to agree to in Scotland. Adam Tomkins spoke about the many female refugees who have sought sanctuary in Scotland. They often come with added vulnerabilities, having been abused or exploited even before they arrive here. Cultural and linguistic barriers have caused difficulties in providing assistance to those who need it the most. Adam Tomkins highlighted that we must re-examine the issue to make sure that we give adequate support to those victims.

The UK Government legislated in 2015 to protect young girls against female genital mutilation. I hope that the cabinet secretary has listened to today's comments and that she will take forward some of the actions to ensure that Scotland legislates in the same way.

Annie Wells spoke passionately about the worrying trends that have grown in Scotland over the past year—domestic violence is on the rise and the number of rapes and attempted rapes has increased. Those are statistics that we should worry about. Such behaviour is not only unacceptable but constitutes a violation of basic human rights. Any increase in the number of incidents is to be noted with concern and should prompt action from the Scottish Government. Annie Wells also drew attention to some of the excellent local projects, such as the Archway project in Glasgow, which she called to be replicated. There are many good campaigns in Scotland, and we need to ensure that they have the necessary funding. Our support for them should not be annual, so that they do not know from one year to the next whether they will be funded; they need to know that they can offer continuity of support to the women and children whom they help.

Gordon Lindhurst featured some of the positive work that the UK Government has done in the field to eradicate violence against women and children. There are 127 programmes that address violence against women and girls, there is new domestic abuse legislation and, of course, FGM protection orders have been introduced. In many respects, the UK is ahead of Scotland in this area, and the

Scottish Government should look to adopt similar measures if it is serious about the matter. However, I heard what the cabinet secretary said, and I believe that she will work to do that. I will watch to ensure that that happens.

We have heard a lot today about violence against women and girls, including impassioned speeches by Claire Baker, Kate Forbes and Rhoda Grant. I want it to be remembered that the vast majority of men are equally horrified by the behaviour of some men. Rhoda Grant made that point, which is really important. We must not get to the stage at which we vilify all men as perpetrators, but we must ensure that we identify those who are, hold them in abhorrence and ensure that they are duly punished for their attitudes and the crimes that they have committed.

John Finnie spoke eloquently about how gender-based violence affects the whole family and the need for judiciary training to ensure that victims do not suffer further victimisation through the justice system. We are making slow progress on that, but there is progress. John Finnie is absolutely right. We must ensure that those who sit on the benches and work in the courts understand how horrific it feels to have gone through that violence and then to be explored in a courtroom. We must ensure that people understand what that means and that they use the right language, have the right attitudes, and use the right kind of questioning so that they do not make things worse rather than better.

Alex Cole-Hamilton spoke very well about the need to change the culture and ensure that our children understand respectful relationships and have good role models. A lot of work is being done on that in schools, and I welcome the extra money that is going in to ensure that that is enhanced. We must ensure that the attitudes and cultures that underpin the decision making of our future adults are based in a good, respectful gender culture.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Will you come to a close, please?

Michelle Ballantyne: Yes.

Bob Doris spoke very well when he said that, as a man, he has the duty to show solidarity with those who have suffered, to challenge his own complacency and to pay tribute to those who contrive to fight to make things better. I use his words to close. That is not just a duty for men; it is a duty for all of us. Bob Doris framed that duty very well in his comments.

16:52

Angela Constance: This debate is, of course, a very important opportunity to discuss one of the

most serious human rights violations and to highlight the cross-party consensus on the issue. I have often said that one of the gains of devolution has been the cross-party consensus that has been built over the lifetime of the Parliament. Everyone who has spoken in the debate has made an excellent contribution.

I do not want to be too complacent or congratulatory, of course, because I am conscious that we can be guilty of operating in our own institutional bubble in the Parliament. One of the joys of chairing the joint strategic board on equally safe with a full range of stakeholders is that they often remind politicians to get out of our bubble. The strength of some of the participation projects that feed into the equally safe strategy has demonstrated that there are many people out there who are less than aware of the work that we are doing on equally safe.

Members across the chamber have been particularly thoughtful, reflective and at times challenging in the debate. I think that that is partly because of recent events. As someone said, from Hollywood to Holyrood, no institution or part of our society is immune from the scourge of sexual harassment or other horrors.

With its publication today, we have had the opportunity to get our teeth into aspects of the equally safe delivery plan, which outlines 118 actions to be taken over this session of Parliament. Adam Tomkins, Annie Wells, Kate Forbes, John Finnie, Pauline McNeill and many others were right to remind us of the action that we need to take at home and abroad, and they mentioned the international efforts of both the UK Government and the Scottish Government. That, for anyone who is interested, is reflected on page 21 of the delivery plan.

