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Thursday 6 September 2018

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 6 September 2018

[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 11:40]

General Question Time

Endometriosis (West of Scotland Specialist Centre)

1. **Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress has been made in the last year in establishing a west of Scotland specialist unit for the treatment of endometriosis. (S5O-02319)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): We are working closely with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde to help to establish the west of Scotland specialist centre, which is expected to open in April 2019. Once open, the Glasgow centre will be the third in Scotland, with two other specialist centres in Edinburgh and Aberdeen. As I am sure Mr Gibson knows, the specialist centres provide multidisciplinary, state-of-the-art, high-quality and person-centred treatment for the management of all grades of endometriosis. They also have an important role in raising awareness.

Kenneth Gibson: I am pleased by the progress that has been made since I raised this issue in my members' business debate last year. As the cabinet secretary knows, one in 10 Scottish women of childbearing age—some 150,000 women—live with endometriosis, which is the biggest cause of female infertility in Scotland. Given these numbers, what steps are being taken to provide information about endometriosis, targeted particularly at young women, and to develop more specialist centres? When can we expect to see a centre in Ayrshire?

Jeane Freeman: I thank Mr Gibson for his significant efforts to raise the profile of endometriosis, including his motion in February last year.

I have asked officials to work with our clinicians in this area to provide information. Mr Gibson is absolutely right about the need to provide additional information and increase awareness among young women and girls in particular in order to increase the opportunities to provide the kind of care and treatment that is necessary. As he knows, this can be a condition that emerges only later on in life and, as a consequence, it can be much more difficult to treat.

The clinical advice is that in a population of Scotland's size, with the level of prevalence that Mr Gibson has quoted, having three specialist centres is recommended as the optimal approach for effective treatment of women in Scotland. However, that is where we are treating severe endometriosis; work is going on to look at what else can be done to support the pathway into those centres so that we can deal with women and girls with the condition much earlier.

Short-term Letting (Licensing Powers)

2. **Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to a recent report by the City of Edinburgh Council that requested licensing powers under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 to allow local authorities to license the use of domestic property for short-term letting. (S5O-02320)

The Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning (Kevin Stewart): I understand the pressure in some parts of the country for new controls over short-term letting of residential properties and we want to address that. That is why, in our programme for government, we have committed to working with local government, communities and business interests to ensure that local authorities have appropriate regulatory powers. That will ensure that local authorities can take decisions that balance the needs and concerns of their communities with wider economic and tourism interests. The powers will allow local authorities to protect the interests of local communities while providing a safe, high-quality experience for visitors.

Licensing may or may not be part of the solution. The solution must be based on the best possible evidence. We have already established a short-term lets delivery group of officials from across Government to examine the issues around short-term letting. That group will consider the existing powers of local authorities and gather evidence about whether further measures are required.

The Government is concerned about the potential negative impact of short-term lets on communities, which is why we are prepared to legislate if that is what is needed.

Andy Wightman: I thank the minister for his answer and welcome the programme for government announcement—I am glad that we have gone beyond sandboxes and data observatories.

The specific request from the City of Edinburgh Council was for powers under section 44 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982. Will the minister introduce a statutory instrument to provide those powers and, if so, when? Can he confirm

that such powers will be available to all local authorities? Can he confirm that such powers will be framed in broad terms to allow each local authority to develop its own licensing scheme or no licensing scheme at all, as each authority sees fit in relation to local needs?

Kevin Stewart: We acknowledged the concerns that have been expressed by the City of Edinburgh Council and we welcome its contribution in its paper published on 1 August to the thinking on how best to manage short-term lets. Government officials meet the council regularly and we will be considering its proposals carefully. We will work with the council and other councils, which may have different views, and with stakeholders to ensure that the right balance is struck between having adequate accommodation for visitors and ensuring permanent housing stock.

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): I urge the minister to act as quickly as possible. I have been inundated with complaints from people living in the city following the Edinburgh festival detailing the problems that they have had with Airbnb accommodation. If he is not prepared to act promptly, will he at least work with the sector to introduce a voluntary code to limit the number of days that properties can be rented out for short-term lets over the next 12 months, if legislation is going to take longer than that?

Kevin Stewart: I understand that Ms Dugdale and many other folk want us to act quickly. However, we must act appropriately and get it absolutely right. That is why we have set up the group to examine all that is going on in respect of short-term lets. We will take the views of communities, local authorities and stakeholders very seriously. I know that everyone in Parliament wants to get the right solution. We have to find the right balance and we will do so. I will not talk about speed because I do not think that that is necessarily the way forward. The important thing is to get it absolutely right for all local authorities, communities and stakeholders.

Overcrowding on Trains (Edinburgh to Dunblane)

3. Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to tackle overcrowding on rail services between Edinburgh and Dunblane. (S5O-02321)

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson): The member will be pleased to note that the final phase of the electrification of the full route between Edinburgh and Glasgow and Dunblane is due to be completed later this year. To support that major infrastructure investment, around £370 million of Scottish Government

funding is being provided to deliver a fleet of 70 new Hitachi class 385 trains, which Abellio ScotRail will lease during this franchise term.

The plan is for ScotRail to introduce greater capacity on services from Dunblane to Edinburgh and Glasgow from December 2018, with further increases in May 2019. However, that timeframe is very dependent on the completion of Network Rail's electrification works and how ScotRail and Hitachi's introduction of the new C385 train fleet proceeds. My officials at Transport Scotland are working closely with those organisations to maximise the success of those transformational investments.

Mark Ruskell: I thank the cabinet secretary for that detailed response and welcome him to his new role. I am sure that, in discussions with people in his constituency, he will recognise that capacity is a big issue and that these services are effectively standing room only at peak times—they are dangerously overcrowded. Can he assure me that, as the 385 trains are rolled out, the Edinburgh to Dunblane service will not be stuck with short, four-carriage 365 trains? An overcrowded train is still an overcrowded train, regardless of whether it is electrified.

Michael Matheson: I recognise the member's concerns and, as I said, ScotRail intends to have greater carriage numbers available on the Edinburgh to Dunblane service from December 2018. That will increase capacity, but it is dependent on electrification works being completed on time. I know that Network Rail and ScotRail are working very closely together to ensure that that work is completed on time. Overall, once the new Hitachi trains are rolled out, they will provide further capacity in services right across Scotland, including on the Edinburgh to Dunblane line.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): Users of this service talk about crush hour, not rush hour. There is a shortage of carriages, and a practice of skip-stopping and early termination of services. The previous transport minister said that ScotRail would get a grip of that but, given that ScotRail's public performance measure is at a three-year low, what assurances can the current transport secretary give to users of the Dunblane service about when they will see tangible results in improvements on the line?

Michael Matheson: I outlined in my earlier answers the improvements that are taking place now, including the significant capital investment into the electrification of the line, along with the rest of the electrification that is taking place in the central belt. As I said, additional capacity will be provided on the line in December this year, once the electrification work has been completed. That

will continue to be rolled out as the new Hitachi trains come on stream.

NHS Grampian (Funding)

4. Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of information provided by the Scottish Parliament information centre that NHS Grampian has received the lowest share of public funding of any national health service board for each of the last nine years, how the new health secretary plans to reimburse NHS Grampian for a funding shortfall totalling £165.6 million over that period. (S50-02322)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): In 2018-19, NHS Grampian has received a resource uplift of 2.1 per cent—the highest percentage uplift of any territorial board—which takes the board's annual resource budget to £921 million.

The NHS resource allocation formula—NRAC—sets out target shares for the distribution of funding to the 14 territorial boards. The formula was introduced in 2009-10 to provide improvements in predicting relative needs across board areas. The approach taken by the Scottish Government has been to move boards towards parity gradually over a number of years. In 2018-19, all boards have been brought within 0.8 per cent of parity.

Mike Rumbles: It is very welcome that boards are moving towards parity, but NHS Grampian still has consistently the worst waiting times, and is the worst for chronic pain, the worst for cancer and the third worst for child and adolescent mental health. Staff numbers are dropping in almost every field and there has been a tripling of vacant hospital positions. That is due to the funding formula. Will the health secretary make the case with her cabinet colleagues to find at least some of the £165 million of underfunding from her own funding formula to address the crisis?

Jeane Freeman: Let me make a number of points. First, as I am sure Mr Rumbles knows, because he has been round this particular course many a time before, the funding formula is not my funding formula; it is set by an independent group of experts, including board representatives and health academics. Secondly, it is not possible, as Mr Rumbles seeks to do, to make a causal connection between challenges that boards may have in recruiting staff or in meeting the targets for patient care that we have set for them, and the funding formula.

The way to move towards parity is to do precisely what we as a Government have done, which is to take it step by step. The consequence of what Mr Rumbles is suggesting is that boards in

other parts of the country—equally challenged, equally trying to provide high-quality healthcare, and equally expected by me to meet those targets—would be stripped of funds. That strikes me as a deeply unfair, irresponsible and disproportionate way to proceed.

As Ms Robison said before me, we will proceed to deliver in that stepped way towards parity. That is what we have done, and I am very pleased that we are now 0.8 per cent closer to parity across all our boards. That is the approach that we will continue to take.

William McIlvanney Campus

5. Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the completion status and final outturn costs of the William McIlvanney school campus in Kilmarnock. (S50-02323)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): In October last year, I laid the foundation stone for the £45.3 million William McIlvanney campus. I look forward to visiting the campus, which opened in April, later this month, to see the modern state-of-the-art educational facilities that are available to the children and young people of Kilmarnock.

Willie Coffey: As we formally open that magnificent new campus next week and welcome all the staff and pupils, and even those who voted against the budget that built the school, will the cabinet secretary confirm that there will be no 30-year legacy of public debt with the campus, as there is under previous school building schemes brought in by Labour?

John Swinney: The William McIlvanney campus represents a significant investment in the educational facilities for children and young people in Kilmarnock. It is the product of good joint working between East Ayrshire Council and the Scottish Government. It is part of an ambitious school building programme, which has seen the number of children and young people being educated in good or satisfactory buildings across Scotland increase from 61 per cent in 2007, when this Government came into office, to 86 per cent. That represents a transformation of the educational estate for young people in Scotland and a significant element of co-operation between the Government and local authorities.

MV Loch Seaforth (Financing)

6. Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government whether it plans to investigate the financing of the CalMac vessel, MV Loch Seaforth, which is now owned by

Lloyds Banking Group, after a lease deal was agreed at a reported cost to the public purse of £53 million. (S5O-02324)

The Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands (Paul Wheelhouse): A full tender process for a lease arrangement was undertaken by Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd in line with European Union procurement rules. That resulted in the award of the contract to Lloyds Banking Group as its tender was assessed as the most economically advantageous.

Audit Scotland published its report to Parliament, "Transport Scotland's ferry services", in October 2017. It included comment on the MV Loch Seaforth procurement, but having concluded its analysis of this and other procurement decisions, Audit Scotland did not raise anything of concern regarding the procurement of the MV Loch Seaforth. The Scottish Government therefore has no plans to investigate the financing of the MV Loch Seaforth.

Rhoda Grant: That is truly disappointing. It is shocking that the boat will require to be handed back as new in 2022 or have a new lease negotiated. It is also not clear when the two ferries that have been further delayed will come into service, if ever.

These revelations follow a summer of chaos in the Western Isles and Argyll that is on-going because of inadequate ferries and no capacity in the fleet to deal with breakdowns. That is costing the islands' economies dear and the Government has simply turned a blind eye. Instead of taking money from CalMac, will the minister now invest in a new ferry?

Paul Wheelhouse: It is disappointing to hear Rhoda Grant's lack of recognition of the £1 billion that the Government has invested in the Clyde and Hebrides ferry services since 2007.

I acknowledge that there is great concern in the islands around assuring the resilience of the ferry services and I am happy to engage on that issue with members across the chamber. However, I would have hoped that Rhoda Grant, in framing her question, might have recognised that we are commissioning new ferries from Ferguson Marine Engineering Ltd. A revised delivery programme has been discussed by Ferguson Marine and CMAL and Parliament was informed of the dates on 16 August 2018.

In recognition of the importance of the issue, the Government has invested in ferries, as I have said, and in harbour facilities across routes in the area. We continue to invest in ferry services. I hope that Rhoda Grant will acknowledge that.

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): The minister will be aware that the need for

additional capacity is the most pressing ferry-related issue. Will he commit to visiting my constituency to meet me and other stakeholders at a summit to discuss that important issue?

Paul Wheelhouse: I was pleased to visit Dr Allan's constituency last month and to meet the comhairle and local stakeholders to discuss issues, including ferry services. I would be pleased to visit Dr Allan's beautiful constituency once again to meet stakeholders and discuss ferry services and other connectivity issues that are important to the islands.

I agree that capacity during peak periods is one of the greatest challenges that our ferry services face, particularly given the welcome increase in the number of the visitors to the Western Isles. I recognise that service reliability and fleet resilience are issues of great importance to the island communities. In recognising that, we have added sailings to Lochboisdale, and the Tarbert and Lochmaddy service. There is a new route between Mallaig and Lochboisdale and a significantly larger vessel on the service to Barra. The Government is investing in services to the Western Isles, but I would be more than happy to meet Dr Allan and his constituents.

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): In relation to the cost of the two new CalMac ferries that the minister mentioned and which are now delayed, will he confirm whether there will be additional costs as a result of the delay and, if so, how much?

Paul Wheelhouse: I recently heard Jim McCol of Ferguson Marine discussing the difficulties with getting regulatory approval. That is one of the causes of delay in the vessels being delivered. I hope that members will be behind the procurement of these innovative new ferries from a Scottish engineering company and I am happy to engage with Mr Cameron and get him the further details of the procurement process that he requires.

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

Parole System (Victims and Families)

1. Ruth Davidson (Edinburgh Central) (Con):

On Tuesday, the First Minister said that she would improve the information and support that is available to victims when prisoners are released, and that she would increase the transparency of the parole system, but we need the detail. Will victims and their families be able to give their testimony to the Parole Board for Scotland in person? Will the law be changed so that the safety and welfare of victims is explicitly taken into account in decisions on early release and on parole? What is the timescale for getting the changes that victims and families demand? We had no clarity from the First Minister on Tuesday, so can she give us some today?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We will consult on all those matters shortly. As I said on Tuesday, some of that consultation will take place before the end of this year, and other aspects of the consultation will be in the early part of next year.

To answer some of the content of Ruth Davidson's question, it is the case right now that the Parole Board for Scotland, and the Scottish Prison Service in cases of temporary release, can and should take into account the views of and the impact on victims of crime. What we want to do is consider whether there is a need to extend that. We also recognise that there is a need for greater transparency around the decisions that the Parole Board takes, and about where decisions on temporary release are being made. I look forward to hearing the views of people across the Parliament and those with an interest in the issue from outside the Parliament, so that we get those things right.

The final point that I want to make is one that I make frequently in this chamber. Although it is absolutely the case that it is for the Government, and in a wider sense for the Parliament, to set the policy around these issues, the decisions—whether on parole, bail or temporary release—are rightly for the independent authorities to take, and I hope that that is something that Ruth Davidson would agree with.

Ruth Davidson: I am sure that the First Minister would acknowledge that I am asking about the framework. This is an issue that I have raised with the First Minister before. Families who feel that they are being treated as an afterthought have come to this Parliament. They have met with the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and their requests

for change have been denied. That is why the Stewart family, who lost their daughter Michelle, are now campaigning for greater rights. They received a letter from Humza Yousaf yesterday, and they had this to say about the Scottish National Party's plans:

"Lots of warm words. But nothing concrete."

That is their verdict on what the First Minister is proposing. Are they not right?

The First Minister: Humza Yousaf met the Stewart family on 3 August to discuss their understandable concerns over the treatment of victims in the justice system. I can tell Ruth Davidson, members in the chamber and, most important, the Stewart family themselves that we are actively considering in detail the Stewart family's proposals and other calls for improvements. We are already in discussion with the Parole Board on further reforms and possible development of its rules of procedure, and that must include whether any changes are necessary following the Worboys case in England.

As I understand it, the Stewart family have raised three broad areas where they think that reform is necessary. The first is the safety and welfare of victims when parole and early release decisions are being taken, and it is important that we consider that fully and carefully. The second is increasing the use of exclusion zones into which serious prisoners are not allowed to be relocated when freed. Conditions such as that can already be put on licences, but it is important to look at whether more can be done. Thirdly, they call for toughening of the victim notification scheme. All those things have been taken into account and will continue to be considered in full by the Government. I hope that we will get the views of the Stewart family and of other families who have views on those matters, as well as views from parties across the chamber.

Ruth Davidson: The issue here is that it is not just about one case. It goes far, far wider. Over the summer, we were contacted by other families, including the Carsons from Harthill. Their dad, Mike Mosey, a former policeman, was bludgeoned to death in his kitchen. The killer was sentenced to 18 years, which was reduced to just 13 on appeal. This June, after being told of rumours that he was to be released early, they wrote to the Scottish Prison Service and were told that that was not the case. Then, just six weeks later, they received another letter informing them that, in fact, he had already been approved for temporary release—a letter that coincided with the anniversary of Mike's murder.

The family have been left traumatised and feel that the system has totally let them down. I know that the First Minister will agree that such a case is

unacceptable but does that not simply demonstrate the need to act decisively now to show victims and their families that we are listening?

The First Minister: The case that Ruth Davidson cited is unacceptable. The Cabinet Secretary for Justice would be happy to meet that family if they wanted to do that.

We have already taken a range of actions in this policy area. For example, we have changed the rules on automatic early release to reduce the circumstances in which prisoners can be released earlier. Some of the issues that Ruth Davidson rightly raises can and should already be taken into account by the Parole Board in decisions on parole or by the Scottish Prison Service in decisions on early release. However, because of the kind of experience that she narrated in her last question, we need to look at what more needs to be done to ensure that victims and families of victims are given proper notice and, where appropriate, properly consulted when such decisions are taken.

It is right that we set out the package of reforms that we set out earlier this week. We will now take those forward, taking full consideration of the views of victims, families of victims and members around the chamber. That is the right way to proceed and we will do it as quickly as possible.

Ruth Davidson: The Stewarts, the Carsons and families like them are not asking for the world; they just ask to be heard when the killers of their loved ones are released. They feel that criminals have more rights than victims, and they want the law to be changed so that victims are put at the heart of the justice system, which is where they should be. Those families are in the Parliament today because they want their experience to help others. When will the Government do right by them, end the warm words without concrete action and finally adopt Michelle's law in full?

The First Minister: I am not clear whether the Stewart family are in the chamber. If they are, I welcome them and assure them that the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and I are very happy and willing to continue to liaise with them about the changes that they think require to be made.

Two things are important. It is important that we stress the things that the Parole Board or the Scottish Prison Service can already do that families understandably think should be done, and that we make sure that they are done consistently. For example, the Scottish Prison Service and Parole Board can and should already take account of the impact on victims when decisions are taken. The Parole Board can also already impose licence conditions that prevent offenders from going to specific places or contacting specific people.

Let us make sure that the provisions that are already in place are applied properly and appropriately but let us also ensure that we listen to people who think that there are further things that we need to do. That is exactly what we are doing and will continue to do. The Stewart family and any other family with concerns of that nature have my absolute assurance on that.

Yammer (Pornographic Images)

2. Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): Over the recess, under freedom of information legislation, an email dated 30 April was published. It was from the chief executive of Education Scotland to the Deputy First Minister and it revealed that a pornographic image had been shared on Yammer, the social media app that is used in Scotland's schools, including primary schools. The image had been viewed 100 times and viewed by children.

The Deputy First Minister asked for the guidance of his officials. He was told by civil servants that

"it is inevitable that young people will be exposed at some point to inappropriate material",

so he took no action. Why did the Yammer app stay online for a further six weeks after that incident? (S5F-02539)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): As I understand it, when that image appeared and was drawn to officials' attention, it was removed. Yammer remains offline for pupils while the relevant issues are examined in detail as part of the review that Education Scotland is undertaking. That is because we take the safeguarding of children, information security and data protection very seriously. I hope that Richard Leonard will welcome the action that was taken and the fact that we continue to take a precautionary approach to the matter, because pupils cannot access Yammer right now and will not be able to do so until we are satisfied that the issues have been properly resolved.