Members were right to highlight the challenges of going further and faster with legislation and safeguards around how we respond to female genital mutilation. In the debate that we had earlier this year, I spoke of this Government's commitment to take further action over this session of Parliament. We are looking closely at the experience south of the border, but it will not necessarily be a shift and lift. We genuinely want to look and learn, and we will always incorporate what the evidence shows works well and effectively.

Another major theme of the debate has been the need to guard against survivors being retraumatised by their experience of justice services or other services. It is imperative that our services are always victim centred and trauma informed. The additional investment in Rape Crisis Scotland of £1.85 million will help with additional advocacy and will extend services to Orkney and Shetland, picking up on some of the issues that

Oliver Mundell mentioned with regard to rural and more remote areas. I can also tell Michelle Ballantyne that one of the reasons why I was absolutely determined that the equality budget would indeed incorporate three-year funding is that I want organisations the length and breadth of Scotland that are supporting women and tackling violence against women and girls to concentrate on what they do well, which is supporting women and their children, as opposed to continuously filling out forms.

My final point with regard to justice services is that there is an important task force, chaired by the chief medical officer for Scotland, to ensure that we are constantly improving services for children and adults who have experienced rape or sexual assault.

Rhoda Grant, Ruth Maguire, Claire Baker, Ash Denham and others spoke powerfully about criminal sexual exploitation and prostitution and about the relationship that commercial sexual exploitation has with trafficking. Ash Denham spoke powerfully about those children lost at sea, who had been victims of human trafficking and other horrors, and Ruth Maguire spoke about the actions that we are taking to reduce harm and to help women exit prostitution and commercial sexual exploitation, and about the importance of raising awareness. What I take from today's debate is that there is clearly an appetite for further action to tackle the root causes of that behaviour. I can tell Parliament that, although the research that was published earlier this year was inconclusive and—to be candid—we as a Government have not reached some final conclusions on that research, it is fair to say that our work is not over and we will not be looking the other way.

Another important matter that was raised is that, although we know that women of all backgrounds and ages experience violence, women and girls from minority ethnic backgrounds or from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community, or women who have a disability, can be at greater risk of violence.

We will work with others on the needs of refugees and asylum seekers, and one of my other responsibilities is to review and implement the new Scots strategy. The UK contract on asylum accommodation and support is also important in that regard, and it is not without its controversies.

Our strategic approach is drawn from the United Nations definition of gender-based violence, recognising that it is a function of gender inequality. That is to say, it is an abuse of male power and privilege that women and girls experience violence and abuse quite simply because they are women and girls and because

they continue to occupy a subordinate position in our society in relation to men.

Our equally safe delivery plan will be the cornerstone of our efforts to work together to eradicate violence against women and girls, by changing the law, investing record levels of funding, taking action to support victims and tackle perpetrators, and tackling the underlying attitudes and inequalities that create the conditions for violence against women and girls.

Ultimately, we have to prevent violence and abuse from happening in the first place. If we are to do that we must recognise that progress is never permanent; our efforts must be redoubled, restated and reimagined if progress is to be sustained and the position improved.

I commend the equally safe delivery plan and the motion to the Parliament.

Business Motion

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-09243, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revised business programme for tomorrow.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revision to the programme of business for Wednesday 29 November 2017—

after

followed by Portfolio Questions
Health and Sport

insert

followed by Ministerial Statement: Policing

delete

5.00 pm Decision Time

and insert

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

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S5M-09223, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on committee membership.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that Claire Baker be appointed to replace Daniel Johnson as a member of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.—[*Joe FitzPatrick*]

Decision Time

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): We come to decision time.

The first question is, that motion S5M-09205, in the name of Angela Constance, on making Scotland equally safe, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the global 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence; commends the many activists and organisations, both in Scotland and across the world, providing front-line support for survivors, raising awareness of the problem and working tirelessly to challenge the underlying attitudes and inequalities that perpetuate violence against women and girls; calls on men everywhere to stand shoulder to shoulder with women in sending a clear message that violence against women and girls is never acceptable; reaffirms its support for Equally Safe, Scotland's strategy to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls and welcomes the publication of the Equally Safe delivery plan, and agrees that it is for every individual, community and institution to stand up to abuse and harassment, hold perpetrators to account for their behaviour and work together to build a Scotland where everyone can live equally safe.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-09223, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on committee membership, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that Claire Baker be appointed to replace Daniel Johnson as a member of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