Richard Leonard: I accept that the First Minister took the app down, but that happened only on 11 June, after parents raised concerns with her. The Deputy First Minister was told about the matter on 30 April and, for six weeks, he did not act. What is more, the app is now back online, yet the Government has not installed proper safeguarding measures. Who authorised the decision to put the app back online? Was it the First Minister or the Deputy First Minister?

The First Minister: As I understand it, Yammer is currently available only to staff and is offline to pupils. That is an important matter.

On the issues that were drawn to the attention of Education Scotland and then the Deputy First Minister, in April, they were alerted to a single inappropriate image on Yammer. As I understand it, that image was removed. In June, we were alerted to another incident, and it became clear that the suspension of the Yammer network was required until all of the issues could be properly resolved. That process is under way.

I think that the right precautionary actions have been taken, and I hope that everyone across the chamber understands, as we do, that we have to strike the right balance between the educational benefits of such online systems and the safety of young people. That balance is critically important and we are acting in a way that will ensure that we can strike exactly that balance.

Richard Leonard: To recap, here is what we know: the Deputy First Minister was told about pornographic material on this app in April, and the app remained online until June. The Government is only now looking for a safeguarding product for Yammer, with the specification expected to be issued tomorrow at the earliest. So, not only did the Government relaunch the app without proper safeguarding, it relaunched it without knowing what proper safeguarding looks like. Teachers and parents continue to be concerned, and they are right to be. They deserve straight answers.

Will the First Minister today order an urgent investigation into her Government's handling of this matter, and will she report back to Parliament all of the findings in full?

The First Minister: I am not sure whether Richard Leonard heard some of my previous answers. An investigation and review is already underway, being carried out by Education Scotland. Yammer is offline to pupils—they cannot currently access it and they will not be able to access it until we are satisfied that those issues are resolved. I think that that is the responsible and appropriate action to have taken.

In terms of the actions of the Deputy First Minister, let me recap. In April, a single inappropriate image was identified. It was immediately removed. At that point, there was no indication that there was any concern about wider, systemic issues to do with Yammer. However, when a second incident was reported in June, not only was the image removed, but Yammer was taken offline for pupils. I think that that is absolutely the right action to have been taken and I am surprised that Richard Leonard is not welcoming it.

We will continue to ensure that the safety of children is paramount by ensuring that Yammer is not accessible to pupils until we are absolutely satisfied that all of the issues have been properly

resolved. I believe that that is the appropriate action for the Deputy First Minister to have taken, and I would hope that members would agree with it.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): We have a number of constituency supplementary questions. We will see how much progress we make.

Transvaginal Mesh Implants

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Today, *The Scotsman* and the *Edinburgh Evening News* highlight the tragic death of 75-year-old Mrs Eileen Baxter from Loanhead in my region. Listed as one of the contributing factors in her death is a mesh implant. I believe that this is the first time that mesh has been specifically cited as one of the underlying causes of a woman's death in Scotland.

With this new information, will the First Minister instruct an inquiry into Mrs Baxter's death? Will she instruct national health service boards not to buy one more box of mesh implants? Will she instruct the NHS to clear its shelves of all mesh? And will she ensure that not one more implant is carried out in Scotland using this grotesque and deadly product?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I thank Neil Findlay for raising that extremely serious issue.

First of all, I convey my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Ms Baxter.

The Scottish Government does not, of course, hold information on individual patients or their treatment but, if we are supplied with information on Ms Baxter's case, we will give that very careful consideration and consider whether any further review or inquiry into that specific case is required.

On the issue of mesh more generally—I will discuss the issue further later today with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport—its use other than in exceptional circumstances remains under suspension in NHS Scotland. The number of such operations has fallen dramatically. In the six months to March this year, 33 were carried out; that compares with more than 1,100 in the similar period in 2013-14.

We will continue to have that suspension in place until the chief medical officer is satisfied. The chief medical officer also announced further actions following the Public Petitions Committee's report.

Medical devices across the United Kingdom are, of course, regulated by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency, and the matter is reserved. However, we will continue to

work within the health service to ensure that we are taking appropriate action.

As I said at the outset of my answer, I will discuss the issue further later on with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport, who will keep Parliament fully updated.

TMD Friction (Job Losses)

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): The First Minister will be aware of the announcement by TMD Friction in Hurlford in my constituency that 86 jobs are to be lost as the company moves its operation to England. What help, if any, can we provide to the company and the staff affected by that devastating news? What assistance can the Scottish Government provide to support Scottish manufacturing companies to improve their competitiveness at this time, when European manufacturing is under significant cost pressures from emerging markets?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I was disappointed to learn of the proposed closure of the TMD Friction site in Hurlford in Willie Coffey's constituency. Obviously, that is a blow to the local area, and this will be an anxious time for the affected employees.

Scottish Enterprise is already engaging with the company, and it will meet local management as soon as possible to discuss the decision. Partnership action for continuing employment—PACE—will meet TMD Friction today to discuss support for employees who face redundancy. Obviously, PACE will aim to minimise the time that any individuals who are affected by redundancy are out of work.

On manufacturing more generally, our manufacturing action plan reaffirms our commitment to growing and investing in the sector and putting innovation at the heart of the growth in the manufacturing sector. That is why we are investing £48 million in developing the new national manufacturing institute for Scotland, which will be an industry-led international centre of advanced manufacturing expertise and skills and which can help to secure Scotland's place as a global leader in advanced manufacturing.

Kweku Adoboli (Deportation)

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): On Monday, my constituent Kweku Adoboli was detained by the Home Office. He is now in Dungavel detention centre facing imminent deportation to Ghana. In 2012, he was convicted of financial fraud as a result of systemic recklessness in the banking industry. He has now served his sentence and has been making a positive contribution to society by working with industry leaders and politicians. What support can

the Scottish Government provide to Mr Adoboli, who is being forcibly removed from his home to a country that he barely knows? Does the First Minister regard that as a proportionate decision in light of Mr Adoboli's long-established residence in the United Kingdom and, in recent years, in Scotland?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I have concerns about that case and frequently have concerns about how immigration cases are treated. I appreciate that this will be an extremely stressful and difficult time for Mr Adoboli and his friends and family.

I think that most people would accept that it stands to reason that it is right that questions of character and criminality should be a factor in any immigration system, but it is also important that the UK Government gives due consideration to individual circumstances. In this case, that would include the positive contribution that the individual has made to life in Scotland.

The Scottish Government welcomes non-UK citizens from all over the world and their contribution to our country, so we will continue to push generally for an immigration system that recognises individual circumstances and provides a welcoming environment. We are, of course, always willing to consider whether we can give assistance in individual cases, and I am sure that the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs would be happy to discuss that constituency case directly with Mr Wightman.

Glasgow Fire Recovery Fund

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): The First Minister will be only too aware of the devastating Glasgow School of Art fire and its effect on residents and businesses on Sauchiehall Street. I thank her for personally intervening to set up a £5 million fund to help affected businesses. However, she might know that the Centre for Contemporary Arts, which has been closed since the fire, was due to reopen on 14 September but now has no opening date, has still to receive the £25,000 that it applied for and is in grave danger of closing. Will the First Minister act today to release that money? Will she agree to meet me and some of the businesses, including Bagelmania, that have not been able to access the fund at all? Will she consider whether any money that is left in the fund could go towards the businesses that feel that they may go out of business because of the fire?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I thank Pauline McNeill for raising what is a very important issue in the city of Glasgow. It is also an important national issue.

The Government and I considered that it was right to set up a fund—as we did over the

summer—to help the businesses that were most directly affected by the impact of the Glasgow School of Art fire and by the earlier fire on Sauchiehall Street. We will try to be as flexible as possible with applications to the fund, so that if there are particular businesses that are not initially eligible, and which Pauline McNeill wants to bring to our attention, I will ensure that they are given proper consideration.

I am aware of the particular difficulties that the CCA is experiencing. It already receives public funding as an arts organisation, which has meant that more time has been needed to process its application for money from the fund. I will personally seek an update on that today and will ensure that Pauline McNeill gets the information as soon as possible.

More generally, we will continue to work with Glasgow City Council and to do everything we can to reduce the impact of the two devastating fires on businesses and individuals in the city of Glasgow.

Programme for Government

3. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Elements of the new programme for government are certainly welcome—for example, the continued commitment to a fairer system of income tax, the creation of a south of Scotland enterprise agency and a young carers grant. Many of them are things that the Greens proposed.

However, big problems remain. Teaching unions, for example, have been deeply disappointed by the lack of a plan to tackle the growing teacher shortage, and of a commitment to a fair pay deal. In addition, the Government's own figures that were published this week show that public satisfaction with local services is in deep decline. Satisfaction with local health services and public transport is in deep decline, and there is a big decline in satisfaction with schools. The First Minister must agree that the situation is not acceptable. What needs to change so that the services in our local communities, which we all rely on, are protected and delivered to the high standards that people deserve?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Patrick Harvie has raised a range of issues.

On education, the teachers' pay negotiations are under way as we speak. I hope that they will be resolved well in the near future. I note that the Educational Institute of Scotland said the other day that there were some very welcome statements in the programme for government, and listed many of them.

On satisfaction with public services, if we look at the figures that were published the other day on people's use of our public services, for local health

services the satisfaction rate is more than 80 per cent, for local schools the rate is almost 90 per cent and for public transport the rate is well over 70 per cent. That is a good basis, but our priority is to continue to protect and to support services.

Patrick Harvie asked me what needs to change: we need to continue what we are doing. In this year's budget, we delivered a real-terms increase for local authority resources, we are delivering more money to ensure that we are closing the attainment gap in our schools and we are taking action on our railways to ensure, for example, that passenger services improve. We will continue to take a range of actions to ensure that this country has the public services that it needs and deserves.

Patrick Harvie: Of course, those are not separate issues; they are brought together by a single situation. Local service providers and, in particular, local councils, face rising demand and do not have the financial powers that they need to meet that demand fairly. All too often, they are left having to make decisions about whether to cut services or to increase fees and charges.

Free swimming lessons have been cut, there have been increases to childcare charges, and councils have been forced to increase transport costs and to introduce new charges for music tuition, which has led to a huge number of children losing out.

Our polling shows that 85 per cent of people in Scotland want their councils to have better powers to raise funds fairly. Does the First Minister not agree that cutting services or hiking fees and charges is the least fair, least progressive and least sensible way of paying for local services in communities across Scotland?

The First Minister: The Scottish Government's job is to ensure that we give fair funding settlements to local government. It is then for local government to take the decisions that it thinks appropriate in communities.

The settlement for this year's budget delivered for local authorities a real-terms increase in their revenue and capital budgets. That is before we take account of the resources that local authorities can raise themselves through council tax, for example. We will continue to ensure a fair settlement for local government, within the context of the Scottish Government's budget continuing to be subject to pressures and cuts from the Westminster Government.

The wider question that Patrick Harvie was getting at, on whether local authorities should have more powers to decide themselves what revenue to raise, is a discussion that Parliament will have in the run-up to the draft budget this year and the final budget next year. The Government is certainly open to suggestions, as we have been in

previous budget rounds, and will continue to consider carefully ideas and suggestions that are brought forward, whether they come from parties in Parliament or from local government itself.

The Presiding Officer: There is room for additional questions. The first is from John Mason.

Orange Order Marches

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): The First Minister may be aware of the incident that allegedly happened at St Alphonsus RC church in my constituency, stemming from an Orange order march. There can be more than 200 such marches in a year. Does the First Minister agree that restrictions are needed on the number and routes of such marches?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): First, I was appalled—as, I am sure, was everyone across the chamber—by the incident that took place outside St Alphonsus church. Absolutely nobody should ever be a target of hatred because of their faith. The Scottish Government will always be very clear about that in our responses.

I understand the concerns that have been raised and which John Mason has reflected in the chamber. Responsibility for regulation of marches and parades rests with local authorities, and it is important that they work with Police Scotland, because they are best placed to make decisions that balance the rights of people to march with—very importantly—the rights of others in our communities.

We always encourage action that brings the different parties involved together to try to find constructive ways forward.

Guru Nanak Gurdwara Edinburgh (Attack)

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): Last week, there was a petrol-bomb attack on Edinburgh's gurdwara. Thankfully, no one was hurt, but there was considerable smoke damage and there is no doubt that the attack has left people feeling fearful, upset and alarmed.

The multicultural and diverse community of Leith has rallied in support. I ask the First Minister what her Government can and will do to allay the fears of the Sikh community, to crack down on all crimes that are fuelled by hate and to promote a culture of inclusion and respect.

The First Minister: Everything that we do, not just as a Government but right across the Parliament and our country, should ensure that everybody, regardless of their faith, race, background or culture, feels safe and secure in Scotland. It is incumbent on all of us that we have zero tolerance of any attack on any person that is motivated by hatred of that person's faith or race.

Last week, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government engaged with the Sikh community to try to allay its understandable concerns. We will continue to do that.

As we announced in the programme for government, we are about to undertake a review of hate crime law. That is a welcome opportunity to consider whether further protections are necessary.

I know the impact that attacks like the reprehensible attack that Kezia Dugdale has raised have on communities. There is more than one gurdwara in my constituency; they were impacted by what happened in Edinburgh.

It is important that we all stand in solidarity and side by side with all the wonderful communities that make up our wonderfully diverse country.

Exports

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Figures out today show that Scottish exports have increased by 7 per cent to £28.8 billion. That growth is faster than in any other nation in the UK. There is, however, significant untapped potential. How will the Scottish Government capitalise on it? How will we tackle the threat that is posed by the UK Government dragging Scotland out of the world's largest single market, which will have a negative impact on Scotland, including my South Scotland constituents?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Today's export figures are excellent. There has been a 7 per cent increase in Scottish exports which, as Emma Harper said, represents the fastest growth of any United Kingdom nation. Yesterday, we heard about growth in tourism figures; in particular, growth in the number of European Union visitors coming to Scotland when the number is declining elsewhere in the UK. That underlines the importance to us of continued membership of the single market.

We are doing well on exports, but as I said on Tuesday when I announced the programme for government, we need to do even better. That is why I announced a £20 million package, on which we will work with business, to ensure that we encourage and support our businesses to export even more.

Ayr Station (Alternative Parking at Prestwick Airport)

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): The First Minister will be aware of the dangerous state of the Station hotel in Ayr, which is causing disruption to rail services across the west of Scotland. The most recent plans to mitigate the problem include bringing longer trains from Glasgow and stopping

them at Prestwick Town station, where car parking space is very limited. In order to relieve congestion at Prestwick Town station on a temporary basis, would the First Minister consider asking Prestwick airport to make parking available at the airport free of charge to rail passengers until the present crisis is resolved and normal services are resumed, so that they can use the Prestwick Airport stop as well?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): As regards the general issue with the Station hotel in Ayr, I know the area very well. I was in the chamber on Tuesday when Michael Matheson answered a question about the important issues around that.

I think that the specific suggestion that John Scott has made sounds very good, on hearing it for the first time, so I undertake to take it away, discuss it with relevant officials and get back to him as quickly as possible. It certainly seems like a positive suggestion and I cannot immediately think of any objection that anybody could have to it, but I would obviously have to discuss—*[Laughter.]* That is not something that I can often say about suggestions that come from Mr Scott's side of the chamber.

In all seriousness, we know how much pressure the current situation is putting on commuters, so we will take John Scott's positive suggestion away and come back to him as quickly as we can.

Young People (Mental Wellbeing)

4. Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government will take to support the mental wellbeing of young people. (S5F-02556)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): This week in the programme for government, we set out a package of measures to do more to support positive mental health, to prevent ill health and to ensure that those people who need specialist care can access it more quickly. Those new actions build on our mental health strategy and will be backed by £0.25 billion of additional investment, starting this year and increasing over the subsequent four years. That includes £50 million to improve perinatal mental health, more than £60 million for additional counselling services, £20 million for school nurses and £65 million to develop a community mental wellbeing service for five to 24-year-olds that will offer immediate access to counselling and to family and peer support.

Fulton MacGregor: I recently held a children and young people's mental health event in my constituency, at which local and national stakeholders came together with local young

people for a constructive discussion. One of the issues that came to the fore was an apparent lack of access to community child and adolescent mental health services for those aged between 16 and 18 who are not in education.

Can the First Minister confirm that the provision of the expanded community mental wellbeing services that were outlined this week in the programme for government will be an opportunity for national health service boards to ensure that all young people, including those who are outwith school or college, can get the support that they require?

The First Minister: Yes. Community mental wellbeing services must be designed in such a way that it is easier for children and young people, and their families and carers, to access the help that they need, when they need it. They must not be designed around criteria such as whether the young person is still in school. I would expect all NHS boards to provide age-appropriate mental health services for young people, including those who are not in education.

More generally, it is the expansion of community services, including services in schools, that is the key to dramatically improving services for young people. We know from the statistics that were published the other day that, over the past quarter, more young people were seen by the specialist CAMH service and more were seen within 18 weeks. The percentage fell because demand is rising so fast.

We need to make sure that young people are not being referred to the specialist CAMH service because of a lack of community provision. That is what the focus of the investment that I announced the other day will be on. If we get that right, we will also make sure that those young people who are suffering from the most serious ill health get access to specialist services as quickly as possible.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): Coming in the week in which Scotland posted its worst-ever waiting time statistics for child and adolescent mental health services, the programme for government money is of course welcome. However, does the First Minister recognise that the issue is about not just health services but training educationists to understand the very specific mental health needs of children who are suffering trauma, attachment disorder and loss?

The First Minister: Yes, I do. I specifically mentioned on Tuesday that some of the investment that we have now dedicated will go to ensuring that teachers have the materials that they need and that all local authorities have access to mental health first-aid training for teachers, which

is a really important part of this. Equipping those who are working with young people, making sure that there is a range of services available in the community and making sure that our specialist services are available as quickly as possible to those who most need them are the three prongs of the approach that we want to take.

I repeat again—and I am not trying to shy away from the figures that were published on Tuesday—that when we look at the detail of those figures it is clear that the system is doing more. It is seeing more people, and seeing more of them within 18 weeks, but rising demand is outstripping the capacity to deliver, so we need to reform as well as invest. We have invested a lot in mental health services—with increased funding and an increased number of staff—but reform to make sure that more community services are available is key to making sure that we get this right for every young person who needs those services.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): A few days after celebrating Christmas with his partner Karen and their two young children, my constituent Luke Henderson completed suicide. As reported in the *Sunday Post*, Luke pleaded with health services for help eight times in the six days directly before he died, but was either turned away or referred elsewhere. Nothing will bring Luke back, but his family desperately wants to know that lessons have been learned from the catalogue of failures that led to his preventable death.

Will the First Minister please ask the Minister for Mental Health to meet Karen McKeown and take urgent action to review suicide prevention procedures in NHS Lanarkshire?

The First Minister: The Minister for Mental Health will, of course, be willing to meet Luke's family. If Monica Lennon gives us the details, we will set up that meeting as quickly as possible. If there are lessons that need to be learned from this or any case, by any NHS board, it is essential that that is done. Over the summer we published the suicide prevention plan, which is looking at the additional actions that we need to take to make sure that the number of suicides in Scotland continues to reduce, and we have set another target for reduction.

I am always aware that when we talk about statistics around suicide we should never forget that one suicide is one too many and leaves a bereaved family in its wake. We must all make sure that we do everything possible to reduce the numbers and to learn lessons where that is required, so the Minister for Mental Health will, of course, be happy to meet Luke's family.