World AIDS Day 2017

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S5M-08658, in the name of Annie Wells, on world AIDS day 2017. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes that the 29th annual World AIDS Day is being marked on 1 December 2017; believes that this offers an important opportunity to remember the estimated 35 million people who have died from AIDS-related illnesses; recognises what it sees as Scotland's role as a leader in HIV policy by ensuring access to new medicines and treatments to contribute to prevention options; further recognises that, in 2017, the country became the first in the UK to offer PrEP on the NHS; acknowledges the efforts to exceed the UNAIDS 90-90-90 goals to help Scotland contribute to the global mission to get to zero new infections; understands that there are over 6,000 people living with HIV in Scotland; notes with concern statistics suggesting that two young people in the country are diagnosed with HIV every month; further notes the view that it is important to end HIV-related stigma by using Scotland's HIV Anti-Stigma Strategy to ensure that everyone can access high-quality healthcare and support, and commends the work of HIV Scotland on what it sees as its work in promoting policy changes that are grounded in evidence and for using the experiences of people living with, or at risk of, HIV to help ensure that the voices of communities most stigmatised in society are heard.

17:03

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): It is with great pleasure that I open this debate, only three days before the 29th annual world AIDS day. The debate brings much-needed attention to how we remember the estimated 37 million people worldwide who have lost their lives to AIDS-related illnesses, and enables us to consider how we in Scotland can be at the forefront of pharmaceutical care and can contribute to the global mission to eradicate new infections.

World AIDS day in 1988 was the first ever global health day, and it is as vitally important now as it was nearly three decades ago. By wearing the red ribbon as a symbol of solidarity with HIV positive people and those who live with AIDS, we have the opportunity to unite in the fight against HIV by fighting prejudice and improving education. Ultimately, world AIDS day reminds the public and MSPs that HIV has not gone away.

HIV/AIDS is arguably one of the most destructive pandemics in modern history. In 2016, 36.7 million people were living with HIV/AIDS, which resulted in 1 million deaths in that year alone. There were 300,000 fewer new HIV cases in 2016 than in 2015, which gives confidence that worldwide strategies are working. More than 100,000 people are living with HIV in the UK, with

more than 6,000 living in Scotland. One of the most concerning statistics is that two young people are diagnosed with HIV every month in this country.

No cure or vaccine exists, but science has come a long way since the 1980s. Antiretroviral treatment has advanced to slow the course of the disease and can lead to a person diagnosed with the disease having a near-normal life expectancy.

I am extremely proud that on 10 April 2017, the Scottish Medicines Consortium announced that the drug Truvada was agreed to be an effective treatment to prevent the transmission of HIV, thus making Scotland the first country in the union to approve the prescription of a pre-exposure prophylaxis on the NHS. We would not be able to declare such a status if it was not for the hard work of HIV Scotland, which spent years campaigning for PrEP provision via the NHS as part of a comprehensive prevention strategy. In 2016, a PrEP good practice guide was published by HIV Scotland as a result of a collaboration between community members, service providers, researchers and decision makers all coming together to learn and work in a multisector partnership.

Many new treatments and strategies will be needed to finally bring an end to the AIDS pandemic, and we will be unable to prevent the spread of the disease without bringing treatments to all those who need it, hence the focus in the motion on Scotland attempting to exceed the UNAIDS 90-90-90 goals—90 per cent of all people living with HIV knowing their HIV status; 90 per cent of all people with diagnosed HIV infection receiving sustained antiretroviral therapy; and 90 per cent of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy having viral suppression. Those goals have been set to be achieved by 2020, and, by UNAIDS' own admission, the target to completely end the AIDS pandemic by 2030 is ambitious. Although it is ambitious, it is certainly achievable if we build on the powerful momentum of the new narrative on HIV treatment.

Education is the most powerful resource that we have in our battle to reduce the risk of HIV infection in Scotland. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization places the utmost importance on access to sexual health education, which is its number 1 strategic priority. Article 17 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to information that is of vital importance to their health and wellbeing. Even though those international human rights organisations see sexual health education as a young person's right, sexual health lessons in Scotland are still not compulsory. Such lessons are taught via relationships, sexual health and

parenthood education, but teaching inconsistencies can be found throughout Scotland's 32 local authorities. On 22 October this year, I asked the education secretary what the Scottish Government's response was to the reported inconsistencies among Scotland's local authorities. We all respect the response, which was that the curriculum for excellence provides flexibility for teachers to decide what children learn within a broad framework, but we would welcome a consistent approach to RSHP education among local authorities.

Scotland could also lead the way in significantly reducing HIV-related stigma via a reformed sexual health curriculum. Radical initiatives must be sought to reduce HIV-related stigma and to respect the human rights of populations who find themselves stigmatised in many ways. According to Scotland's HIV anti-stigma strategy, the recent outbreak of HIV among injectable drug users in Glasgow was compounded by the multiple stigmas attached to both HIV and drug use. Stigmatisation that is based on gender, sexual preference, race, culture and religion, class and poverty, and criminalisation can be profound and lasting for people living with, and affected by, HIV. It is down to us to understand how and where people experience stigma to properly legislate against it, and to promote successful intervention strategies.