Thrombectomy

5. Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government is taking in response to Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland's call for an increase in the use of the thrombectomy procedure. (S5F-02546)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We recognise the benefits of thrombectomy, which can significantly improve outcomes and quality of life for people who have had an ischaemic stroke by avoiding, or reducing the level of, disability. That is why the directors of planning thrombectomy advisory group is progressing the development of a national planning framework for its provision in Scotland. That group is due to report in spring next year.

Miles Briggs: The procedure has recently been withdrawn from NHS Lothian. The Scottish Government has said that up to 600 stroke patients across Scotland a year could benefit from the procedure, which would help to avoid significant levels of disability caused by stroke, as the First Minister said. Although I welcome the fact that a plan has been developed, when does the First Minister believe that a deadline has to be in place to see a national thrombectomy service in Scotland, as is already the case in England and Northern Ireland?

The First Minister: Before giving that date, it is important to allow the advisory group to do its work. As I said in my original answer, that group will report in spring next year. Its recommendations will then be taken forward as quickly as possible. Miles Briggs referred to NHS Lothian. The issues experienced in NHS Lothian underline the importance of developing a national planning framework for the provision of the procedure. I will ask the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport to keep the member fully updated as that work progresses.

Drug Deaths

6. Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government is taking in response to the rising number of drug deaths. (S5F-02574)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Addressing drug-related deaths is a public health priority for the Government—and I use the term “public health priority” deliberately. Today, we are sharing a draft version of our new alcohol and drugs strategy with stakeholders from across the sector. That will inform a process of engagement by the Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing to inform the final strategy, which will be published in the autumn. The strategy will look at how services can adapt to find the people who are most in need and deliver services that address

their specific circumstances. We have also set out detailed actions for reducing the number of drug-related deaths.

We have just released further funding, bringing the total provided for alcohol and drug partnerships to over £70 million in this financial year, to help reduce the harms that are caused by alcohol and drugs. That further £20 million of investment has been allocated to support new approaches that respond to the needs of those who are most at risk in a more joined-up and person-centred way.

Jenny Marra: I am sure that the strategy will be welcome, but the First Minister knows that drug treatment can reduce deaths. In some European countries, 80 per cent of problem drug users are in treatment, and in England 60 per cent are treated, but in Scotland we treat only 40 per cent. Our death toll, which rose in the past year, shows the human cost of this public health failure. There is nothing in the First Minister's programme for government this week to tackle that huge public health crisis. The human cost is immeasurable, so what will the First Minister do to increase treatment rates and reduce the death toll across Scotland?

The First Minister: I agree about the importance of getting people into treatment, which is why we have allocated the additional funding that I spoke about in my initial answer, to expand services' ability to cater for people who need treatment. It is important to say that drug and alcohol treatment waiting times have greatly reduced, with almost 94 per cent of people now being seen within three weeks of referral.

It is not true that there is nothing in the Scottish Government's programme for government. The strategy that I spoke about earlier is extremely important on-going work in the area. Of course, we are keen to support health services and local authorities with more innovative approaches. For example, the programme for government discusses our support for the proposals in Glasgow for a safer drug consumption facility. Unfortunately, right now, it is not within the Parliament's power to set that up, which is why we hope to encourage the United Kingdom Government to move forward on that.

Across a range of issues, it is vital that we ensure that people have access to services, and the additional funding and the reduction in waiting times are both important measures in that respect.

Scottish National Standardised Assessments

7. Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): To ask the First Minister, in light of the comment by the Educational Institute of Scotland that the recent review's recommendations "will do little to allay the very serious concerns held by many

teachers", whether the Scottish Government plans further changes to the Scottish national standardised assessments. (S5F-02550)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): In the first year of the Scottish national standardised assessments, over 578,000 assessments were completed, which was a completion rate of 94 per cent. The user review report reflects on the experience of the first year and lists a number of important enhancements, including the establishment of a primary 1 practitioners forum. Moving forward, case studies will be shared with teachers on interpreting the data that is provided by the assessment system and using it for improvement purposes. Feedback questions will be added to the system to allow children and young people and teachers to share their experience of the assessments. The intelligence that is gained from those enhancements to the system will be used to inform the continuous improvement of the assessments.

Tavish Scott: When the Parliament votes to stop the testing of four and five-year-olds in primary 1 classes across Scotland, will the Government accept that decision?

The First Minister: We will continue to make the case for what we are doing. It is important to take a calm look at the issue. Assessments are not new in Scottish education. Twenty-nine of 32 councils were already doing primary 1 assessments; in fact, the majority of councils did two a year. What the Scottish Government has done is to standardise the assessments, so that all councils are using the same tool, and we have made them more relevant to the curriculum for excellence levels.

The assessments provide important diagnostic information to inform teacher judgments on how children are developing. That is important to ensure that, if there are areas where children need extra help, they get that extra help as quickly as possible. The assessments are not high stakes and they are not tests—there is no pass or fail. Of course, if a teacher thinks that a young person should not undertake the assessment, that is within their discretion.

The assessments are about ensuring that we get the best possible help to children as early as possible, which of course is an important part of raising standards in our schools and closing the attainment gap.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes First Minister's question time. Before we move to members' business, there will be a short suspension to allow people to leave the public gallery and others to come in.

12:44

Meeting suspended.

12:47

On resuming—

Michelle's Law Campaign

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-13427, in the name of Liam Kerr, on the Michelle's law campaign. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes the campaign to introduce "Michelle's Law", which seeks to strengthen victims' rights; acknowledges that this specifically includes the rights of victims being considered paramount in matters relating to temporary release from prison and parole and that they and their families should be able to make representations in person to those deciding to release criminals from jail; notes the view that the authorities should have to explicitly consider the distinct safety and welfare of victims and their relatives when setting conditions for release on licence; understands that the Scottish Prison Service and the Parole Board do not have to publish reasons for releasing offenders into the community; notes the call for this to be reviewed and changed, and further notes the view that exclusion zones for released offenders are an under-utilised power that could alleviate the distress faced by victims and their families in North East Scotland and across the country.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): What are the purposes of our justice system? Punishment of criminals, deterrence from criminal activity and rehabilitation of those who have chosen to commit a crime are often suggested. However, there are other aspects, including to protect the safety and welfare of the public, to protect the integrity of community and society and to provide some kind of retribution or closure for victims and their families. Too much focus has been on the first three aspects—those that relate to criminals—and we have lost focus on the victims.

Parliament heard earlier, and is no doubt aware, of an absolutely tragic set of circumstances that illustrates the point. Michelle Stewart lived in Drongan, in Ayrshire. When she was only 17, John Wilson ended her life and took her away from her friends and family for ever. Presiding Officer, I welcome that family to the Parliament today and acknowledge their bravery and courage in being prepared to step forward. I also welcome the Carson family, about whom we heard earlier, and likewise commend their bravery and courage.

It is not appropriate to go into the detail of the depraved attack; the facts have been rehearsed many times in the media. Suffice it to say that the sentence that Wilson received makes a mockery of the system. My party has long been in favour of ensuring that life means life for the worst criminals

and I will bring forward a member's bill to do exactly that, later in this parliamentary session.

However, that is for another time. Today, we are here to ask why killers such as John Wilson get out of prison only nine years into their 12-year sentence with no explanation or input given to the victim's family, no consideration for their welfare and no restrictions on the locations that he can visit while he is out.

Michelle's family think that that is unacceptable. They are right. They demand three key reforms relating to the release of offenders from prison both on a temporary basis and on parole. First, victims and their families must be given reasons for an offender's release and be able to make representations in person to those who are taking the decision. In practice, that means toughening up the victim notification scheme.

Parliament will know that, at present, when the Scottish Prison Service or the Parole Board for Scotland decides to release a dangerous criminal back on to our streets, it is under no requirement to justify that decision to the public. Victims and families who are registered with the scheme simply receive a standard form letter that tells them the date on which the offender will be released, and there is no automatic right to make representations. The only recourse is a letter to the Prison Service or the Parole Board.

The one exception is that, when a so-called life sentence prisoner is being considered for release, the victim or family member may make representations in person. However, we should be under no illusion about that. Those representations are not part of the parole hearing, the person whom they speak to is not a member of the tribunal that is deciding on the case and the right does not extend to temporary release decisions—it extends only to parole. In addition, they do not carry a great deal of weight. Victims and families must no longer be shut out of decisions that are taken behind closed doors. They must be involved in a process that gives them a voice.

The second demand is that the rights and welfare of the victims, the families and those who have been impacted must be explicitly taken into account by those who take decisions to release offenders back into Scotland's communities. At present, Scottish Prison Service rules state that, before granting temporary release, a governor must assess the risk that the prisoner may pose to the public at large. Similarly, the Parole Board for Scotland looks at the protection of the public in general terms. Neither body is required to assess the impact that its decisions to release will have on the mental and physical wellbeing of individual victims and their families. That cannot be right. Those who are most harmed, most wronged and

most aggrieved by the criminal are not individually considered. Our justice system must surely be able to look victims in the eye, explain its decisions and take their thoughts, considerations, health and wellbeing into account.

The final demand is on exclusion zones. Both the Parole Board and the Prison Service already have the power to impose location restrictions when they release criminals from jail, but they are not using it. Why is that power not being used to prevent offenders from coming into contact with their victims? The answer from the authorities appears to be that allowing criminals back into their home communities helps the rehabilitation process. That may be true, but are we really happy to prioritise criminals over victims in that way? Is there no point at which the right of families to live safe and peaceful lives becomes more important?

Michelle's family have spoken out powerfully about how seeing their daughter's murderer on their streets has affected them. Can any of us imagine how that must feel—how it must be to see this criminal swanning about their streets getting on with his life? I well recall being consulted several times by a young constituent in my region when she learned that the man who randomly dragged her off the street to rape her was to be released to the very community and the very streets where that had happened. It destroyed any sense of safety and any sense of justice being done, and ultimately traumatised her beyond my understanding again.

This is not right. There simply must be greater use of exclusion zones for those offenders who are released, and here is the thing: that measure would require no change in the law. Exclusion zones are a vital tool and victims demand their use, so the message to those with the power is: let us start using them.

Those are the three things that the Michelle's law campaign calls for. Each has the clear aim of putting victims at the heart of the justice system rather than their being left outside, looking in. I am grateful to other members of this Parliament for their cross-party support today and for being here to contribute to the debate.

I sought the views of other experts in this field. Dr Marsha Scott, chief executive officer of Scottish Women's Aid, told me how often domestic abuse survivors voice concerns about their safety when their abusers are released from prison. They tell of decisions to house the perpetrator being taken without consideration of the impact that it might have on the women and children. Victim Support Scotland told me that it is encouraged by discussions on how to include victims and witnesses during the parole process.

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice has, since taking over this brief, exhibited a commendable willingness to listen and to take good ideas on board. I hope that that continues, because the simple fact is that Michelle's family and others like them up and down the country need more than words; they need action.

Let us be clear—this campaign is not about preventing criminals from ever being released from prison. It is not about preventing rehabilitation, nor is it about excluding criminals from society. It is about a simple desire to tip the balance in favour of the victims, their families and those who have been wronged, and to treat them with the dignity and respect they deserve.

It is time to put victims first; it is time to refocus the debate away from criminals; and it is time for Michelle's law. [*Applause.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you very much. Before we move to the open debate, I say very gently that we do not permit applause from the public gallery. I perfectly understand why it is done, but we do not permit it.

12:55

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): I apologise to the Presiding Officer and to fellow members for having to leave this debate early due to a long-standing event in my diary that I am hosting.

I thank Liam Kerr for bringing an important debate to this chamber. It raises some important issues about how we deal with transparency, punishment and parole in our criminal justice system. I also thank Michelle Stewart's family, who deserve so much credit for their activism and for raising the issues in the way that they have, because it stems from deep personal tragedy. They have my deepest condolences and I know that my thoughts and the thoughts of everyone in the chamber will be with them as we speak on these issues through this debate.

I believe that the system can be strengthened only through open discussion of these issues. The justice system often seems to treat victims as an afterthought, with its logic and decisions opaque and its behaviour seemingly cold and unsympathetic. I think that we can do better; I think that we must do better.

However, as we think on these issues, we must also uphold the values of justice. Justice must be swift; justice must be fair; and justice must be consistent. The blindfold worn by Lady Justice is just as important as the sword and the scales that she holds, but we cannot allow Lady Justice to also be deaf to the concerns, views and interests

of the victim. That is what we are seeking to discuss.

Much of the Michelle's law campaign centres around two key themes—victims' rights to be heard, and transparency. I would like to discuss some issues around that latter point because it is a key issue. I have actively been talking to those in the criminal justice system about transparency and how we can have greater understanding of the workings of justice, because I have long believed that the way we sentence those who are convicted and the way that that is reported do not lead to a strong understanding of the sentence. That is a fundamental problem with our system.

In my view, sentences should reflect three things that society hopes to achieve when we sentence convicted criminals. First, we must deal with the root causes of the crime—for example, addiction or involvement with organised crime. Secondly, we must punish, because those who have committed a crime must pay and atone for what they have done. Thirdly, we must rehabilitate and ensure that prisoners have a measured and safe re-entry into society.

Those are the three aims and if sentences were handed out explicitly with those three aims and were explicitly reported in those terms, we would make some progress. In short, if I can put it flippantly, we need a Ronseal approach to sentencing—a sentence has to do what it says on the tin. At the moment, because we have automatic release after two thirds of a sentence has been served, we have a degree of confusion.

I am not necessarily arguing for an increase in sentences, but it has to be clear how much time will be served in relation to those three core elements so that we can avoid misleading people in their understanding of what will happen and avoid people being imbued with mistrust in our criminal justice system.

There are important points to raise about victim notification, too. It is right that we improve victims' understanding of when and how people will be released. However, we need to look at the constraints within that, partly around data protection and other principles. It is right that the Prison Service should say when prisoners will be released, but can we say when they might be out in the community, where and what activity they might be doing? Data protection is one issue, but we also have an important principle that, once a person has done their time, they should have the opportunity to rejoin society

We need to think carefully about how we find the balance; the rights of victims and their families are hugely important but we must also preserve the hope of rehabilitation, which is an important component of our criminal justice system.

13:00

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): At the outset, I extend my heartfelt sympathy to Michelle Stewart's family and to the Carson family. I am very sorry for your loss and the pain that you are enduring.

I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to Liam Kerr's debate on Michelle's law and I thank him for bringing the important topic of strengthening victims' rights to the chamber.

I support the Scottish Government's focus on prevention, early intervention and services that support rehabilitation and ultimately reduce reoffending. Those things make our communities safer. However, for a justice system to be truly just, the needs of victims must be at its heart. I share the feeling of campaigners that the voice of victims need to be heard better.

I agree that the distinct safety and welfare of victims and their families must not only be considered, but acted on. That must happen at all stages of the criminal justice process. Providing more help and support for victims of crime and witnesses is key to building a better criminal justice system. Navigating the justice system would be daunting at any time, and at times of trauma and loss it must seem even more so. It is imperative that in making law and policy we recognise the real-life impact on people. We must never lose sight of that.

I acknowledge the work that has been done and the progress that has been made in our justice system in Scotland. However, in the context of today's debate, which follows a very specific tragedy, I am not going to stand here and list those points.

Moving forward, we will have to work together as a Parliament, being cognisant of what evidence tells us effectively reduces crime and reoffending and makes our communities in Scotland safer.

I reiterate my belief that victims and their families must be considered at all stages of the criminal justice process. That consideration must not end with sentencing.

In the programme for government, as part of ongoing reforms, I note that the Scottish Government says that it will strengthen victims' rights and support. There is also a commitment to increase the openness and transparency of the parole system. That is a welcome development. I ask the cabinet secretary to take the opportunity in his closing speech to expand on that commitment and to share what that will mean with members and the public in the gallery.

13:03

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): I begin by congratulating Liam Kerr on securing today's debate on Michelle's law—and so early in the parliamentary year.

I welcome the Stewart family to our public gallery today, knowing, as I do, how difficult it is for them to again relive and recall the circumstances of Michelle's death. I salute their courage in doing so today. I also welcome the Carson family.

When my constituent Lisa Stewart first contacted me on 25 June 2018 about the murder of her sister Michelle by John Wilson in 2008, I was horrified to hear of the circumstances surrounding Michelle's death and about the premeditated attack that cost Michelle her life. Her murderer, John Wilson, was sentenced to 16 years imprisonment for this heinous crime and that sentence was reduced to 12 years as he pled guilty immediately to killing schoolgirl Michelle.

The initial reduction of 25 per cent in the sentence was a source of dismay to the victim's family, but one that they had to accept. However, Presiding Officer, you can only imagine the anger of Michelle's parents, brother and sister when they discovered on 23 June that John Wilson would be walking the streets of Ayrshire—possibly of Ayr—on unsupervised home leave, just nine years after murdering his victim, Michelle.

As we know, Ruth Davidson raised the matter with the First Minister on 28 June, which resulted in the First Minister giving an instruction to her new cabinet secretary Humza Yousaf to meet the Stewarts to discuss their concerns. That meeting took place on 3 August at Russell house in Ayr, with commitments given by the cabinet secretary that the family's concerns would be listened to and addressed. I attended that meeting with the Stewarts and heard those commitments being given to them.

Imagine, again, the Stewart family's unhappiness on Tuesday, when the First Minister made only a passing reference in her programme for government to what her Government is prepared to do to recognise the rights of victims in circumstances similar to those of the Stewart family. Since the matter was first raised in Parliament by Ruth Davidson, two other families have contacted me, in similar, dreadful circumstances. That highlighted for me the widespread nature of concerns of hard-working, decent families such as the Stewarts—such as any of us who find themselves victims of crime through no fault of their own.

The Scottish Government must really take heed of those families' concerns and change its attitude towards the families of murder victims, and victims more generally, in the Scottish justice system. As

Liam Kerr said, in Scots law as it stands the rights of victims are almost an afterthought. On behalf of victims in Scotland, I want to hear less said about the rights of criminals and offenders and more about the rights of victims. I want victims to have more say in the justice system.

We need to see more and better use of exclusion zones for released offenders, to stop them coming into contact with victims and victims' families. We need families to have more input into prison service and parole board decisions, and a more sympathetic and understanding approach taken by authorities towards the fears and needs of families. No longer is it sufficient in the modern interconnected world—everyone is on Facebook or WhatsApp—for victims and families of victims to be told effectively to man up and just get on with life, because it has aye been this way.

Families such as the Stewarts and others, and victims of many other dreadful crimes, will always be victims. Whereas offenders, criminals and, yes, murderers walk free after serving their sentence, the families of those who have lost loved ones never recover. No matter how strong and supportive the Stewarts are for each other, and no matter how much support they receive from their families, friends and local communities, not a day will pass when they do not think of Michelle.

Today, Parliament again asks the Scottish Government to bring about the changes to the legislation sought by the Stewarts and the Scottish Conservatives. I hope that the cabinet secretary will act now to bring those changes about.

13:08

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf): I thank Liam Kerr for bringing this important debate to the chamber and thank also those who signed the motion. I welcome to the chamber the Carson family, and Michelle Stewart's family, who I had the great pleasure of meeting in August. None of us would wish to find ourselves in the circumstances in which they found themselves. It was a really moving meeting that was, on the one hand, inspirational—I will come to that in a second—and, on the other, very powerful. I was affected for weeks afterwards—I am still affected.

It has been a very good debate, with excellent contributions. My job is to give as many reassurances as I can and to tell Parliament about action that we will be taking. However, before I do, I will say that one of the reasons why I found that meeting very powerful was that I got to learn a little bit more about Michelle.

When these terrible and tragic murders happen, those who did not know the family will pick up a newspaper or see a news broadcast and will just

see a picture of an individual. All that will be associated with that individual will be the terrible murder. I wanted to know about the person behind the story. I met her father, Kenny, and Josephine Stewart, along with Lisa, Kenneth and Stephen, as well as John Scott MSP. Each of the family members took it in turn to tell me about Michelle. What was so inspirational about her was that she overcame so much adversity in the physical health issues that she had. She never let any of that hold her back. Hers is a life lost far too young. Hearing about her was incredibly important for me. Behind every single one of the homicides and murders that happen unfortunately in Scotland, there is a human story. None of us, whether it be me as the cabinet secretary or any member from across the chamber, should forget the importance of the human behind such a tragedy.

From day 1 of my taking up the role of Cabinet Secretary for Justice, I have made it clear that victims' rights must be strengthened and put at the heart of our criminal justice system. The programme for government commitments that the First Minister has been speaking about this week reflect that, and I will come to that later. However, I want to get straight into the substance of the Michelle's law campaign.

I said that the meeting with the Stewart family was inspirational. I do not think that any one of us would have taken any offence or would have been entirely surprised if, after suffering the tragedy that they suffered, the family members chose simply to reflect on and overcome their individual grief. None of us would have faulted them for doing that. They did not choose to do that. They are inspirational as a family because they chose, and are choosing, to ensure that this tragedy has a positive legacy, which is the Michelle's law campaign. That is why I say that they are inspirational and I praise them for that campaign.

Let me also give them some reassurances about the campaign and the fact that not only are we listening to them and giving them warm words, but there will be some concrete action. I guarantee that, and I will come to that in just a second.

I met the family in early August and we are now in early September. I can promise the family that what they had to say to me at that meeting profoundly influenced what is in this year's programme for Government. My conversation and the follow-up with the family and the MSPs who are involved directly influenced what is in the programme for government and I will touch on some of that in a minute.

In his opening remarks, Liam Kerr spoke about the three main asks. One of them was that victims and families of victims, as in this case, are given the reasons why the perpetrator is on release and that the victim notification scheme is toughened

up. I say to Liam Kerr and, more importantly, to the Stewart family that I am absolutely happy to commit to doing that. That is very much part of the conversation that we will have after the programme for government debates.

As we know, the First Minister announced that a consultation on the handling of parole will be held before the end of the year. I will try to speed that up as appropriate. That consultation will include consideration of the issues that have been raised by the Michelle's law campaign. I give a 100 per cent guarantee that that consultation will address some of the issues raised about parole by the campaign, including for example, the reason for decisions, and the opportunity for victims and the families of victims to contribute to such decisions. I give Liam Kerr and Michelle Stewart's family the assurance that those issues will be part of the consultation.

I know that it can be frustrating. As legislators and lawmakers, we understand the process that we have to go through—the consultation, the drafting of the bill, stages 1, 2 and 3—and it can be infuriating for those who are outside the Parliament. However, I promise that no time will be wasted in taking those measures forward.

The second point that was raised by Liam Kerr, and which is part of the campaign, is about the rights of victims and the families of victims when it comes to temporary release. Once again, I am very happy to commit to ensuring that the contributions of victims—and the families of victims, in this case—are taken into account, including their issues and circumstances and the way that they live and work. All those things must be taken into consideration, as they already should be.

I should say that, in my letter to Michelle Stewart's family, which was referred to during First Minister's questions, I said that the Scottish Prison Service is carefully considering how to improve the information and support available to victims and families. That will include how to better engage with families at various critical points in sentencing. The need for that came out strongly in the meeting that John Scott was at, and the SPS will take that back and reflect on it. It will also reflect on how individual victims' circumstances and those of the families of victims are taken into account in relation to temporary release.

Again, I am happy to explore that issue, and when I say "explore" I should stress that there is not a lack of concrete action. Liam Kerr will certainly understand that there are complexities in all the issues that we have discussed. They are not easy. They are the most difficult issues that we have to deal with. There are complexities, and I have to ensure, from my perspective, that when it comes to those complexities I am not doing

something that could make the situation worse, as opposed to better, because all of us want the same outcome. I say to the family directly: please do not confuse or conflate that with an unwillingness to listen to what you have to say and to act as best we possibly can to ensure that the Michelle's law campaign and the issues that you raise are taken forward as quickly as possible.

I am aware that I am slightly over time, Presiding Officer, but I wish to raise a point about exclusion zones—the third point in the Michelle's law campaign. Liam Kerr's language, from the beginning of the Michelle's law campaign until now, has slightly developed, and it is a welcome development. He understands that there is a possibility to have conditions put upon an offender's release in relation to who he or she can see and where he or she can go. His ask is how those conditions can be used more. Again, I go back to the point that I made a second ago about complexities. The powers are there, and what I will do is give an absolute commitment to assure him, right here and now, that that is something that can and will be looked at, but of course we will have to work with local authority partners.

John Scott: I hear what the cabinet secretary says and I am assured that his intentions are of the first order, but can he give some indication of timescale for those changes that are to be made or for the different guidance that is to be issued?

Humza Yousaf: On my earlier points, the consultation timescale that we are aiming for is the end of the year, but I will try to inject some pace into that as quickly as I can. In terms of the exclusion zones, I am not able to give John Scott a timescale, because although the powers currently exist we are looking to see whether they could be used more widely and how they could be extended or strengthened. I can give him an absolute assurance that there will not be any hesitation in doing that. In fact, it was on the very day that I met with the family of Michelle Stewart that we started to look into the issue with even more pace, once the Michelle's law campaign became public. We are wasting no time on that, but I can promise John Scott that I will keep him, the family, and other members who are interested up to speed.

My very last point is one that was made by Daniel Johnson, who I realise had to leave the debate early. He made a thoughtful contribution, and I want to end on this point. In our political narrative, there often seems to be a tension between the rights of victims and the families of victims and the rehabilitation of offenders, and that is something that has come out in earlier contributions to today's debate. Although I completely understand how that perception might exist, it is important for us, in the positions that we

are in, to say clearly that the two are not mutually exclusive. There is not necessarily a tension between the two, because the reason that we rehabilitate offenders is to ensure that we have fewer victims of crime in the first place. That way, we will not have to deal with more and more victims and, of course, we want crime to go down.

Therefore, we should never lose focus on both those points, although I hear what the family and even Opposition members say about the need for victims' rights to be strengthened and be at the heart of our justice system. I give everybody an absolute and unequivocal assurance that that will be the case as long as I am the Cabinet Secretary for Justice under the current Scottish Government. I look forward to meeting the Stewart family shortly after this members' business debate and giving them those reassurances as best as I possibly can.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sure that members who are sitting in the chamber and who heard the debate but did not contribute would wish to extend their condolences to the family. It is a tough road that the family have taken, but it seems to be taking them to some results, although it will never compensate by any means.

13:20

Meeting suspended.

14:30

Resumed debate.

Programme for Government 2018-19

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a continuation of the debate on the Scottish Government's programme for government 2018-19.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): When we published our national performance framework in June, we set out a significant ambition for improving the wellbeing of the people of Scotland. Public services are central to that ambition and I welcome this opportunity to set out in some small measure how our programme for government will continue to work to meet those ambitions.

Our nation's economic health and wellbeing depends on the health and wellbeing of each and every one of us. We are living longer lives, but we are not yet living healthier lives. That brings the inevitable consequence of increasing demands on our health and social care services.

Our national health service staff are the heart of our health service. Their dedication to caring for the people of Scotland is tremendous, and I want to put on record my thanks for the care that they deliver to all of us. Ensuring that we have the right number of staff with the right skills to meet changing demand is clearly a challenge. There can surely be no doubt anywhere in this chamber that Brexit makes addressing that challenge harder. It makes it harder, but adds further impetus to our need to take action.

Our programme for government demonstrates our commitment, and our approach is clear. We are building on the work of recent years: hard, productive work that has driven innovation, such as the Scottish patient safety programme, now in its 10th year, which has led to reductions in sepsis and surgical mortality, both by more than a fifth; work that drives our integration of health and social care to bring the right care to people in the right setting and will see the delivery of Frank's law by April next year.

That work values all our workforce, with all those earning under £80,000 seeing a pay increase of at least 9 per cent for agenda for change staff over the next 3 years, and a 3 per cent increase in salaried NHS doctor and dentist pay this year, and has delivered the new general practitioner contract in partnership with the British Medical Association, putting our GPs where they belong—as our local lead clinicians.

All that and a great deal more is delivered day in, day out by professional NHS Scotland staff—dedication that earns them the justifiable 83 per cent satisfaction rate in the most recent Scottish household survey. I know only too well that there is more that we need to do, but I also know that we tackle those areas where performance must improve from that strong foundation.

Mental health is critical to our wellbeing, but we know—as members across the chamber have said—that our configuration of mental health services and their accessibility needs to improve, especially for our children and young people. While we have asked Dame Denise Coia to look at where and how improvements should be made, we know that people who need that support should see action from us now.

That action should provide the right support at the right time and in the right setting, so our programme for government sets out a comprehensive package of investment and reform, with a quarter of a billion pounds of additional investment all designed to improve services, including more wellbeing support for women before and after birth; 350 more counsellors and 250 more nurses in our schools, giving us one counsellor in every secondary school; 80 counsellors in further and higher education; increasing support for teachers; enhancing community-based mental health and wellbeing services for five to 24-year-olds; and fast-tracking for people who need specialist services. That is a comprehensive package that rightly demands collaboration across Government and public services.

Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con): I am interested in the money that is going to provide counsellors in schools. Will those schools that already have counsellors lose their share of that potential funding, or will it support what they are already doing and allow them to use the current money for something else?

Jeane Freeman: We would have that discussion with those schools. We certainly have no intention of taking away services and support, so we need to look at what more we can do in a school that has already made that provision. We will have that conversation with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and education leaders.

Elsewhere, we will see a trauma centre opening before Christmas in Aberdeen, and from early next year work will begin on our expanded elective centre services, which are critical to maintaining sustainable improvement in waiting times. In a few weeks, I will set out in detail the additional work that we will undertake to focus improvement action and improve waiting times in a number of board areas and specialties.

We have spoken before of the significant benefit that the NHS has brought in enabling more and more of us to live longer. We are addressing the challenges, as described in the programme for government and elsewhere, but we must not lose sight of the need to ensure that young generations now and in the future not only live longer but live more healthily than we may have done. The programme for government focuses on the health of those generations, which means delivering on other fundamental issues such as diet and obesity, supported by an investment of £42 million to tackle type 2 diabetes.

The baby box, our work on the best start grant, the early delivery of that grant and our young carers grant all indicate our focus across Government on helping families, children and young people. I am delighted to say that we will continue to do the work that we need to do to consider the necessary improvements in terms of further income support.

This year is the 70th anniversary of our national health service, and we have rightly recognised and celebrated that achievement. However, our health service shows us that celebration does not mean complacency; it means inspiring more ambition and challenge. That is at the heart of our programme for government's vision for public services—it is a programme for government for the whole of Scotland to flourish.

14:37

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): Over the summer recess, I met many of our outstanding nurses, doctors and other NHS workers to hear their views and ideas. As we start this new term, and as the cabinet secretary has just done, I again put on record my party's gratitude for all that those staff do each and every day of the year to care for people across Scotland.

I welcome the cabinet secretary to her position. I am sure that she will have an in-tray the size of Arthur's Seat, most of which probably consists of letters and questions from me, but I genuinely welcome her to her position and look forward to working with her in the role.

The Scottish National Party Government has been in power for 11 years and, as such, has been in complete and total control of our NHS. It is therefore legitimate for all of us to consider and assess the SNP record on Scotland's NHS and how it compares to the performance that the SNP inherited in 2007, when it first came to office. Sadly, when we do so, we find far too many examples of things not only not improving, but actually worsening for patients across Scotland on this Government's watch.

Accident and emergency waiting times have deteriorated, with fewer people being seen within the four-hour target. Indeed, the target has not been met since July 2017 and, last winter, performance dipped to a record low. On the 18-week referral to treatment target, the percentage of patients being seen within that timescale has declined and is regularly worse than when SNP ministers first put the policy in place in 2007.

Early cancer diagnosis and detection rates are falling and waits for key diagnostic services are lengthening. As has been reported in the papers during the summer recess, it is a national crisis that drug-related deaths have doubled since 2007, with 934 of our fellow Scots losing their lives last year because of drug abuse. On delayed discharge, which is supposedly a key priority for the Government—the First Minister has said repeatedly that her Government will get on top of it—the number of patients who are ready to leave hospital but who have to stay there through no fault of their own has increased significantly, adding to capacity pressures on already busy hospital wards.

Jeane Freeman: I am sure that Mr Briggs will acknowledge that I have said repeatedly that I completely accept that there are areas for improvement. He will also acknowledge that he and I have discussed the importance of recognising the NHS's successes as the foundations on which we build. Will he also recognise that, despite rising demand, nine out of 10 patients in A and E continue to be treated within the target, which is a target that NHS England has completely abandoned?

Miles Briggs: I always take the opportunity to praise our staff in the NHS and A and E. I have visited A and E units across Scotland and seen the pressure that they are under and how they are working to achieve the target. However, Audit Scotland confirmed last autumn that only one of the key NHS performance targets—which the SNP set for itself—was met in 2016-17. The former cabinet secretary made no great claims that they would be met this year.

This summer, we have seen many more examples of problems in our local health services that are a direct result of this Government's abject failure to put in place a long-term NHS workforce plan. It should have been established years ago, and I welcome that the cabinet secretary said today that it is her real priority. Scotland's GP crisis shows no sign of abating, as thousands of patients at Rosemount medical practice in Aberdeen know only too well, following this summer's news that the practice will close next January. Meanwhile, the crisis in radiology services means that the NHS in Highland has lost its last interventionist radiologist and has to rely on

locums or sending patients to Tayside and Grampian.

The workforce issue simply must be a priority for the new health secretary; we are happy to work so that it is the priority that it should have been 11 years ago. In my region, Lothian, the paediatric unit at St John's hospital has remained closed, with hundreds of in-patient overnights sent to the Royal sick kids in Edinburgh. I am sorry to say that the mismanagement of our NHS workforce has become the hallmark of this SNP Government. For our dedicated NHS staff, it is becoming ever clearer that this SNP Government is part of the problem, not part of the solution.

On child mental health waiting times, we discovered on Tuesday that Scotland now has the poorest child and adolescent mental health services waiting times on record. I welcome the announcement on CAMHS funding, which Scottish Conservatives have been calling for for years. However, I am absolutely clear that this crisis in our mental health services, which affects young people and families across Scotland, is because they have been failed by the SNP Government, which has failed to put in place the resources that are needed.

We may have a new health secretary, but the evidence so far suggests that there are no new ideas to tackle the problems facing our NHS. More of the same simply cannot be good enough for Scotland's patients and its under-pressure NHS. That is why the Scottish Conservatives will bring forward our proactive policies and I am happy to work with the minister if she is willing to take forward our ideas. Over the next year, the Scottish Conservatives will continue to scrutinise this Government as necessary, and to work for our health service. We will carry on working with NHS professionals and experts to develop the new policy ideas and fresh thinking that are required.

"It is our responsibility as a Government to ensure high-quality health services that are delivered as close to home as possible, with the right balance between hospital and community care. We must do more to improve health and tackle the grotesque inequalities that still scar our nation. We need a sharper focus on prevention and on supporting people to take greater responsibility for their own well-being."—[*Official Report*, 5 September 2007; c 1384.]

Those were the words of the new health secretary—now First Minister—Nicola Sturgeon in June 2007. After 11 long, tired and distracted years in office, this SNP Government seems further away than ever from achieving those outcomes. I hope that I am proven wrong and that this Government will work to improve our health service. However, it must focus on doing that and not on separation.

14:43

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): Thank you, Presiding Officer, for pushing me forward in the speakers' list, to let me get away early.

Miles Briggs got one thing right: he will be proved wrong by the positive legacy that this SNP Government will leave for Scotland, when eventually there is another party in this Parliament that the people of Scotland consider to be fit to run the country.

It is a pleasure to be back at the Parliament and to take part in this year's debate on the programme for government. This is a challenging time for Scotland as we continue to try to grow the economy, preserve and protect public services and ensure a fairer Scotland for all. We do that with austerity biting massive chunks out of our budget and Brexit causing ever more social and economic uncertainty. I was delighted when our First Minister rolled out such a positive, forward-facing and outward-looking programme for our Government and the people of Scotland. It is clear that this is a Government that is serious about building on our strong foundations to create a more equal, fair and progressive Scotland.

Over the past year, the Scottish Government has undertaken a number of steps to make Scotland a better place to live, work and grow up in. From the introduction of the new, fairer income tax system, which sees 70 per cent of people paying less tax now than last year—a policy and outcome so disliked by the Tories, of course—to the passing of the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill, we have achieved a lot in 12 months.

As a humble back bencher, I take this opportunity to voice my thanks to the members who recently left their roles as ministers for their tireless work in championing last year's programme for government. I have had the good fortune to work for a minister and I know just how hard they work. I also wish the new cabinet secretaries and ministers good luck in their new portfolios.

One of the crucial areas in the programme for government is communities and local government. The SNP Government is increasing our commitment to tackle the food insecurity that many of our children across Scotland face. The additional £2 million of funding that is being made available will make a considerable difference to many families that have been left behind by Tory welfare cuts or the shameful benefits sanctions system that is an affront to all of us in a caring and compassionate country such as Scotland.

The other aspect that I wish to mention in that area is the plans to eradicate homelessness by building on the important work that has been

undertaken by the homelessness and rough sleeping action group in partnership with the Scottish Parliament's Local Government and Communities Committee. I should mention Bob Doris and the other members of the committee, who have done a fantastic job there. Again, we have a social disgrace that is exacerbated by an unfair UK-designed benefits system that, we should remember, gave us the bedroom tax.

Joint working with organisations such as the Glasgow Homelessness Network and others will show what partnership working between Government and the third sector can achieve. I welcome the additional £21 million of funding that is being made available for that approach.

Over the start of the current session of Parliament, I decided that it was time to be honest about my mental health. As politicians and as men, there is still a preconceived notion that we should be "strong", but now I realise that, for me, being strong is being honest and saying when I am not okay. I hope that that will allow others to say when they are not okay. I have struggled with bouts of anxiety and depression for most of my life, and it is difficult for me to pinpoint when it really began. What I do know is that I have been profoundly lucky that, even within my role as an MSP, I have been able to meet and work with mental health organisations such as breathing space, which has given me a better understanding of my health and how I can deal with it, and how I can take that knowledge to others throughout my constituency and further afield if required.

However, I cannot help but wonder just how much better my mental health could have been over the course of my life, benefiting me and many others, if there had been early intervention when I was younger. I was therefore absolutely delighted when the First Minister put mental health improvement at the top of her agenda, taking on the challenge of tackling poor mental health from the cradle onwards with a £250 million investment and more support for perinatal and postnatal mental health for new mothers, which will include better and more accessible counselling and support services. Groups in my constituency such as the southside PANDAS will welcome that news with open arms and be delighted to work in partnership with the Government to ensure positive outcomes for both mothers and babies.

My office has been doing some research into adolescent mental health that has led us to become very aware of adverse childhood experiences. We are now aware that ACEs can not only harm a child mentally but, as many studies have shown, severely stunt their ability to learn. It is therefore of monumental importance that every member of this Parliament backs the Government's ambitious plan to have a

counselling service available for every high school in Scotland to identify, treat and provide each and every child across this country with a fair and equal start. I have no doubt that I would have benefited from that or that many people I knew when they were young would have benefited. We are, after all, only as strong as the future that we are creating.

I started my speech by noting how positive and ambitious the programme for government is. There are so many plans that I would love to touch on because they will have a profound and positive impact across my constituency. However, that is impossible in the allotted time, so I take the opportunity to urge members to work with the Government to achieve those targets. Sometimes we should put partisan politics aside for the benefit of the people of this country.

This Parliament is here to work for the people of Scotland and to invest its resources to benefit the people who live here. It is our job to improve people's lives across the many constituencies. I look forward to working with our Government throughout 2018-19 for the people of the Cathcart constituency and the people of Scotland.