Finally bringing an end to the AIDS pandemic is more than an enduring commitment that we have to the 37 million people who have lost their lives to this preventable disease. It also represents an incredible opportunity for us to lay the foundations for a healthier, less stigmatised and more equal world for the young people of tomorrow.

17:10

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): I thank my colleague Annie Wells for securing the debate and bringing such an important topic to the chamber. I apologise for having the wrong ribbon on—this one is from the previous debate. I have a red one in my office, which I will put on later.

The debate is an opportunity to reflect on the estimated 35 million people who have died from AIDS-related illnesses and on how we can support and care for the more than 6,000 people who live with HIV in Scotland. I commend HIV Scotland for its excellent work to raise awareness about HIV and promote evidence-based policy changes to support those living with or at risk of HIV.

As Annie Wells mentioned, stigma is perhaps the biggest issue facing those living with HIV in Scotland. Many people are left ostracised and with poor health and social outcomes, such as mental ill health, anxiety and suicidal feelings. Stigma is also one of the biggest barriers to testing,

treatment and support. HIV Scotland estimates that around 13 per cent of people with HIV in Scotland are unaware of their status. Fear of a positive diagnosis discourages individuals from getting tested and engaging with health services.

Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP): The member raises an important point about stigma and the fear of testing. Does she agree that it is incredibly important that we effect a cultural shift so that we no longer look at an HIV diagnosis as a death sentence, as it once was, but as a manageable condition—indeed, one with which people can now expect to live full and relatively healthy lives?

Ruth Maguire: Absolutely. I whole-heartedly agree. It is important to note that we all have an HIV status—it is not something just for other people.

The stigma and fear around testing can lead to late diagnosis, which negatively impacts on a person's quality of life and life expectancy. It is of concern that HIV Scotland's recent report "HIV and Education: Guaranteeing Lessons for All" highlighted that, every month, two young people in Scotland are diagnosed as being HIV positive—Annie Wells mentioned that statistic, too. I raised that issue in the chamber last month and was pleased that the Minister for Public Health and Sport, Aileen Campbell, made it clear that national health service boards will continue to work with schools and local authorities to deliver change and stage-appropriate RSHP education on the risks of HIV, and that existing work will be built on as we move forward.

We must all continue to work hard to end HIV-related stigma, through education in our schools and through Scotland's wider HIV anti-stigma strategy. We must continue to raise awareness about the fact that everyone has an HIV status and encourage people to get tested. We must continue to ensure that people living with HIV have access to the medical and emotional support that they need to lead fulfilling and healthy lives.

However, there is quite a bit to take pride in. We can take pride in the fact that, by ensuring access to new medicines and treatments to treat HIV, we are a global leader in HIV policy. We can take pride in becoming the first country in the United Kingdom to offer PrEP on the NHS. We can take pride in the fact that last year's figure for new reported cases of HIV, at 317, was the lowest annual figure to be recorded since 2003. We can take pride in Scotland's HIV anti-stigma strategy, "Road Map to Zero". Created by the HIV anti-stigma consortium, the strategy is a unique document produced by people living with and affected by HIV, in collaboration with academics, the NHS and the third sector. It provides the

foundations for Scotland's HIV anti-stigma strategy action plan, which will be published in 2018.

I look forward to seeing that strategy and, in the meantime, would encourage everyone, particularly all MSPs, to use whatever influence we have to tackle HIV-related stigma wherever we see it and whenever we can.

17:15

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands)

(Con): I am pleased to have been given the opportunity to speak in this debate and help colleagues on all sides of the chamber in highlighting the need to end HIV-related stigma and contribute to the ambitious new infections target of zero.

For many people of my age, their first real knowledge of AIDS will have come from the apocalyptic and highly controversial advert that was aired on television in 1986. For those who do not remember the advert, it is worth watching. It certainly got the message across that AIDS was potentially a lethal disease, but it also frightened those who saw it into avoiding people who had AIDS. It took a huge amount of time to reverse that view—a change that was undoubtedly assisted by the work of people such as Princess Diana.

In 1982 to 1983, I unwittingly came into contact with AIDS sufferers when I went to Africa. As a young soldier, I was sent to Uganda to work with the Ugandan national liberation army. Before I flew out, I was given a very short briefing by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which I have to say did little to prepare me. I was, however, given a much more extensive briefing by the regimental doctor, Lt Col Anthony Page. He spent a considerable amount of time teaching me basic medical skills so that I could at least help my colleagues in difficult situations.