14:49

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): There was a time when programmes for government had some kind of story to bind them together into a narrative. Who can forget, for example, "the Saudi Arabia of the seas" or "the first hydro nation on the planet"? We might even once have been promised the "new Scottish enlightenment". That was gratuitous and grandiose guff, of course, but it was more entertaining than this year's interminable managerialist list of reheated, recycled and regurgitated announcements—a tired, timid and turgid programme from a Government that is bereft of vision, strategy or ambition for our country.

Let me welcome a couple of things, however. Incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a welcome step. It is the right thing to do and it sends an important signal. It would have been good to have some legislative detail or a timescale, but it is absolutely the right thing for us to do.

Counselling in schools is great, too. It is a sensible early intervention approach, as Mr Dornan just eloquently and powerfully argued. England and Wales legislated separately for the right to counselling years ago. Labour has argued for the measure in our manifesto and in Parliament—not least at First Minister's question time, four times. It is just a pity that it took the worst children's mental health statistics that we have ever seen to prompt that welcome action.

Above all, let me welcome the great gaping hole at the heart of the programme, where the education bill was meant to be—the flagship, the sacred duty, the engine of the reforms on which the First Minister and her Government were to be judged. Unlike the Tories, I come here to bury the missing bill, not to praise it. It was always a wrongheaded and unwanted attempt to centralise control of our schools in the education secretary's hands, and to undermine local democratic decision making about schools.

I am glad to see the bill go, but the Government has wasted two years on so-called reforms that would only have created more bureaucracy and would have done nothing to improve standards in our schools. After two years, it has convinced no one that the reforms are a good idea—except, perhaps, the Tories, which really should tell it something.

Parents, teachers, educationists and local councillors are all delighted to see the bill go. Alas, the evil that men and bills do lives after them. The Government has promised only to waste another year ploughing on with structural tinkering, which is not what our schools need.

Headteachers still fear being swamped by managing their schools rather than by learning. Schools already see a regional layer of bureaucracy demanding plans, strategies, time and staff from them. Pupils are still sitting national tests that teachers tell us are a waste of time in educational terms, and councils are still threatened with potentially losing the right to decide their own schools' budgets. It is still "mince", as Larry Flanagan of the Educational Institute of Scotland said at the Education and Skills Committee meeting yesterday.

The real hole at the heart of the programme for government is the lack of an initiative to address the substantive issues in our schools—the lack of teachers, support staff and resources. Where is the funding to restore at least some of the over 20 per cent erosion of teachers' salaries? Where is the plan and the money to reverse the loss of additional support needs provision in every school in the land? How will the Government fill 800 teacher vacancies at the start of the school year, now that its social media adverts and new routes to teaching have failed to fill them?

Absent from the programme is any acceptance of the real problem, which is the fact that the SNP Government is spending, in real terms, £400 million less on schools now than it was in 2010. I repeat—£400 million less. The spending includes the pupil equity fund, which is supposed to be extra. Take that out, and we see that the Scottish Government has cut half a billion pounds a year from core spending on our children's education.

That is the problem in our schools, but where is the response to it in the programme for government? Nowhere. Where is the policy to reverse the downward trend in the pass rate of the gold-standard higher? Nowhere. Where is the measure to reverse the 34 per cent drop in attainment in nationals 4 and 5, compared to standard grades? It is nowhere. Where is the guaranteed income that was promised in the student support review or the raising of the cap on university places, which frustrates so many Scottish would-be students? They are nowhere.

This week, we saw that since Nicola Sturgeon first declared education as her top priority, satisfaction with schools in Scotland has plummeted by 10 percentage points. There is nothing in the programme for government that will change that story of drift and decline.

14:56

Alex Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): It is always a pleasure to speak after Iain Gray, because he is always so cheery in what he says. He started off by saying that there is no theme to the programme for government. To be fair to the Labour Opposition, I note that there are two themes running through Labour. First, its seats in the chamber are empty and, secondly, when its members are in them they are hopeless, helpless and heading for oblivion. There is no lack of a theme over there.

I welcome the 12 bills and other measures that have been announced by the First Minister in the programme for government. I welcome in particular the focus on improving the economy and public services.

This afternoon, I want to address two areas that must be given priority. The first is child poverty. I have been in Parliament for 19 years and have lived through many speeches about child poverty. We can all agree on two things. We can agree first that the level of child poverty in Scotland is unacceptable and, secondly, we can agree that the rate at which child poverty is rising as a direct result of the UK Government benefit cuts is equally unacceptable. I fully recognise the huge financial pressures on the Scottish Government's budget that are a result of the austerity budget that is being pursued in London. I also recognise that we cannot keep using our scarce resources to mitigate the ill effects on Scotland of UK Government policy.

However, at the end of the day, tackling child poverty has to be a top priority. Indeed, we cannot fully achieve our ambition to reduce health inequalities, reduce the education attainment gap or reduce inequality more generally, when Scotland has such a high level of child poverty.

Tackling child poverty is a prerequisite to achieving those other laudable aims.

We also know from the research that the overall costs to the public purse of preventing child poverty are a lot lower over the piece than the costs of dealing with the dire consequences that result from child poverty. I wish that the UK Government would take that on board. I therefore urge the Scottish Government to do all that it can to introduce at an early stage proposals for reducing child poverty in Scotland, rather than waiting until next June for a progress report. That is a prerequisite to success in a wide policy area.

I will turn to the second area. I may have been in Parliament too long—some people would certainly say so—and I remember Henry McLeish, when he was First Minister, telling me when I was convener of the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee how frustrated he was that he had allocated a substantial additional amount of money to deal with problems in literacy and numeracy, and had instructed that it be delivered in a certain way, only to find out many months later that his instructions had not been followed. One of my concerns is that the good work and policy intentions of the Scottish Government can sometimes be undermined by how policies are carried out by the Government's own agencies at local level.

As an example, I highlight NHS Lanarkshire's total mishandling of the proposal for a new hospital to be built to replace the existing Monklands hospital by the mid-2020s. The Government says that it will commit £0.5 billion, provided that the business case stacks up. However, I regret to say that NHS Lanarkshire's handling of the situation has been dreadful: it has been totally unaccountable and has flown in the face of local opinion. The board has based its case on facts that are not facts at all—to say that it has been economical with the truth would be the understatement of the year.

The total lack of involvement of local patients in the scoring exercise to decide where the new hospital should be built is a democratic outrage. Only 16 patients took part in the exercise and, to date, NHS Lanarkshire has been unable to confirm whether even one of those patients lives in the Monklands catchment area, even though patients who live in the area will make up 75 per cent of the people who will use the new hospital. While only 16 patients were involved in the scoring exercise, 34 NHS Lanarkshire employees took part, four of whom were members of the project team that is supposed to provide independent advice to the board on the location of the new hospital.

NHS Lanarkshire says up front in its document that one of its key aims is to use the facilities of the new hospital to reduce health inequalities, but

it has made a recommendation on the new hospital's location without having in any way undertaken an equalities impact assessment of the location. Local people regard the decision as a total stitch-up. The level of incompetence is beyond belief.

A few years ago, we had to fight Lanarkshire NHS board on shutting our accident and emergency provision. Now we have to fight it over its promise that the new hospital would be in the Monklands area. This is not a nimby argument; it is a rational argument. Such big decisions must be made based on reliable evidence, but nothing that NHS Lanarkshire has produced so far inspires any confidence whatever.

The Government needs to ensure that its intentions, strategy and policies are carried out and that the new hospital is located in a place where the evidence takes us and not in a place to which vested interests are trying to railroad us. The Government's policy here is bang on—it is absolutely the right thing to do—but all that could be wasted because of a body not doing what it is supposed to do.

I am not saying that NHS Lanarkshire is the only example, nor am I saying that such situations are a universal truth in the public sector. However, where it is happening, particularly in relation to strategically important projects, I urge the Government to look at projects very carefully. The Government needs to ensure that, at the end of the day, the right decisions based on evidence are made not just on the location of the hospital but on all other aspects of the hospital development. That would be a tremendous service, yet again, by the SNP Scottish Government to the people of Monklands.

15:03

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): This time last year, when the First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills told us very forcefully that the new education bill was an essential component of raising standards in schools, unlike Mr Gray I chose to believe them. A year on, with the bill having been ditched, the problem is not the SNP's ability to recognise what factors need to change—so stark is the evidence in that regard—but its complete failure to put into practice the policy decisions that are necessary to remove the barriers that prevent Scottish schools from moving back up the international league tables.

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills should not be surprised by that, because the warning signals were contained in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's report of three years ago, which

said that, despite many good things happening in our schools, Scotland is not fulfilling its potential.

Let us stand back a bit and see the situation through the eyes of parents and young people. What do they want from our schools? They want three things. They want good and sufficient teachers in our schools, they want good progress in basic literacy and numeracy, and they want more opportunities for their families—whether that means better subject choice, better quality vocational training or greater diversity in extracurricular activity.

What have they got? We know that total teacher numbers are down by 3,500 since 2007 and that permanent vacancies are rising. In the past couple of weeks, we have all read the reports in newspapers across the country about local vacancy situations at the start of the new term.

Current trends are what matter most. For example, in modern languages there were 1,662 teachers in 2008, but only 1,335 in 2017. In French and German, the reductions in teacher numbers were 30 per cent and 45 per cent respectively. It is, perhaps, little wonder that fewer and fewer pupils are taking those two subjects. Indeed, in broad general education, out of 269 secondary schools, only 161 are carrying out the full 1+2 policy, and a large number of schools are not even stating what their modern languages policy is.

However, John Swinney—or perhaps it was his civil servant—told me in a recent parliamentary answer that more pupils than ever are studying modern languages. I can assume only that the cabinet secretary was counting short taster courses in primary schools, because if we speak to our modern languages teachers, they tell us that they are in serious trouble in secondary education.

The lack of teaching and support staff is real, and there are the additional worries that a growing number of teachers are leaving the profession early, and that many families are being disadvantaged by an absence of teachers.

In this year's Scottish Qualifications Authority results—with the exception of the advanced higher, which was good—how worrying was it to read SQA markers' comments about "disappointing basic numeracy" in key exams? That is embarrassing and is further evidence of the fundamental failings in the delivery of curriculum for excellence and its accompanying qualifications. It is crystal clear to everyone that we are not making nearly enough progress in literacy and numeracy, or in testing those skills, and that by taking Scotland out of key international measurements of literacy and numeracy, the SNP is itself failing.

It is not just basic literacy and basic numeracy that are worrying families; the narrowing of subject choices in many schools is also an increasing worry. We have seen Jim Scott's evidence on that. I know that the cabinet secretary will come back and say that level 6 qualifications show an improvement, but the cabinet secretary should look at when that growth actually occurred, because it was before the new qualifications were implemented.

Some subjects—I am back to modern languages again—have suffered badly as a result of narrowing of subject choices. The cabinet secretary should also look at the drop in the number of level 5 qualifications. Despite the fact that there are lots more vocational qualifications, the level 5 qualifications have a knock-on effect on highers and advanced highers.

We should not forget that this is happening at the same time as there is deep-seated concern among parents that many of them cannot get their children into Scottish university courses because of the iniquities of the SNP's capped-places policy. It is no use telling those students that a record number of Scotland-domiciled students are at university, or that more are coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. Both those things are true, but the fact remains that students cannot get in despite being well qualified, having worked their socks off to get good grades. They cannot get on to courses that have places available because of the capping policy.

This time last year, we were told by Nicola Sturgeon and by John Swinney that the education reform bill was the biggest opportunity that we had to change schools for the better—I believed that, and I still believe it—especially when it came to addressing the attainment gap. I had substantial differences of opinion with John Swinney about what should be in the bill, as did many councillors of all political persuasions, but we were willing to work with him.

After numerous statements in the chamber, in committee and in the media that the bill was an essential component of reform, it disappeared, and we have been told, after all the hype, that the bill actually was not necessary—although John Swinney says that the bill will be kept ready until it does become necessary. That is not a credible state of affairs when it comes to the SNP's stewardship of education.

I am convinced that Scotland can lead the world again when it comes to schools, but it will not unless there is a major shift in culture in order properly to free up our headteachers to get on with the job of deciding what is best in their schools. It is not all about money and resources, although they are important. It is also about the decision-making process and where lines of responsibility

and accountability lie. What this summer has shown is that parents want more teachers, more progress on basic literacy and numeracy, and more choices for pupils to take different subjects. Under the current Government, they are not getting any of that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): I have some time in hand, so there is time for interventions and no need for cross-bench chatter.

15:11

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): When this Parliament meets for a programme for government statement or an annual budget statement, we are often starkly reminded of the differences between choices made here in Holyrood and those made 400 miles down the road at Westminster. For me, nothing quite signals the difference in values between this SNP Scottish Government and the Tory Government in London better than the announcement that the First Minister made on the settled status of European Union citizens working in our public services.

One thing that we can all agree on across this Parliament is the immense contribution to our communities, economy and public services that EU citizens make every day. In my view, it is utterly unacceptable that such people may face Home Office fees in order to secure their settled status when we crash out of the EU in March next year, following a referendum that they were excluded from. Simply put, our national health service would cease to function as normal if we were suddenly to lose such an important cohort of people. The same is true of the countless other public services that EU citizens help to ensure are delivered day in, day out.

More important, covering the costs of any settled status fees for EU citizens working in our devolved public services sends out a clear message that, despite the rhetoric that has consumed the debate at Westminster, EU citizens are welcome here in Scotland.

Members: Hear, hear.

Bruce Crawford: This is their home, as it is for all of us, and we value their contribution.

In a similar comparison, the early delivery of the best start grant will help to deliver the Scottish National Party Government's vision of making Scotland the best possible place in which to grow up. The grant, which is given to parents at a crucial stage of a young child's life, will support families and help to ensure that everyone gets a fair start in life, no matter their background. There will be no cap on that grant, and the dreadful rape clause will not apply. There is a difference

between what happens here and what happens at Westminster.

I represent a constituency with a large rural area and population, and some parts of the remote and rural communities that I represent still do not have the benefit of being connected to reliable broadband services with decent speeds. The announcement that the reaching 100 per cent programme contract will be awarded this coming year is good news for those communities. It means that we can now focus on the remaining percentage of premises that are not yet connected to fast broadband. Reaching 100 per cent of premises across the country with faster broadband, I am proud to say, is the most ambitious policy of its kind anywhere in the United Kingdom. Again, that shows a clear difference in approach between what happens here in Scotland and what happens at Westminster.

I turn to the most important announcement that the First Minister made in her statement on the programme for government, which relates to mental health. Recently, contact with my constituents about access to mental health services—particularly CAMHS—has increased. I have had meetings and discussions with officials from NHS Forth Valley on their proposals to improve services to my constituents. To its credit, the board has attempted to increase the number of appropriately qualified specialists and redesigned its mental health services in an attempt to drive forward change. That said, as all members should acknowledge, the increasing demand for mental health services as a result, in part, of the removal of stigma makes it all the more difficult for the board to deliver the level of service that it is determined to achieve.

That is why I was delighted that the programme for government contained the significant announcement of an additional £250 million for mental health. I am pleased that much of that new resource will be aimed at taking a more preventative approach and ensuring earlier intervention on a person's care journey. I strongly support the Government's proposals to provide 350 counsellors and 250 additional school nurses, thereby ensuring that every secondary school has a counselling service, and an additional 80 counsellors working across further and higher education. However, most important by far are the plans to fast track young people with the most serious mental illnesses to specialist services.

The volume of negativity coming from some Opposition politicians over the past few days has been disappointing, to put it mildly. We have heard bewildering chuntering and—I say to Iain Gray—some performances of which Private Frazer would be hugely proud. The Tory economy spokesperson took to Twitter to decry the Scottish

Government for having run out of ideas on the economy in response to news that Scotland had outperformed the rest of the UK on growth—you could not make it up. That is without mentioning the package that was announced in the programme for government that will stimulate Scotland's economy and ensure that it reflects the outward-looking nation that we are proud to be.

Following eight years of austerity that have been imposed on Scotland by a Tory Government for which we did not vote, the programme for government builds on the progress that we have made as a country and reaffirms Scotland as an outward-looking and confident nation.

15:17

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): The programme for government includes some welcome announcements—for example, additional funding for rape crisis centres and to tackle holiday hunger. Access to school-based counselling in all secondary schools, as other members have said, is also very welcome. Scottish Labour has campaigned for all those measures, as have others, and I take that as a positive sign that the Government is prepared to adopt good policies, regardless of where they come from.

However, on local government and our communities, I am disappointed that the Government's programme is light on new content. That is all the more striking because, on the day when the programme was published, the Scottish household survey revealed that public satisfaction in public services had plummeted to the lowest level in 10 years. We cannot escape the fact that SNP Government cuts to the tune of £1.5 billion in the past seven years are making it impossible for councils to deliver the full range of public services that our communities need. Communities are watching important public services, from libraries to public toilets, disappear.

Earlier today, I met Shelter Scotland to discuss Scotland's housing crisis. More than 137,000 people are on council waiting lists and Shelter highlighted to me that families spend on average more than six months in temporary accommodation. It told me that there is a growing crisis in Scotland and that councils are under-resourced and under increasing pressure to respond.

That made me think about what the situation must be doing to staff morale—to the council workers who came into public service to make a positive difference to the lives of others. They are under increasing pressure to do more with less. A Unison survey found that half the people in the

workforce are thinking about leaving their posts for less stressful jobs.

Derek Mackay: Monica Lennon is fairly addressing the housing challenge that we face, but would she welcome the multiyear commitment of £1.8 billion to housing and a commitment that is on track to deliver 50,000 new affordable homes? If that is not the right direction of travel, what is her suggestion?

Monica Lennon: I welcome the cabinet secretary's intervention. The discussion that I had today with Shelter Scotland reflected some of the good commitments and the work that is in progress. However, I have to say to the cabinet secretary that what is important is the pace of that change and the longer-term commitment. I would not want colleagues to knock Shelter Scotland. I think that we can have a conversation after today's debate. *[Interruption.]* The Deputy First Minister is making a comment. I am happy to take an intervention from him.

Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Monica Lennon: I think that I will just make some progress. I will let the Deputy First Minister intervene later, if he wants to.

The programme for government should have been brimming with new and radical action to reinvigorate local economies and local public services. However, it is lacklustre and I, like many of us, believe that our communities deserve better.

There is a frustration around the fact that the Scottish Government says that it is focused on growth. To that end, it makes no sense to short change local government, because well-resourced public services strengthen communities and are ultimately good for the economy.

Having spent my early working life in local government, I know that, with the right resources, powers and people, councils can deliver transformative change in partnership with communities.

Jeane Freeman: Given everything that Monica Lennon has said, how would she explain the fact that East Ayrshire Council, the local authority in my constituency, has successfully built more social homes in the recent period than previously, has what I believe is the highest record in Scotland for community involvement and asset transfer and has more PAMIS toilets, which we want across all authorities? That is an SNP-led council that is managing, despite the financial pressures that it faces in common with this Government, to deliver services for local people and to continue to be successful. Is it, as I believe, an exemplar, or is it unique? Is it simply a well-run, well-managed local authority?

Monica Lennon: I am impressed by the amazing work that I have seen in all local authorities—I think that they are all doing their best with limited resources. On the point that the cabinet secretary makes, it is important to celebrate such best practice when we find it. However, we have to listen to COSLA, which speaks with one voice and talks about the extreme funding pressures that all local authorities face. All too often in this depressing austerity era, councils struggle to prevent and mitigate local economic shocks, to plan for the needs of an ageing population and to prepare for the challenges around Brexit and beyond.

At the start of my remarks, I gave the Government credit for taking on policy ideas from other parties and people outside Parliament. However, the tourist tax idea did not benefit from such good will. It beggars belief that SNP ministers continue to deny councils the powers to raise much-needed revenues in that way, especially when there is consensus across local government and COSLA has made an excellent case.