My tour in Uganda was spent in the jungle—unlike some, I could not claim to be a celebrity, and there was no way out. My daily routine included holding a sick parade for soldiers and their families. The parade was supervised by a Ugandan medical officer, who at every opportunity would dust off his one syringe and one needle. The needle was sharpened before and after each injection on the inside of a glass. I had no idea what the medical officer was injecting in most cases, but he assured me that it would work.

My task at the sick parade was to treat minor injuries using a medical pack that the FCO had given me. There were no gloves and no anaesthetic, but there was plenty of improvisation. The outcomes for our patients were without doubt better than they would have been if we had done nothing, and probably better than if they had

experienced the trusty needle. They were also better than the outcomes that the local witch doctor achieved; he had a bit more of a kill-or-cure approach. Sadly, sometimes our lack of knowledge showed, but we did our best.

During my time there, we saw a few cases of a disease called “slim”, and there seemed to be no positive outcomes for those who suffered from it. It would affect husbands and wives and often the youngest children, but not all the children. For those whom it affected, there were more often than not tragic consequences.

Little did I know that what we were seeing and trying to deal with was AIDS. If I had known that, I wonder whether we would have looked at things in a different way; I suspect that we might have done. I also suspect that my colleagues and I would have dealt with things differently if we had seen the advert that was aired in 1986. That is the point that I am making. We had no worries about what we were doing, because of our lack of knowledge. Today, we have the knowledge, and we know that there is more that we can do for those who have AIDS and those who live with HIV. There is no need, or any excuse, to stigmatise them. They are the same as you and me, and we must end all stigma relating to their conditions.

On Friday, I will take a moment to remember the 35 million-odd people who have died from AIDS-related illnesses, and those with whom I might unwittingly have come into contact. To me, they were, and will always remain, fellow human beings who needed help, and that is all they should ever have been.

17:19

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): I, too, thank Annie Wells for lodging her motion, which provides members with the opportunity to mark world AIDS day on 1 December through today's debate. The UN theme for this year's world AIDS day is my health, my right. I will use my brief comments to highlight the right to proper health and social care for older people who are living with HIV. It is worth pausing for a moment to think about that statement. For many of us who were growing up in the 1980s and 1990s and who witnessed the emergence of AIDS, the letters “HIV” were seen very much as a death sentence, and not something that people grew old with.

Still, today, to all our utter shame, tragically a million people a year die from AIDS. Those deaths are unnecessary. Thanks to the wonders of science and the tireless campaigning of charities across the world, with early diagnosis and the right treatment, those with HIV can—and do—have near-normal life expectancy, as Tom Arthur highlighted earlier in his intervention.

In fact, the median age of people living with HIV in Scotland has risen from 36 in 1997 to 45 in 2015; and the proportion of people living with HIV aged 50 or over increased from one in eight in 2003 to one in four in 2014. Of course, that brings with it the challenges of ensuring that older people living with HIV have the health and social care that they need.

Levels of poverty among people living with HIV aged 55 and over are double those seen in the general population, and those people are significantly more likely to have other health problems. In fact, two thirds of people over 50 with HIV receive treatment for other long-term conditions—again, a rate that is almost double that of the general population. Mental health problems and depression are also more common among older people living with HIV than in the population as a whole.

Tackling those inequalities requires meaningful action and a multiagency approach in health and, crucially, social care, but we know that across Scotland, social care services are under pressure. A report by HIV Scotland called “Making the Vision a Reality” highlighted concerns in some local authorities that funding and budget constraints

“may result in fewer people with support needs being able to receive support”.

In the report, one local authority stated:

“Due to current budget constraints ... not all people with HIV may meet the critical eligibility criteria we can currently fund, therefore may not be able to access social work funded services”.

We need to properly resource social care and we have to ensure that staff are equipped with a strong understanding of HIV because, as HIV Scotland’s report also highlighted,

“There is a lack of specialist training for social care staff in relation to HIV and supporting people living with this.”

The care must be dignified. Although there is no doubt that most care is of a high standard, a report by the National AIDS Trust called “HIV: A guide for care providers” highlighted experiences that some people with HIV had in care homes and the discriminatory treatment that they received. One resident with HIV was made to have the last bath of the day and was given separate cutlery, another described difficulty in getting a staff member to assist them in the shower, several highlighted breaches in confidentiality, and, in one instance, a care assistant advised a resident’s visitors not to let their children see him because of his HIV.

Ruth Maguire, Annie Wells and Edward Mountain all commented on the stigma surrounding HIV and, in particular, on Scotland’s anti-stigma strategy, the “Road Map to Zero”. Not only can that stigma be isolating and distressing but it can act as a barrier to receiving the care and

support that people with HIV need. There remains a great deal more to be done to improve the provision and the standard of social care for those living with HIV.