Scottish Labour champions the tourist tax because we believe that it is a win-win for visitors and communities. I therefore appeal to ministers to stop standing in the way of councils that want to do what is right for their communities.

Cash-strapped local authorities are facing real dilemmas now. I am glad that the cabinet secretary mentioned the importance of PAMIS toilets but, this week, Disability Equality Scotland spoke out about the dwindling number of public toilets and the negative impacts of that on disabled people and other groups.

The squeeze on public services, whether it comes from Westminster or Holyrood, is forcing more and more people into poverty. I hope that we would all agree that the Labour administration in North Lanarkshire Council is doing brilliant work to poverty-proof our schools. Club 365, a scheme to tackle holiday hunger, is a shining example of the difference that councils can make.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Ms Lennon is just closing.

Monica Lennon: I was exceptionally proud of North Ayrshire Council when it became the first local authority in the UK to offer period products in all its public buildings. I congratulate Councillor Joe Cullinane and his officials on the speed at which they are rolling that out. I am also grateful to the Scottish Government for its commitment to end period poverty. There is more work that we can do together on that.

I believe that all councils want to do more for their communities. Scottish Labour is extremely disappointed that the programme for government puts limits on their ambitions.

The Scottish Government said in its programme for government document:

“The success and the wellbeing of our communities, is rooted in the strength of our relationship and partnerships with local government”.

We appreciate that sentiment, but there must be a genuine commitment from the Scottish Government that is backed up by action, because it is only by providing high-quality public services that can be readily accessed by the many and not just a privileged few that our communities and economy will truly begin to thrive and flourish.

15:25

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): I am pleased to take part in this debate on the exciting programme for government that the First Minister announced on Tuesday. I want to focus on two areas: the further measures that were announced to tackle the attainment gap and the measures to support children and young people’s mental health.

The work that the Government has undertaken to address the attainment gap through pupil equity fund moneys, which really help schools across my constituency, is already showing results. I am pleased that there will now be even earlier intervention to tackle the issue.

The announcement that the best start grant will be introduced before the end of the year is very welcome. It will give children from families who are struggling a better start in life. With families already benefiting from the baby box, the Scottish Government is focused on giving every child born in Scotland the best start possible. A key point in relation to the best start grant is that the policy is that there is no limit to the number of children that mothers can have to qualify for that support. That is unlike the Tories’ two-child policy, which brought with it the unforgivable rape clause.

Let us fast forward a few years to children preparing to start school. A big worry for parents is the cost of school uniforms. The finance secretary recently announced that the Scottish Government will make additional funding available to councils to pay a minimum of £100 to parents who qualify through the school uniform grant. That is a fantastic measure that will support those who need it most to ensure that their children are ready to start their education.

Unfortunately, that is not always enough. Just as the use of food banks is becoming more common as a result of right-wing Tory policies, so

too is the use of uniform banks. I pay tribute to Julie O'Byrne and her team at cool school uniforms in Coatbridge, which is in my constituency. They have just finished their busiest time since they started out just over a year ago, and they have helped hundreds of families to prepare children and young people who are starting or returning to school.

On the topic of attainment, I want to mention the fantastic club 365 initiative, which Monica Lennon also mentioned. It ensures that all children and young people in North Lanarkshire receive a nutritious meal every single day. That amazing initiative was, of course, piloted in Coatbridge. Monica Lennon failed to mention that it was Labour and SNP support in North Lanarkshire that saw it through—I suppose that it is unsurprising that the Tories tried to block it. It was largely funded by the Scottish Government. I look forward to seeing more feedback on that project and seeing it rolled out further.

Food poverty is a big issue in my constituency. I highlight the fact that Coatbridge food bank is totally out of supplies; if anyone can help, they should please do so. Presiding Officer, you will forgive me for saying that I was surprised at the weekend to see Conservative Party canvassers in Coatbridge who had ironically—and probably obviously—positioned themselves metres from that food bank, which has run out of supplies.

I want to talk about mental health and young people. It is hard to ignore the fact that mental health—particularly the mental health of young people—is one of the biggest challenges that we currently face as a society. Some, such as the Scottish Youth Parliament, even refer to mental ill health as this generation's epidemic.

In light of that, I held a children and young people's mental health event for Coatbridge and Chryston just last month at which I brought together local and national charities and organisations as well as young people from schools and members of the Scottish Youth Parliament. The event provided them with an opportunity to discuss what they felt the challenges were in addressing young people's mental health. I am pleased to say that I have had some really good feedback from that event. There were interesting and lengthy conversations to be had, and it was good to see that taking place non-politically in a very mature and constructive environment.

Overall, it was widely agreed that CAMHS should be a last resort—not the first port of call—for those in immediate need of treatment and that the issue should be tackled through a more efficient buffering system in place between schools, general practitioner services, CAMHS and the third sector to ensure that, wherever

possible, mental health problems are identified at the earliest opportunity and the most appropriate action is taken.

Tools such as healthy coping mechanisms, mindfulness, making use of exercise and access to counselling services and cognitive behavioural therapy are not the answer to all mental health issues, but they would certainly provide support and early intervention to those in need of care.

We need to ensure equality of opportunity. At the event, it was mentioned that young people aged 16 to 18 are unable to access CAHMS unless they are in education. It should be recognised that the cause of school dropouts at a young age could be adverse childhood experiences, trauma and other experiences that have the potential to cause mental health problems. The gap in provision concerns me and clearly needs to be addressed. Although such young people are able to access adult mental health services, we should consider whether it is appropriate for them to be referred to adult services simply because they have been, for whatever reason, unable to remain in education. For those who are referred to CAMHS only to be referred on, that rejection has the potential to adversely affect mental health further.

I was pleased when the issue was raised today with the First Minister, who confirmed that the expanded community mental wellbeing services will be designed to include age-appropriate services for young people, who will be able to access the healthcare that they need when they need it regardless of whether they are in education. I welcome that approach—in addition to having a counsellor in every school, which has been widely talked about today—and consider that community provision is the best way forward, along with a commitment to resources, staff and budgets.

As Gillian Martin tweeted the other day, the approach shows that this Scottish Government is a listening Government. Mental health is an area in which I and many other MSPs, including Gillian Martin and Clare Haughey, who is now the Minister for Mental Health, have campaigned. I am making the point to other parties that there are a lot more ways to effect positive change than just constantly undermining and badmouthing Government decisions for the sake of headlines in newspapers that can be held up here in the chamber.

There are too many things in the programme for government for me to mention, but I particularly welcome the announcement that the principles of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child will be incorporated into Scots law, as well as the further measures to support care-

experienced young people, including access to affordable credit.

I am looking forward to this new parliamentary year and supporting the proposals to become a reality.

15:32

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I am delighted to be able to contribute to this very important debate on the SNP Government's agenda for the next year, although I am less excited by the content of that agenda because, frankly, the programme for government does little to get the juices flowing. It is full of glossy pictures and nice graphics and it is replete with general principles that many would be hard pressed to disagree with, but when it comes to the detail, regrettably, it is very uninspiring.

As Ruth Davidson said on Tuesday, we are now halfway through this parliamentary session, yet we have a programme for government that lacks ambition, avoids difficult subjects and backtracks on old promises. It is also noteworthy how commentators across the political spectrum have likewise been disappointed with the programme in the days following its launch. It is striking that no one is prepared any longer to give the SNP the benefit of the doubt. Why should they? The SNP has been in government for more than a decade, yet the programme for government reveals just how tired its administration of Scotland has become.

I cannot be alone in feeling that the programme for government is a missed opportunity. It was a perfect chance for the First Minister to reboot her Government, to set the agenda and to announce bold and dynamic measures that would benefit the people of Scotland. As we approach the date when the UK is leaving the EU, it was an opportunity for the First Minister to set out her stall and to describe her vision for what a post-Brexit Scotland should look like and what her political priorities would be.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Donald Cameron: Hang on a second.

We all acknowledge that this is a time of political volatility and disruption, but that is precisely why creative thinking and bold policy choices should be undertaken.

Stuart McMillan: Can Mr Cameron tell the chamber what the UK Government's vision is for the UK after it leaves the European Union?

Donald Cameron: We want to achieve a deal that works for Scotland and Britain. *[Interruption.]*

Let us return to the topic at hand. *[Interruption.]* I am not surprised that the SNP does not want to talk about its own programme for government, because it is little more than a mix of rehashed or reannounced policies from the past.

There are elements that we welcome, some of which were Scottish Conservative ideas or campaigns originally. Take the south of Scotland enterprise agency, which my colleague Oliver Mundell has been agitating for, or Finn's law, which my colleague Liam Kerr has been battling for. Other colleagues have welcomed various bills that we support. However, in the time that I have left, I want to focus on what I think is one of the biggest omissions, which is the lack of a clear and ambitious plan for Scotland's rural communities. I refer to my crofting, farming and forestry interests in my entry in the register of members' interests.

With Brexit only months away, the SNP Government had a perfect opportunity to provide Scotland's farmers and crofters with certainty over what kind of tailored system Scotland would have in place, not just in terms of subsidy support but in terms of a wider programme of specific policy.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Excuse me, Mr Cameron. There are some private conversations going on that are creating a bit of a buzz in the background.

Donald Cameron: Instead we have the offer of a rural economy action plan and a commitment to work on a crofting bill, both of which contain very little detail. In a programme of nearly 120 pages, the few pages dedicated to the rural economy reveal how far down the list of SNP priorities our rural communities lie.

The Minister for Public Finance and Digital Economy (Kate Forbes): Will the member give way?

Donald Cameron: No, I must make progress.

The fact is that, despite funding guarantees on pillars 1 and 2 from the UK Government up to 2022, the SNP Government has dithered about the future of agricultural support, and only just before recess began outlining its initial views and consulting on future support.

Derek Mackay: Will the member take an intervention on that point?

Donald Cameron: No, I am sorry. I need to make some progress.

Derek Mackay: I bet that you are sorry.

Donald Cameron: By comparison, members will be aware that today the UK Government has announced the creation of a new pilot scheme that will provide 2,500 seasonal migrant worker visas to non-European Economic Area workers to

support soft fruit and vegetable farmers. NFU Scotland described that this morning as

“a step in the right direction”.

What a stark contrast with the failure of the Scottish Government to effect real and material change for Scotland’s agricultural community.

In last year’s programme for government, the SNP promised to

“put the CAP payment system on a secure footing and complete full digitisation of the application process for payments”.

This year’s programme for government is silent on that. Instead, we know from a recent freedom of information request that there are still 340 businesses waiting for their payment for 2017, and even one business in the north-east still waiting for its 2016 payment. Although I am not entirely surprised that the Government chose to omit a similar commitment in this year’s programme for government, it yet again highlights the SNP Government’s inability to get to grips with this long-running saga.

Similarly, Scotland’s fishing communities will be less than impressed with the five paragraphs afforded to them in the programme for government, none of which mentioned post-Brexit policy. Instead, the SNP Government intends to bring forward another consultation paper—another consultation document, and absolutely no concrete action, notwithstanding the fact that it is over two years since the UK voted to leave the EU.

So there you have it—a programme for government that is devoid of creative thinking, a programme for government that retreads old policies and a programme for government that delivers no certainty or peace of mind for farmers and crofters. All of that is from an SNP Government that is quite simply letting down Scotland’s rural communities.

The First Minister blames Brexit for what is essentially a timid and shallow programme for government, but the reality is that the SNP Government is a busted flush, and the people of Scotland deserve better.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind all members that, although debate can be robust, I expect politeness at all times.

15:38

Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP): I start with a confession. Perhaps because of the long summer recess, I decided not to prepare any extensive speaking notes, because I was expecting this afternoon to hear a raft of ideas and initiatives and policies from the Opposition parties,

which would present an opportunity for engagement and dynamic debate. Alas, all we have heard is the tired dirge and plaintive cries of “SNP bad”.

What has been missing so far in the debate is a modicum of context. We live in extraordinary times. We have a situation where the director of the Central Intelligence Agency in the United States is describing the US President’s actions as “treacherous”. We have an expansive and growing China seeking to establish a new authoritarian world order. In Italy, we have the upper house of the Parliament taking away compulsory vaccinations for children. In the UK, we have seen a Conservative Party engulfed over the summer, attempting to define what it means by Brexit, to the extent that the deputy leader of the party has taken to social media to beg SNP MPs to block Mr Johnson and Mr Rees-Mogg. Meanwhile, the Labour Party has spent the summer trying to work out what the definition of antisemitism is.

Given the turmoil in both those parties, the use of expressions such as “tired” or “managerial” is a bit of a compliment, because what it means in practice is that we have a mature, serious, grown-up Government that is focused on delivering for the people of Scotland instead of internal squabbling.

We are debating a substantive, impressive and important programme for government. I start by congratulating the Government on its commitment to expand its investment in infrastructure. The fact that investment in infrastructure will be £1.5 billion per annum higher by 2025-26 is a substantial achievement. Such investment is necessary.

We have come a long way in the past 11 years. When the SNP Government was first elected, the M8, the M80 and the M74 were not complete and there was no Queensferry crossing, no Aberdeen western peripheral route and no Queen Elizabeth university hospital. There has been substantive investment across a range of areas.

My colleague Alasdair Allan spoke about the transformation in digital connectivity that has taken place over recent years in his constituency. Across Scotland, 95 per cent of homes and business premises are connected. That is an outstanding achievement, and I am delighted that the contracts for the reaching 100 per cent—R100—programme are to be awarded imminently.

There is far more infrastructure investment that I could mention. More than 750 schools have been refurbished, 76,500 affordable homes have been built, a commitment has been made to supply 750 new, extended or refurbished nurseries and a roll-out of electrification is under way on Scotland’s roads and highways.

There are many other aspects of the programme for government that I would like to talk about, but I am limited by time, so I will pick out just one or two. Something that has not been spoken about in any great detail in the debate is the commitment to have an older people's framework by March 2019, which will seek to maximise the contribution that our older people make across Scotland. In my constituency of Renfrewshire South, I recently met ROAR—reaching older adults in Renfrewshire—which does incredible work with older people in the community, including improving digital literacy and tackling loneliness and isolation. I look forward to the roll-out of the older people's framework and to finding out how it will support my constituents.

I also want to welcome the commencement of the carers allowance supplement. In this job, with the sparring and the back and forth of political debate, it can be easy to forget that the decisions that we take in Parliament have a significant impact on our constituents. On Monday morning, I returned to my constituency office after a meeting to find that my staff were elated. A gentleman had come to my constituency office to see me. He had been disappointed to find that I was not in, but he wanted to relay a message. The previous week, he had read in the *Johnstone Gazette* a press release that I had put out to announce the commencement of the carers allowance supplement. He had been unaware of that, and he was ecstatic to learn of it, as it will make a significant impact on his life. Of course, for now, I am quite happy to let him believe that I was personally responsible for that. It is an example of the difference that policies that are adopted and decisions that are made by the Scottish Parliament can make.

My final point relates to an issue that my colleague Bruce Crawford picked up on—the commitments to cover settled status fees and to legislate to ensure that EU citizens retain the right to vote. I think that those commitments speak to who we are as a nation and to our values as a country. I condemn any politician of any party who would suggest that that is some cynical ploy to distract from other issues. What a miserable attitude to take.

I welcome the programme for government and I look forward to supporting the legislative programme as it advances through Parliament in the coming year.

15:44

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): This debate on the Scottish Government's programme for government and public services comes at a time when many local public services are struggling under the continued austerity of a

Tory Westminster Government. I acknowledge at the outset that it is a bit rich for the Scottish Tories to keep demanding that more money should be spent on public services while supporting continued austerity and proposing tax cuts for the richest in our society.

However, this programme also comes at a time when the Scottish Government has control of a budget of more than £40 billion and is failing to stand up for and protect vital public services. The fact is that the Scottish Government controls and funds most of Scotland's public services. Politicians can make claims and counterclaims and blame each other, but when it comes to public services the general public of Scotland do not need to listen to politicians; they can see for themselves daily the impact that cuts are having on local services.

Why, then, is the SNP in such denial about the state of public services in Scotland? Yesterday, I read a quote from the Deputy First Minister, who said:

"We are determined to do more to ensure that our public services deliver for communities and major reforms are under way to improve systems and tackle inequalities."

Is it not incredible that after 11 years of being in government and in charge of our public services, the SNP seems to think that the problems are with systems? It is not systems or structures that are causing the problems in local services; it is the fact that £1.5 billion has been taken out of local budgets over the past eight years.

The SNP says that it wants to empower people and put more power into the hands of the people. I see that as code for more cuts and fewer services—a kind of do-it-yourself approach to public services under the guise of community empowerment.

Let me take one example from the programme for government, which says that it will

"invest up to £4 million"

across all of Scotland

"to ensure headteachers have the skills, support and expertise they need to be the key decision-makers in the life of their schools".

Never mind the whole of Scotland, if we look at just one authority, Fife, and just one service, education, we see that more than £4 million is being taken out the Fife education budget in this year alone. Fife's secondary schools are taking a hit of more than £2 million over two years. The SNP says in the programme for government that it wants to empower headteachers. I ask myself, "Empower them to do what?", because it seems that it wants to empower them to make the cuts.

The Courier recently reported that the head of Balwearie high school in Kirkcaldy is faced with

the prospect of cutting subjects and guidance teachers as the school aims to make savings of £346,741 over the next two years. One parent is quoted as saying:

“I am distressed and angered that our school is facing this additional massive financial hardship.”

The Fife branch of the Educational Institute of Scotland has warned that the cuts to many of the region’s secondary schools will damage the delivery of services. The programme for government states:

“We want Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow up and that means ensuring every child has an equal chance to succeed.”

I agree with that, but for headteachers, teachers, parents and pupils in Fife secondary schools, that just seems like rhetoric, far removed from the reality that they are facing right now with the budget cuts in those schools.

So, although there are many initiatives to welcome in the programme for government, when it comes to public services there is too much rhetoric. The reality for headteachers and teachers across Fife is that they are consulting on how to cut hundreds of thousands of pounds from their school budgets, this year and next.

A former United States education secretary once said:

“Even in a time of fiscal austerity, education is more than just an expense”.

Is it any wonder that dissatisfaction with public services in Scotland is growing, when those kinds of cuts are taking place in Fife secondary schools? Education makes up more than half of most councils’ budgets, so the SNP cannot continue to cut council budgets and pretend that it is having no impact on the education of our children. That just does not stack up and parents know that to be the case.

I call on the Deputy First Minister to look at the depths of the cuts that are being made in Fife schools and to get into dialogue with the council to find an alternative to the unacceptable situation that is being faced by teachers and pupils across the kingdom of Fife. I urge the Government to stop the cuts to local public services, stand up for Scotland’s communities and invest in Scotland’s greatest asset: its people.

15:50

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): Last year’s programme for government contained radical and ambitious policies that have been widely praised in Scotland and beyond. The public sector pay cap has been lifted in Scotland; income tax is fairer; Scotland has become the first country in the world to implement minimum unit alcohol

pricing, which has the potential to save 121 lives a year; Scotland is the only part of the UK with statutory child poverty reduction targets; and we have committed to ending rough sleeping and transforming how we prevent and tackle homelessness. Of course, we also passed the landmark Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018.

Now is the time to build on those ambitions and achievements. This year—this month, in fact—the first major new public service to be created since devolution, Social Security Scotland, will make its first payments, with the carers allowance supplement being paid to Scotland’s carers. There will be a 13 per cent increase in the carers allowance, which will bring it into line with jobseekers allowance. During the summer, I met carers in Irvine and heard at first hand about the challenges that they face and the difficulty and indignity that they have experienced at the hands of the Department for Work and Pensions.