The integration of health and social care will fundamentally change how care is delivered, and it is an opportunity to address some of those challenges. Taking a more collaborative approach to delivering care for those with HIV is in itself a step in the right direction, but we must ensure that we expand expertise in and knowledge of HIV among those delivering that care. Equally, structural changes through integration must be backed up with the funding that is needed to deliver services. Social care is an increasingly critical aspect of care for those with HIV, in particular older people living with HIV. That may be a good challenge to have—it is certainly not one that we faced 30 years ago—but it is a growing challenge, and we all have a duty to make sure that our health and social care services fully meet it.

17:23

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I am pleased to take part in the debate and grateful that the motion has been brought to the chamber. Like a couple of other members, I was going to reflect a little on how things have changed over the years. I was growing up when those TV advertising campaigns that Edward Mountain referred to were being shown. I had not come out at that point—I had not, let us be honest, started my sex life at that point—and then there was that set of ideas around fear. Certain aspects of that campaign may have been well meant, but certain aspects, I am sure, exacerbated the fear and the stigma that arises as a result of fear. I was certainly very aware of that.

A little later—as I had cause to reflect in an earlier debate—I was a student in Manchester when God’s cop was sending police wearing biohazard gear to raid gay clubs there. I was reminded of the ignorant and prejudiced attitudes that informed that behaviour, sadly, when Colin Smyth mentioned some of the practices in care homes, which were also grounded in needless and ignorant attitudes toward HIV and in the stigma that arises from that ignorance.

A few years later, I spent a few years working in an HIV agency in Glasgow. When I think about what has changed since those days, I see that immense scientific and medical progress has been made. As others have mentioned, treatment, in particular, is dramatically more effective, and many more people are living long and healthy lives. At least here, in wealthy countries, that is the case—it is not the case everywhere.

Immense progress has also been made in testing. In the run-up to world AIDS day, I recently dropped by the Terrence Higgins Trust offices in Glasgow. The agency that I used to work for, PHACE West—Promoting Health and Challenging Exclusion—eventually merged with PHACE Scotland and then became THT Scotland after I had left. I was able to catch up with a few colleagues there and take the test. It was just a tiny finger-prick, and it took literally seconds for the result to be clear. It is a cheap, convenient and easy form of testing that was not available when I was working in the field.

As other members have mentioned, not only have treatment and testing improved but so has prevention. We have new tools in the box when it comes to prevention, with the availability of PrEP—post-exposure prophylaxis—in Scotland. I very much welcome the progress that has been made there.

There are some things that I hope have changed, but I do not know whether they have. One of the last things that I was involved in challenging when I worked for PHACE was the pushing of anti-condom messages in schools by an organisation that promoted the Billings ovulation method of birth control, which was basically one step up from the rhythm method. It was complete nonsense to be pushing it in schools. Whether it was motivated by their religious ethos or something else, they also pushed the kind of disinformation that is now being pushed in some developing countries. An example of that is telling young people that condoms have holes in them that will let HIV through, which is, in essence, telling them not to use condoms as a means of protection against HIV transmission. I really hope that no such misinformation is being peddled in our schools today. However, there are those who argue against the comprehensive, equality-based sex education that all young people should have access to, and the Government must show determination to ensure that that education is a reality.

There are also things that have not changed. The stigma, the prejudice and the misunderstanding persist. We all need to take responsibility for challenging those. Partly as a result of the on-going stigma, there are aspects of the law that have not changed. The criminalisation of sex work, of drug use and even of HIV transmission directly harms people's lives.

The economic injustices in drug access globally have not changed enough, although it would be wrong to say that there has been no change and no progress. The targets that are being talked about for access to treatment are for 90 per cent of people who are living with HIV to know their status, for 90 per cent of people with diagnosed

infection to receive sustained antiretroviral therapy and for 90 per cent of all people receiving that therapy to have viral suppression. We are still a long way from achieving that 90-90-90 target globally, as I am told that we are at 70-77-82. On each one of those three targets, progress has been made through the greater availability of generic drugs, but that progress is not nearly enough.

Finally, some things have changed for the worse. Colin Smyth mentioned the economic insecurity that a great many people live with. That can be related to social security cuts, insecure work, the impact that austerity has had on the public services that people who are living with HIV need to access or the inhumanity of our immigration and asylum system, as those things are changes for the worse.

I will give one example: the loss of a needle exchange service in Glasgow will almost inevitably lead to an increase in the number of infections. I agree with Alison Thewliss from the Scottish National Party, who is quoted as saying:

“Evidence from safe injecting facilities in other countries demonstrates that they reduce levels of drug addiction, as well as improving public safety through reducing the level of discarded needles and other”

related items. I hope that the Scottish Government agrees with that comment by Alison Thewliss and will commit to ensuring that safe injecting facilities are available everywhere that they are needed.

The stigma that exists in relation to HIV harms not only individual lives but our collective ability to make political progress on controversial and difficult subjects such as drugs use and sex work and in other areas in which we have not moved in the right direction.

17:31

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): I thank you, Presiding Officer, for letting me say a few words, and I thank my colleague Annie Wells for bringing the debate to the chamber.

I welcome to the gallery members of the consortium that HIV Scotland brought together to work on the strategy that will be launched this week. Entitled “Road Map to Zero”, it is about ending the stigma for people who live with and are affected by AIDS.

The debate has been wonderful to listen to. We have talked about AIDS, the challenges that exist in different communities around the world and the reason for the presence of AIDS in different communities. We have recognised that the disease is universal to us and that much progress has been made in identifying, treating and testing

for it. In all those areas, we have come a long way since, much like Patrick Harvie, I first heard about AIDS as a young teenager.

I am thankful for the content of “Road Map to Zero”. It is about stigma and HIV, but the document teaches about stigma in any area. It teaches about anti-gay feelings and anti-religious feelings—all the feelings that can be involved in stigmatising people because of certain things. It challenges those attitudes and our beliefs about what we do. It is a powerful document and I thank the consortium for building it that way.

The strategy asks us to challenge ourselves in five areas. It asks us to challenge ourselves as individuals with our own feelings and knowledge and to become better educated about matters around which there might be stigma. On interpersonal relationships, it asks us to challenge family, friends and partners on some of their attitudes. Organisationally, we can challenge stigma anywhere in our workplaces or social institutions where we see it being applied to people living with AIDS. We must also take account of community and cultural values. Each community will have its own experience of AIDS. For some, it will be a sexual health issue; others will have experience of it from drugs issues. We must recognise and understand those experiences before we can not only reduce infections but reduce stigma to zero. Of course, there is also a structural level: our national laws and public policy must reflect the need for the anti-stigma message to be at the heart of what we do.

I will close by mentioning the five things that the partners have committed to do, which are important. They have committed themselves to ending HIV-related stigma in Scotland; to participating fully in designing, implementing and monitoring programmes to reduce stigma; to working collaboratively with other partners to introduce necessary policy changes; to strengthening and making meaningful the involvement of people who live with and are affected by HIV; and to holding one another accountable for progress towards zero-stigma goals. Those five asks are powerful and important, and I wish the consortium all the best moving forward.

I should also mention the funding from the MAC AIDS Fund, which made the report possible. It is a powerful document that we should all read and take on board in our jobs as politicians.

17:34

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): Like others, I thank Annie Wells for securing the debate. I also thank all the members who took part in it for their contributions.

This is a welcome opportunity, ahead of world AIDS day on Friday, to consider how far we have come in tackling HIV. As members have noted, world AIDS day provides us with an opportunity to show our support for the millions of people worldwide who are living with HIV, and to remember those who have died over the years since the virus emerged.

Over the past 30 years or so, huge scientific advances have been made in the treatment of HIV. However, although we have come a long way, new HIV infections are still being diagnosed in Scotland every week. Despite all the progress that we have made, some of those at risk still do not know how to protect themselves. Some—too many—hold outdated views about the facts of HIV, leading to the needless stigmatisation that many members have talked about. Therefore, we must make sure that we continue to raise awareness.

The theme of world AIDS day this year is “let’s end it”. We must work together to end isolation, stigma and HIV transmission. Sadly, stigma remains a problem for many people living with HIV. For some, that means that they live in fear of their HIV status being revealed to those they live, work and spend time with. It is vital that we take an evidence-based approach to addressing stigma. We need to take into account what has—and has not—worked, here and elsewhere in the world. I believe that providing everyone with the facts about HIV has a significant part to play in tackling stigma. Government, third sector organisations, practitioners and those infected with HIV need to continue to collaborate with our efforts to tackle the problem.

Annie Wells mentioned the importance of education and raised the consistency of RSHP education. I reiterate the words of Ruth Maguire, who continues to take an interest in the matter. We are making sure that we develop the consistency that Annie Wells asks of us. NHS boards are working with local authorities and other partners to support the delivery of high-quality, consistent and inclusive RSHP education in schools across Scotland. Boards are also working with authorities to produce a national RSHP resource to support effective teaching. That new resource will cover a range of issues, including consent, healthy relationships and the impact of digital technology. It will also be fully inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex issues—all based on facts, not the myths that Patrick Harvie is right to say that we need to guard against.