Where we have the power and responsibility, we can and will do better. When we discuss social security-related issues, from child poverty to disability rights, the regrettable reality is that Scotland is, more often than not, acting with one hand tied behind its back and with UK Government policies taking things backwards as we legislate to move forwards. We must remember that 85 per cent of welfare powers will remain at Westminster and that even the powers that have been devolved are impacted by cuts at UK level. However, even where we do not have powers, we continue to protect people from the worst excesses. I think that we can do better than that. Just imagine what we could do with the full powers returned through Scotland regaining her independence and with all that time, energy and resource directed to moving forward and not simply to mitigation.

In the meantime, our new Scottish social security system, with dignity and respect at its heart, will deliver 11 benefits, including best start grants for low-income families, which will begin by Christmas, six months early. Best start grants will be paid for every child in a family—there will be no draconian two-child cap and no repugnant rape clause in our Scottish system. Folk who are in need of help will be supported and not demonised. Our Scottish social security system will be run for people and not for profit and, most important of all, every person, with no exception, will be treated with dignity and respect.

To be a more successful country, we need an overall improvement in our population health and, of course, mental wellbeing is as important as physical wellbeing. I welcome the additional £250 million to reform the way that we treat poor mental health in children and adults, which will deliver 430 new school, college and university counsellors and

fast-track specialist treatment systems for those with serious mental illness.

Good perinatal maternal mental health is vital in improving outcomes for mothers and their young children. Poor maternal mental health can impact significantly on child development outcomes if untreated, with an impact on a child's emotional, cognitive and even physical development. Although that is not inevitable, the consequences can be serious and potentially lifelong. We know about the importance of early development in a child's life. Intervention and support at the earliest possible stage can have a positive impact by preventing or mitigating issues later on. The Scottish Government's announcement that it will substantially expand the range of perinatal support available to women is good news. The work to provide more counselling support for less acute issues and better specialist support for moderate to acute problems will ultimately prevent unnecessary suffering for women and families, while improving children's early experiences and removing future pressures. There is an obvious human cost of undiagnosed and untreated perinatal mental illness. If perinatal mental health problems were identified and treated quickly and effectively, serious and sometimes life-changing human and economic costs could be avoided.

There has not been a lot of cheer in the chamber this afternoon, so I want to share some of the praise that the mental health reforms have received from outwith our party. The Richmond Fellowship approves of the reforms, as do Graeme Smith of the Scottish Trades Union Congress; Inspiring Scotland; Barnardo's Scotland; Stephanie Fraser, the chief executive of Bobath Scotland; Alastair Ross, the head of public policy at the Association of British Insurers; the president of NUS Scotland; and Billy Watson, chief executive of the Scottish Association for Mental Health.

That positive response for our programme for government from civic Scotland has been phenomenal and demonstrates people's confidence in our SNP Government to deliver for Scotland. These are ambitious but achievable proposals and I look forward to contributing to the delivery of them for the people of Cunninghame South and Ayrshire, and for Scotland.

15:56

Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con): The devolution of social security powers to this Parliament is the largest devolution of powers since its inception. Although I welcome the Scottish Government's announcement that the carers allowance supplement is being rolled out this month and that the best start grant will be delivered six months ahead of schedule,

metaphorically speaking, we have only just entered the woods. Carers allowance supplement and the best start grant will affect many people, but let us not forget that there are far more challenging benefits yet to be delivered.

Although the First Minister says that the delivery of the best start grant depends on the "required DWP co-operation", it is worth remembering that the DWP will continue to deliver the largest benefits alongside Social Security Scotland. Disability living allowance, personal independence payments, heating allowances, the best start grant and funeral expenses will all be administered jointly with the DWP until 2020. Scotland's social security agency may be open for business, but it will be a while before it stands on its own two feet.

On Tuesday, the First Minister was kind enough to provide us with this year's schedule, but, as the remainder of her timings on the welfare programme are unknown, we are still in the dark. Carers allowance supplement is perhaps one of the easiest benefits to deliver—it is relatively small compared to, say, PIP. However, by 2021, Social Security Scotland will be making more payments a week than it currently will in a year. A careful and accurate roll-out is important, but my fear is that we will reach 2021 with PIP, DLA and the winter fuel allowance being rushed to delivery. As Audit Scotland pointed out in its infamous March report, the Government will have to be careful not to fall behind as budgets tighten and deadlines loom.

I was disappointed to see in the programme for government that independence was once again at the forefront of SNP policy. The Government was unable to deliver the bulk of its pledges from the last programme due to its constitutional wrangling. I would like the focus to be on delivering things such as social security and I fear for the smooth delivery of the benefits, particularly once Social Security Scotland removes its stabiliser wheels and goes it alone.

The timetable proposed by the First Minister on Tuesday raises other concerns. The work of any Government must be scrutinised, yet for social security there is currently a blind spot. Carers allowance supplement will be delivered from Monday, yet we do not have a Scottish commission on social security to hold the Government to account.

Jeane Freeman: I am sure that colleagues will forgive me, but I cannot sit and listen to much more this, given my knowledge. Will Michelle Ballantyne accept that this Government established a brand new public service within two years and had the unanimous support of the entire chamber for the legislation that underpins it and drives the delivery plan? Will she at least cede that, being a relatively new member of the Social Security Committee, she might want to get a

briefing from her colleagues and read some of the background minutes? She might then perhaps understand exactly how confident we are, and will be, about the delivery of social security in Scotland. The DWP role is absolutely critical, so perhaps she could turn her attention to helping us to help it to sort itself out.

Michelle Ballantyne: I am absolutely delighted that the cabinet secretary remains confident about delivering the service, but the point here is that it is about confidence at the moment, not about actually having done it. If the cabinet secretary takes my comments in the spirit in which they are meant and if she listens to the rest of what I have to say today, perhaps she will start to think about how we work together, rather than making this a battle.

The timetable proposed by the First Minister on Tuesday—where am I? I have done that bit. Sorry—I have lost my place, which is probably what was meant to happen.

Neither is the charter in place. This Parliament legislated that the charter will contain the core principles of the system as well as an obligation for ministers to report on any progress that is made on their commitments. With carers allowance coming into action and the best start grant on the way, the charter is still on the horizon. The principles in the charter are meant to guide our system, so it is worrying that the Government does not deem the charter to be essential before it starts work on the delivery of the actual benefits.

I was struck by Stuart McMillan's words on Tuesday. Mr McMillan told the chamber:

"Opposition parties should be thanking the Scottish Government".—[*Official Report*, 4 September 2018; c 54.]

That is also what the cabinet secretary is asking for. I say to Mr McMillan that, when it comes to Scottish social security, it should also be his party thanking the UK Government. It is, after all, the UK Government that devolved the powers, making our social security system possible. It is the UK Government that contributed £200 million to the cost of implementing the new powers and it is the UK Government that is forecast to spend upwards of £2.9 billion every year through the block grant.

Fulton MacGregor: Will the member give way?

Michelle Ballantyne: No. I am going to make some progress now.

I remind the Parliament that if, as the Auditor General and the Scottish Government's own financial memorandum suggest, our demand-led system begins to run over budget, there will be only three options left to the Scottish Government. The first is to cut services, which it would not want to do and we would not want to see. The second is an adjustment to the block grant, letting the UK

taxpayer pick up the bill. The third is an increase to taxes, hitting Scots again with a tax rise. For a social security system to have the unanimous support of the people of Scotland, we must bear in mind that fairness applies to claimants and to taxpayers. We have an obligation to both.

Social security is a topic that reaches far beyond the remit of its brief. I am firmly of the view that social security should be a springboard, not a safety net. There is a correlation between the state of our economy, schools and health services and the size of our social security budget, so we need to get them all right. The most successful Governments are those that are, first, able to recognise and acknowledge their countries' problems and challenges, and then willing to address them by building consensus across the political chamber. If this Scottish Government is serious about getting social security right and eliminating poverty, maybe it is time to change some of the rhetoric and language in this chamber.

16:03

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): As someone who has just left the Social Security Committee, I feel that I have to comment on some of what has just been said in the chamber. The Smith commission was an agreement between two Governments about the devolution of powers to Scotland. It was not gifted to us and we should not have to be thankful for it, nor should we be thankful for a UK Government whose welfare system includes sanctions, assessments of people with lifetime conditions and the rape clause—a system that has dehumanised our citizens. That is why it was so important that, when we put through the Social Security (Scotland) Bill, it included dignity and respect at its heart, because that approach has been sadly missing in the UK Government. We will thank it for none of that.

The final back-bench speakers in a debate that has lasted three days—of which I am one—are always concerned that they might repeat some of what has been said before. I am glad that that will not be the case for my speech this afternoon, because there has been so much to talk about.

Far from being a tired presentation, this is a tried and tested presentation from a Government that has been tried and tested by the Scottish people and continues to have their confidence when it comes to delivering for the people of Scotland.

So many mentions have been made of some of the great and ambitious work that is coming. We started the week with Dr Alasdair Allan channelling his inner back bencher of choice, but today I want

to channel my inner Tracy Chapman, because today I will be talking about a revolution. That revolution is the fourth industrial revolution—a technological revolution that will fundamentally alter the way we live, the way we work and the way we relate to one another. The transformation will be unlike anything humankind has experienced before.

In the 1700s, we had the steam, water and mechanical equipment revolution; in the 1800s, we had the division of labour, along with electricity and mass production; and in the 1960s, electronics, information technology and automated production came to the fore.

However, the next challenge—the next revolution—will be the cyber-physical systems revolution, described as the fourth industrial revolution. It is about big data, the internet of things, artificial intelligence and bioengineering. It involves the concept of blurring our world with the technological world. Like all technological developments, it offers both opportunities and challenges. The fourth industrial revolution is already here, whether it is self-driving cars, drones, virtual assistants or the decision-making and learning software algorithms that are used in many walks of life, including the stock market and the design of new drugs.

We now have digital fabrication technologies interacting with the biological world; we have engineers, designers and architects who are combining computational design with manufacturing. It is about a symbiosis between microorganisms, our bodies, the products we consume and even the buildings we inhabit. It will transform our lives. That is why I am so glad that this programme for government is embracing data-driven innovation.

Scotland already excels at the use of data to improve public services. We are well placed to become a global centre of excellence. That is an opportunity in the fourth industrial revolution that we should be grasping now, for the future. It is an opportunity for highly skilled, highly productive employment, building on the investment that has already been made by the Government in our centres of excellence. In particular, I think of CENSIS, the innovation centre for sensor and imaging systems, which plays a key part in developing innovation landscapes around Scotland and enables industry innovators and university researchers to collaborate at the forefront of that technology.

The £6 million digital network launched by the Scottish Government as part of the programme for government is the most advanced internet of things network in the UK. The new network, IoT Scotland, will provide a wireless sensor network for applications and services to collect data from

devices and send that data without the need for 3G, 4G or wi-fi. It will support businesses to develop new and innovative applications, changing the way that they work. It will enable businesses to monitor the efficiency and productivity of their assets and equipment and schedule how a building operates from day to day, at busy times and quiet times. The network could monitor office environments and lower costs by saving energy, reducing the building's carbon footprint.

The internet of things will transform every sector of our economy, from agriculture to manufacturing, and it presents an exciting opportunity to revolutionise the way that businesses and the public sector across Scotland work.

Ian Reid, the CEO of CENSIS, commented in relation to the launch of the IoT network:

“It is forecast that there will be 25 billion IoT devices connected by 2025 and only a small number will be connected to the internet using 3G, 4G or WiFi.”

He added that the new low-power wide area network, developed as IoT Scotland, will become increasingly important. It has the potential to disrupt the way we live today as much as the internet has changed the way we do business.

This is an exciting opportunity; it has its challenges but we look forward to seeing how the Government will embrace the fourth industrial revolution.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): Before we move on to the last speaker in the open debate, I remind members that everyone who has participated in the debate over the past three days should be present for the closing speeches, unless they have been given explicit permission not to be here. I am giving those members a six-minute warning, wherever they are.

16:10

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

I am delighted to be back making a speech in the chamber and even more delighted to be discussing the programme for government that was recently unveiled by our First Minister. It is no secret to anyone in the Parliament that I love my constituency and being Paisley's MSP. It was great to spend so much time back in my hometown during recess, meeting constituents and catching up with everything that was going on. However, it is equally exciting to look at the year ahead of us, to take control and plan for the kind of Scotland that we all want to live in. That is exactly what the programme for government does. It looks towards the future and sets out plans for

continuing to make Scotland a sustainable, prosperous and, above all else, fair place to live. For me and my constituents in Paisley, that is extremely important. Having the ability to make our constituents' lives better is why we are all here.

Something that I constantly take into account, and something that is a major part of the programme for government, is the fact that we are making children's lives better, too. I know that you will be shocked to hear it, Presiding Officer, but I am a grandparent. It is important to me to see how we can make things better for our grandchildren.

One of the things that the Tories keep talking about and then do not want to talk about is Brexit. The First Minister was right to say that all our plans hang on the back of Brexit, which is only 204 days away. That is just 204 days for them all to decide to get everything organised.

The Secretary of State for Scotland, David Mundell, was at the Justice Committee today. He gave the committee no facts but said things like, "I would like", "I hope", and "there may be a case that we might be in a position to do something". I want St Mirren to win the Scottish Premier League—that's no gonnæ happen.

Stuart McMillan: No, it's not.

George Adam: So says the Greenock Morton fan over in the corner.

The reality is that we need to look at the situation and at everything that the Scottish Government and the First Minister has put forward against that backdrop.

It is the Scottish Government's commitment to people that sticks out the most. It can sometimes be easy to get bogged down in petty party politics and disagreements, but surely we can all agree that our role as parliamentarians is to do our best for our constituents and the people of our country. That is where the programme for government stands out. People are at the heart of it every step of the way—with dignity and respect firmly at the top of the agenda.

This time last year, the First Minister set out an ambitious plan to build an inclusive, fair, prosperous and innovative country that was ready and willing to embrace the future. This year, she is continuing to build on that vision.

During the passage of the landmark Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018—the biggest, most revolutionary act since the inception of the Scottish Parliament—thousands of people across Scotland took part in sessions to ensure that everyone felt represented and listened to. It was clear that the Scottish Government was committed to helping hard-working families and ensuring that every child and young person in Scotland had the

best possible means and opportunity to thrive. Scotland became the only place in the UK with a statutory child poverty reduction target, and the act set out the best start grant to begin the process of tackling that target.

This week, the First Minister announced further plans to combat child poverty. The programme for government outlines an additional £50 million child poverty fund. We also heard that the first payments of the best start grant will be delivered by Christmas—a full six months ahead of schedule—giving parents on low incomes £600 on the birth of their first baby and £300 for subsequent children to buy family essentials. On top of that, we had the introduction of the baby box. That all ensures that our young people are supported, which is a key pillar of "Delivering for today, investing for tomorrow".

The idea of delivering for today and investing for tomorrow is why I am so delighted by the announcement of a new commitment to address child mental health. The programme for government includes details of a massive £250 million health investment package that will go towards delivering 350 dedicated mental health counsellors in schools, 80 additional counsellors throughout further and higher education, extra training for classroom teachers and a further 250 school nurses to offer emotional and mental health support and provide more advice for young people and their families who are dealing with mental health issues. That does not seem like a tired Government; that is a Government leading from the front. The only tiredness is in the patter and nonsense from the Opposition parties.

Tackling mental health issues head on in schools, colleges and universities is of the utmost importance. However, I should also mention the Scottish Government's commitment to adults with poor mental health. More than ever before, adults are opening up about experiencing poor mental health and recognising their right to be helped. The programme for government acknowledges that our approach needs to change to meet the demands of modern Scotland and ensure that support for good mental health is easily accessible and embedded into our public services and culture.

I am certain that this is a programme for government that really has Scotland's best interests at heart. We are living in a time of uncertainty and, as the implications of Brexit remain unclear and outwith our control, it is important that we take bold steps to protect and advance what we can control. The programme for government does just that and ensures that we are prepared for the future.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: As we move to closing speeches, there are six members who

have spoken in the debate who are not in the chamber. Luckily for them, I do not have time to list them all. We will write to them—we cannot do any more than that. They were well warned to be in the chamber for closing speeches, and their absence is really insulting to other members who have spoken in the debate and to those making closing speeches. We will make that plain to them.

16:16

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): It gives me great pride to close for my party.

I start with a couple of notes of good will—it is important to start the new term in that way. I thank the ministers who will deliver the programme for government, some of whom I worked with over the summer months. I thank Joe FitzPatrick for giving access to the deliberations on the future of HIV Scotland; I hope that we are coming to a successful conclusion on that. I thank also Clare Haughey, who has delivered a suicide strategy that, while late, has been well received and is important. I am sure that her tenure as Minister for Mental Health will be defined very much by the success of the strategy.

In particular, I thank the First Minister for her proclamation about the willingness of the Government to incorporate the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scots law, which is something that I have been fighting for all of my adult life. The language around that matters. Only incorporation of all 42 articles of that treaty into Scots law will give our children access to justice. I invite either the First Minister or the Minister for Children and Young People to intervene now to confirm that we will indeed incorporate all those articles and not just the principles. Maybe another time. It is welcome progress nonetheless.

This summer, I got insight into some of the fresh talent in the ministers who were appointed before the summer. Fresh talent it may be, but in the pages of the programme for government there is the whiff of decay. It is a programme characterised by thin, technical measures—a programme that neither makes admission nor offers contrition for the failings of past public policy. It is a programme that in many ways represents the thin gruel of managerialism. That word is particularly apposite if the weather vanes of opinion polls and unforced errors by this Government show that it is indeed managing its own decline.

We can judge the effectiveness of a Government by the way in which it deals with empirical evidence of failure and how it responds to expert and overwhelming criticism. On both counts, the Government has failed. Drug deaths are once again the worst in Europe—twice as bad

as those in England—and yet there was not one single word or pledge of new money in the First Minister's statement or the programme for government.

Clamour against the compulsory testing of four and five-year-olds is met with dogged intransigence, to the point where, at First Minister's question time today, when the First Minister was asked whether, if Parliament votes against the tests—which it is likely to do—they will be removed, still the answer was no.

There was nothing about the discredited treatment time guarantee, which is visited on every member in this chamber week after week by patients, sometimes in abject pain, clutching letters that promised them that their treatment would begin within 12 weeks. When those 12 weeks are up, they phone their consultant to find out that they have a further 40 or sometimes 50 weeks to wait. This is not about denying that we have a problem with capacity in our health services; it is about being honest with people and managing expectations about how long they will have to exist with that pain.

There is no new commitment to workforce planning, particularly around social care or the wider NHS. I have talked many times about the interruption in flow that is caused by diminished capacity in our social care workforce, which sees people who are well and ready to go home being prevented from leaving hospital because of the absence of adequate social care around them.

I am grateful that the First Minister has made mental health the centrepiece of the programme for government. It should be the centrepiece of anybody's programme for government. However, there is no acknowledgement of or contrition for the fact that, this week, Scotland posted the worst child and adolescent mental health waiting times on record. In truth, the new money is welcome but it is a quarter of what we have asked for in every budget negotiation since the Parliament first sat.

Is that backed up by the necessary workforce planning? Fast tracking is welcome—it is vital—but if someone is fast tracked into a tier 4 bed that is not staffed, and the referral is turned away, it is not worth the paper that it is written on. We need a trauma-informed approach in all our front-line workers. That would answer the call of the former chief medical officer, Harry Burns, whose review of targets said that we are not measuring the one thing that we should be measuring—adverse childhood experiences. We need to capture them and direct support to the young people who have suffered them from that point in time.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Does Alex Cole-Hamilton welcome the setting up of the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on

adverse childhood experiences? John Swinney attended the first meeting. It will mean that we can look at issues around ACEs. I welcome the establishment of that group.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: I certainly welcome the group; I am a co-convenor of the cross-party group on ACEs. I am talking about getting the Government to take the issue out of Parliament and make it real in answering the call of Harry Burns.