It is also important to ensure that good-quality education is available to professionals. For example, I am glad that the Scottish Government has supported successful training initiatives such as the caring conversations training resource

developed by Waverley Care, which encourages NHS staff to think about how they interact with patients and promotes honest and caring conversations. It focuses on HIV and uses case studies from HIV patients themselves, but the learning is also relevant to people who work with patients living with any long-term condition. To reiterate the point that Colin Smyth made, we need to recognise the opportunity that we have, through the integration of health and social care, to ensure that such support is also available to those in caring roles and that we enable them to have that education and enhance their ability to deliver care.

It is also important to sort fact from fiction when it comes to HIV, and to empathise with those affected. It is vital that we hear directly about what life is like for people living with HIV. I thank every person in Scotland living with HIV who has spoken about their experiences—whether that has been to one friend over a cup of tea or on a stage, in front of hundreds. All that work is valued and appreciated, and helps with our journey towards tackling stigma and enhancing the education offer across the country.

HIV prevention remains key to our sexual health and blood-borne virus framework. With highly effective treatments now in place, and with PrEP now available on the NHS in Scotland, we already have some of the tools that we need to reduce new infections in Scotland to zero. However, getting to the people who are infected but undiagnosed to ensure that they are tested and treated is a significant challenge. Our framework is clear that normalising and expanding testing are key, and we are working with NHS colleagues to do that.

It is also important to remember that some of those who are most affected by HIV are also marginalised in other ways, such as those who inject drugs. When a person has a serious addiction, they might not be able to take steps to protect themselves from infection. That is why we need to ensure that support is in place to address the underlying addiction and to reduce the harm that such addiction causes.

Patrick Harvie: Will the minister give way?

Aileen Campbell: I will, although I am about to go on to talk about needle exchanges.

Patrick Harvie: I will leave it then.

Aileen Campbell: Although challenges remain, it is encouraging to see the significant decline in the number of new infections in 2016 in Scotland. Like Ruth Maguire, I take pride in the fact that Scotland was the first part of the UK to make PrEP available to eligible patients. I pay tribute to the third sector—HIV Scotland, Waverley Care and a host of others—for setting the tone and allowing

that to be viewed as an appropriate public health intervention to prevent illness. Based on the evidence, that decision was a good response and a good reaction, and the work of such organisations enabled the discussion to take place. PrEP is making a huge difference to the lives of many people in Scotland, in stark contrast to the way in which people coped as best they could, as Edward Mountain described when talking about his time in Africa.

I turn to needle exchanges. Patrick Harvie was right to raise the issue because the situation poses a significant public health risk. I assure him that we are still working with Network Rail and others, including Humza Yousaf, to achieve a satisfactory solution. I will keep Patrick Harvie updated as that work progresses.

Patrick Harvie: I am grateful to the minister for addressing the point and I look forward to hearing about progress. I appreciate that there are difficulties when a third organisation, such as Network Rail, is involved. Is the Government committed to the principle of needle exchanges, and does it acknowledge, as the minister's colleague Alison Thewliss has acknowledged, that safe injecting facilities have the potential to make a huge difference? There is extremely strong evidence of that from around the world.

Aileen Campbell: I was also going to go on to talk about such facilities. As with PrEP and the public health approach that we want to take, if there is evidence, we need to make sure that initiatives are enabled. The situation with Network Rail shows the interface between worlds. This is not normally Network Rail's world, and we need to enable the discussions to be more open so that we can make progress.

On safe injection rooms, earlier today I outlined our refreshed drug strategy. We will continue to work with Glasgow health and social care partnership on the matter. Patrick Harvie is right to make that case, and the public health case has been and continues to be made. The Lord Advocate has provided his advice, and it is welcome. However, we do not have the legislative powers. I have therefore written to ask the UK Government for a meeting to discuss scope for getting those powers to Scotland to help us move the issue forward. I will also keep Patrick Harvie updated on progress with that. This should not be the last word on the matter because of the public health concerns that he is right to outline.

I am clear that those who are affected by HIV in Scotland should have the same level of protection from discrimination and prejudice as anyone else. In line with the world AIDS day theme, our sexual health and blood-borne virus framework identifies the reduction of stigma as one of its five high-level outcomes. We want to live in communities that

have positive, non-stigmatising and supportive attitudes towards people who are affected by HIV. World AIDS day helps us to communicate that aspiration, as do debates in our Parliament.

On Friday, I hope that we can all take the opportunity to remember the impact that HIV has had on lives in Scotland and globally, to reflect on the progress that has been made in treating the infection, and to consider what we can do to reduce new infections even further and better support those living with HIV. We should also reflect on the fact that, when we had the debate this time last year, PrEP was not available. That shows how fast progress can be if we collaborate and put our minds to making the improvements that we all seek.

I thank Annie Wells and the other members who have contributed to the debate, and I look forward to continuing to work with them as we make the improvements that we want to see for those who have HIV in Scotland.

Meeting closed at 17:44.

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