I want the Government to be bolder. If it is in decline, I say to the First Minister that it should start building its legacy. It should transform the provision of mental health care from cradle to grave, with money and with workforce planning and training for the front-line workers who will deliver that care in the services that people depend on. The Government should give parity to teachers through a McCrone 2 and listen to them and to parents and children on testing. It should give local authorities the power to raise more of their own money.

I come to the thing that has overshadowed everything in this debate and which overshadows all aspects of public policy—our position on the precipice of Brexit. The hour is late but there is still time for the First Minister to swing her party behind a people's vote. As a people, we sometimes make bad decisions. Sometimes we elect Governments that harm us. However, when credited with the facts, the Liberal Democrats believe that the people who first started this process are the only people who can finish it, so please, once and for all, the First Minister should back a people's vote.

16:23

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): The Scottish Government has to deliver for the people of Scotland in the face of many challenges: climate change; an ageing population; Brexit; austerity; and UK welfare reform, including universal credit, which is leaving thousands of Scots unable to feed themselves without emergency food aid, which is far from the springboard that Michelle Ballantyne supports. Every one of those challenges impacts on the demands that are placed on our public services.

Those challenges and demands, and how the Government intends to react to them, have been discussed at length throughout the three days of this debate, and I would like to highlight a few during my time today.

The programme for government's extra £250 million for mental health services has rightly been the subject of much discussion in the debate, and indeed it is very welcome. The First Minister stated that, as the stigma around mental ill health

reduces, demand for services is rising. Reducing stigma is a good thing—it is a great thing.

I thank James Dornan, who today demonstrated that being open about our mental health encourages others to do so. We know that poverty increases the risk of mental health problems and can be both a cause and a consequence of mental ill health, and I welcome the First Minister's comments on the need to do more to support positive mental health. We have to address all the factors that contribute to poor mental health in this country. We need to look at the economic and social causes and consequences of lives with less cash, too little money, more stress, more demands, less time to rest, recharge and spend time with family and friends, and less time to spend with our children and young people. Those demands do not support good mental health, and we can and must do more to challenge that.

That points towards the broader economic transformation that Greens have been calling for, and it is not delivered in this programme for government. The three days of debate have seen much discussion of the challenges facing our NHS and rightly so, as they are considerable. We have only recently celebrated 70 years of the NHS and we must always bear in mind the thousands of health professionals in each and every one of our constituencies and regions and the invaluable work that they do every day.

I want to draw attention to the work of Dr Margaret McCartney, a Glasgow GP and *BMJ* columnist. In her final column, published this week, she summarised some four years of articles in a list of 30 points. They are well worth a read. For example, she writes:

"Political in-fighting over the NHS wastes time, money, and morale. We should seek cross party cooperation".

There is a challenge for us all. It is well worth a read, as is her writing on poverty medicine and more.

Of course, when it comes to health, access to good-quality food is absolutely key. As Liam McArthur and Colin Smyth mentioned, the shelving of the good food nation bill is disappointing. In 2014, the Government's policy paper stated:

"there is consensus on the key concept areas; health and wellbeing, environmental sustainability, local economic prosperity, resilient communities, and fairness in the food chain."

That vision, and the opportunity for radical, world-leading legislation on food, has been gradually eroded, and in this year's programme for government it has been watered down to nothing more than a branding exercise for the Scottish food and drink sectors.

On transport, the commitment to expand the electric vehicle charging network is a welcome step. Yes, electric vehicles are better for us and our planet than diesel and petrol vehicles are, but they are only part of the solution. Although an electric car traffic jam generates less air pollution, it does not cut congestion in the way that investing properly in the greenest mass public transit would, so we must tackle falling bus numbers. Let us ensure that everyone in Scotland has access to the service that we here in Lothian enjoy. We need more of that quality and we need it quickly.

Electric cars do not tackle obesity and inactivity in the way that really investing in active travel would. Doubling the active travel budget last year was a step in the right direction, but surely that cannot be the end of it. On Tuesday evening in this building, three cross-party groups met jointly—the groups on cycling, walking and buses, on lung health and on heart disease and stroke. There were many notable experts gathered in that room, and one of them noted that if the active travel budget was 10 per cent of the transport budget—my own party's policy—it would currently be £200 million.

As Alex Cole-Hamilton mentioned, enshrining children's rights is hugely welcome, but I and many in the children's sector want to know whether the Government intends for it to be binding. Will the Government incorporate into law the substantial articles and the optional protocols of the UNCRC itself, not just the principles? We would like information on the timescale. Will it happen within this session of Parliament?

Like others, I welcome the establishment of an animal welfare commission, to provide expert advice on the welfare of domesticated and wild animals in Scotland. Such a body is badly needed. Had it been in place last year, perhaps we would not have reintroduced tail docking, for no good reason whatsoever, in the face of expert veterinary evidence. With policy that is based on scientific evidence backed with political will, we might end the culling of mountain hares on Scotland's grouse moors, the granting of licences to kill ravens and live exports. Of course, we have all the evidence that we need to ban fox hunting properly now. In fact, the Parliament thought that it had done that in 2002. While the Government hesitates in the face of overwhelming public support, I will continue my work with all who share that aim to achieve it.

Greens will continue to be critical where criticism is just and fair. We will be constructively critical and look forward to continuing to work with colleagues where we have common ground.

16:30

Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): I welcome Jeanne Freeman to her new role. Over time she and I will, without doubt, have robust debates.

The future of our NHS is central to Scotland's future—to how we tackle inequality, to how we improve the lives of our fellow citizens and to the wider message about the society and country that we want to Scotland to be. The values to which our NHS speaks are about much more than the day-to-day care and treatment of patients, so I make it clear that I and Labour members will work with and support the new cabinet secretary and her team wherever possible to deliver an NHS that is fit not just for the challenges of today, but for the challenge of delivering a health service for the future.

We welcome and support large parts of the programme for government. The First Minister's adoption of Labour's policy of having mental health counsellors in schools and school nurses providing mental health support is positive. I also welcome the proposal that teachers have mental health first aid training—but that must be seen in the context of the Government's failure on child and adolescent mental health services, which is a national scandal that is failing a generation of young people. I also welcome the First Minister's announcement on community wellbeing services for young people.

For some time, we have been raising the urgent need for the Scottish Government to wake up to the crisis in mental health services. One example of that comes from just before the recess, when we worked with the Government to instigate a review of mental health services in NHS Tayside. We look forward to seeing an update on that work, and we hope that the review will have lessons not only for NHS Tayside but for mental health services throughout Scotland.

Welcome as those announcements are, I am sad to say that the programme for government represents nothing more than a sticking-plaster approach. It is a timid affair that fails to address the big issues that are at the heart of the crisis in Scotland's NHS and the future of Scotland's wider public services.

The most up-to-date figures show an NHS that is struggling to cope despite the efforts of our amazing NHS staff. The minimum standard on detecting cancer early is not being met. Cancer treatment waiting times are not being met and are getting worse: one cancer patient in six waits longer than they should for treatment. That means that we are failing not just cancer patients but their families. On the SNP's flagship treatment time guarantee, patients have been failed and things

are getting worse month on month and year on year.

On the referral-to-treatment standard, patients have been failed and things are getting worse—performance has been on a consistent downward spiral since 2014.

Sickness absence rates are on the up, but is it any wonder that, in the face of increased pressures and having too few colleagues alongside them, staff are paying a heavy price for the pressures that the Government heaps upon them?

The vital signs are not good: the patient is in urgent need of help. Scottish Labour has the right prescription for the NHS. We should use the Scottish Parliament's tax powers to raise more money for our NHS, because asking health boards to make more than £1 billion of cuts over the next four years will not reduce waiting times. We need a cross-government approach: we should have a health inequality assessment of every policy at every level of government in order to ensure that policy will have a positive impact on health outcomes.

Above all, Scotland's NHS needs a credible and deliverable workforce plan. It needs to learn the lessons from the devastating effect of the First Minister's having cut training places when she was health secretary. We also need to have urgent accident and emergency style services for mental health patients if we are to have a generational shift in attitudes towards, and in the treatment of, mental illness.

Patients also need access to life-saving medicines. I hope that, in this parliamentary year, we will not have patients standing outside Parliament telling their intimate stories for publication on the front pages of newspapers, or protesting outside Parliament in order to get the vital medicines that they need. Access to such medicines should be a fundamental right.

To build into the next generation a culture of health and wellbeing, Labour would deliver free access to sport and a bold obesity strategy so that we could prioritise prevention and promote good health and wellbeing.

As Alex Rowley and Monica Lennon have said today, we cannot continue to protect public services in the face of huge cuts to local government budgets, because the pressure on our hospitals is now heaping even more pressure on our social care sector, which affects tens of thousands of our fellow Scots. We still have the shame of the 15-minute care visit in some places—in some places, the visits are even down to 10 or 12 minutes.

There is a generation of children—Scotland's future—in classes that are growing in size and in schools in which pass rates are falling and teachers are in short supply, which was raised by Iain Gray today.

How we invest in and care for the NHS and our public services more generally speaks to our values as a nation. What we had hoped for from the programme for government was not just a continuation of the sticking-plaster approach, but a fundamental rethink not only of how we can properly fund our public services, but of how we deliver our public services to meet the needs of our fellow citizens, to fight inequality, to fight poverty and to create prosperity across our country.

Where is the vision for our economy that will provide the wealth to fund our public services and enable people to live the lives that they want to live and bring up their children as they want to in our Scotland? Where is the vision to unite our country behind our shared values and shared principles, when the principles of unity no longer seem to be politically fashionable? That is what we needed from the Government and from the programme for government—not just more repeated announcements and regurgitated press releases from the First Minister.

What did we hear from the SNP? We heard lots of members asking why Opposition politicians were not thanking them and why we are not being cheerleaders for the programme. The reality is that there are enough SNP cheerleaders on the back benches; what we need is opposition to and scrutiny of a Government that is running out of ideas and running out of time.

The sad reality is that the Government has missed the opportunity to transform Scotland. In reality, there is only one party that is offering the real change that this country needs: there is only one party with the bold and radical policies that are needed to transform our public services and the economy of this great country, and that is the Scottish Labour Party.

16:37

Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con): It has been my duty to listen with all care and attention to each and every contribution over the past three afternoons. I wish I could report that it has been an unalloyed joy—no, I will be positive: it has been an unalloyed joy; it has been the highlight of my summer.

More prosaically, on Tuesday, we returned from a long summer recess in a year without a national election. Holyrood should have been fizzing with anticipation as Nicola Sturgeon announced a programme for the year ahead. After all, she was

surrounded by carefully placed new ministers who, only two months ago, she said represented the refresh of her Administration that had been promised a year earlier. SNP MSPs should have been bouncing with energy and vigour. I can recall earlier programme for government announcements by Ms Sturgeon's predecessor that were interrupted by cheers and boisterous, even bumptious, applause, from which accusation I should say that John Mason specifically asked to be recused during his speech yesterday—not his style, he said.

In any event, that was not the case on Tuesday. Almost from the minute that the First Minister got to her feet, the energy seeped out of the chamber. As her voice tired with an obvious lack of interest in her own announcements, so too did the reaction from behind her. Conversations broke out, eyes glazed over and wandered and her MSPs concentrated elsewhere.

This was the address of a First Minister running out of passion, steam and, crucially, time, lacking the ability of her predecessor, Alex Salmond—still revered by many around her as a nationalist prophet—to generate momentum, announcing a programme this year after failing to deliver her programme from just a year ago, with bills that were announced by her then as vital being abandoned or struggling to progress past the first stage, and a record number of paralysed legislative priorities.

Guess what the first and only robust applause from the subservient acolytes ranged behind the First Minister was for on Tuesday afternoon. Yes—it was for the *i* word. Whatever the day, the hour or the circumstances—whether national disasters and challenges or internal allegations of sexual misconduct—Nicola Sturgeon incorporates the *i* word into each and every statement. It really does transcend everything.

After a long time in politics, I was puzzled on Tuesday afternoon by a memory from the past of a former Prime Minister—one of the giants of UK politics—in the final months in office, like Nicola Sturgeon. Members of her party still applauded her loudly even while they knew on the doorsteps—just as the SNP knows now—how polarising she had become. They rushed to chuck insults at their opponents even as the public embraced the truth. By the next election, Nicola Sturgeon will have been First Minister for almost as long as Alex Salmond was. Between them, they will have exhausted 14 years of the public's patience.

On Tuesday, I heard Humza Yousaf attack Willie Rennie from a seated position. He said, "But we're ahead in the polls." That is the final refuge of the complacent minister. Being ahead in the polls

is no guarantee of electoral triumph, as any student of the past two years should know.

We should be in no doubt that, despite the typically bravura performance that I expect from John Swinney in a few minutes, the Government is a Government of yesterday's women and men that is drifting in search of a purpose beyond the *i* word, struggling to account for an increasing record of failure, and offering Scotland a programme of fancy rhetoric, but ultimately offering spin over substance with a despairingly poor record of delivery under the First Minister.

Throughout all of Tuesday, I searched for Derek Mackay, who was finally spotted sitting so far back in the chamber that he was almost in the public gallery. Yesterday, I understood why. He was putting clear distance between himself and the front bench, as he had a leadership bid speech to make. Sporting an ice blue-white tie to match his increasingly ice blue-white coiffure, Mr Mackay opened yesterday with more energy and zest than all the SNP members before and after him.

The leader of the Labour Party spent much of his speech recalling his tour of different communities of Scotland in the summer recess. Sadly, that did not include a visit to the Jewish community in my Eastwood constituency in the west of Scotland, in which some 40 per cent of Scotland's Jewish community live. Mr Leonard's deference to the ever-evolving, but consistently disgraceful record and ambition—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: May I just stop you, Mr Carlaw? I am wondering whether that is relevant to the Government's programme in the coming year.

Jackson Carlaw: I am commenting on the debate, Presiding Officer. Mr Leonard introduced his tour of constituencies and communities.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Yes, I heard that, but I just caution you that this is a debate on the Government's programme for the coming year.

Jackson Carlaw: I want to make a serious point, Presiding Officer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: It is a serious point, and you have made it. Please proceed.

Jackson Carlaw: Actually, I have not made it.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Do not discuss it with me. This is not a discussion. Just continue.

Jackson Carlaw: Are you asking me not to make the point?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Yes. Just continue with the Government's programme, please.

Jackson Carlaw: On Tuesday, Willie Rennie tried to revive matters with some bad but passable jokes, which I am sure he felt deserved more appreciation. However, his speech was less about the Government's programme than about his people's vote. As a midwife to referendums—I recall the crucial support for the EU referendum in the votes in the House of Commons from the Liberal Democrats, and Labour for that matter—Mr Rennie wants another. Having failed to accept the vote in the first one, he wants another and no doubt another again if he is not given the answer that he demands.

That, too, was the import of Mr Russell's speech. He said barely anything about the Government's programme.

I have noted with interest the comments of the former SNP minister Marco Biagi in the past few weeks. In talking about our democracy, he coined a phrase. He said:

"Democracy depends on 'loser's consent'."

It was for precisely that principle that, when I was asked in 2014 on a BBC programme, with, I think, Bob Doris, who spoke in the debate, alongside me, what I would do if Scotland had voted for independence, I replied without hesitation that, however I had voted, if that had been the result, I would have manned the barricades with the SNP—the phrase was recalled by Alex Salmond later—to secure the best possible deal for Scotland leaving the UK. I would not have liked it, but loser's consent would have dictated my duty.

I do not imagine that Alex Salmond would then have asked me to lead those negotiations or to have a veto over them, or that the SNP would have spoken well of me if I argued against all that it sought or tried to undermine that negotiation, but that seems to be the hand that Mr Russell and Nicola Sturgeon have chosen to play. Instead of working with every endeavour to support the achievement of the best possible outcome, the SNP has been aggressively frustrating our joint preparation and participation. I get that it does not want to leave—neither did I—but as SNP members' former colleague Marco Biagi stated, democracy depends on all working together to achieve that deal, particularly all those who seek a pragmatic negotiated withdrawal and not a hard, deal-less Brexit.

Elsewhere in the debate there were impressive speeches. Daniel Johnson, who made an articulate and forensic speech, demonstrated that promises made about justice by this Administration are simply not being delivered, but it was Liam Kerr who welcomed a commitment to Finn's law, which he has championed, who welcomed the U-turn on the British Transport Police for which he has led the campaign and who

spoke in support of Michelle's law, on which he led a debate earlier today. Maurice Golden demonstrated the failure of the SNP to meet nearly all the environmental targets that it has set itself.

The best of the new ministers proved to be Jeane Freeman. John Mason gave a thoughtful speech, which I enjoyed. His analysis challenged all sides on certain issues in a way that I consider deserves reflection. Today, we have had strong speeches from Iain Gray, Miles Briggs, Alex Neil and Liz Smith.

The clock is ticking. The First Minister is no longer new to her job and is certainly not new to Government. Increasingly, hers is a record of poor delivery. Even in the opening paragraphs of her introduction to the published programme for government document, she dwells too often on the achievements of her predecessor in past Administrations and not on the current one that she leads.

This was meant to be a refreshed front bench; it already looks and feels just as tired as the one that it replaced. A year after the SNP lost a record half a million votes—not in an opinion poll, but in a single election—and saw the greatest-ever number of MPs defeated such a short time after their initial election, it is a Government whose time looks over. It is a Government that is celebrating yesterday.

Twelve years ago, the SNP slogan was "It's Time"; today, it is "Time's Up". It is time to make way for those who can deliver the change that we increasingly seek as a prosperous and dynamic Scotland within a prosperous and dynamic United Kingdom.

16:47

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): I will make two observations on Jackson Carlaw's speech. First, in nine minutes there was not a single constructive idea that would take Scotland forward. Secondly, it was just a bundle of abuse churned out about one speaker after another. The worst was when he accused Willie Rennie of telling "bad but passable" jokes. Coming from Jackson Carlaw, that is an insult of the lowest level to Willie Rennie, and I will not have it.

There has been a lot of characterisation about the pace, enthusiasm and energy of this debate on the programme for government and of the Government. That characterisation was best put into context by Ruth Maguire and George Adam. They said that the Government came to Parliament last year with a radical programme to transform some of the fundamental issues that our

country faces today and that this year's programme for government sets out the further steps to be taken to implement that progress.

Liz Smith: This time last year, the education bill was supposed to be one of those steps. What happened to it?

John Swinney: I will respond to that in a few words. We are getting on with implementing the policy intention of the bill. That is exactly what we are doing. I thought that people were supposed to pay attention in this Parliament. Yesterday, I spent an hour at the Education and Skills Committee explaining that very point to Liz Smith to the exhaustion of the committee's patience, yet she still has not managed to get it. We are implementing the policy of empowering schools. That is what the Government is doing in our education agenda.

That is not the only issue that has been taken forward from the programme for government. Last year, as Alex Neil mentioned, we started the application of the statutory child poverty reduction targets, which are a huge initiative to safeguard the wellbeing of and the opportunities for some of the most vulnerable children in our society.

We have taken forward the establishment of the Scottish national investment bank to contribute significantly to building on the very strong investment record of the Government in transforming the infrastructure of the country.

Tom Arthur made a very strong contribution to the debate, going through what has happened to the infrastructure of this country since the Government came to office—the completion of the motorway network between Edinburgh and Glasgow, the upgrade of the M74, the electrification of numerous rail links the length and breadth of the country, the enhancement of the capacity in the rail network, the achievement of 95 per cent broadband connectivity and the commitment to complete that task in the course of this parliamentary term.

On the schools investment programme, literally every week of my period as Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills I have been seeing the development of investments in new and refurbished school infrastructure the length and breadth of the country. When we came to office 11 years ago, 61 per cent of young people were educated in schools that were good or satisfactory, and that figure is now 86 per cent, thanks to the investment of this SNP Government.

A substantial amount has been achieved, but of course there are always further challenges that the Government has to face and address. I want to concentrate on three of them in my remarks today.

The first is the measures that we are taking to support young people and to advance their opportunities. There is a series of measures, starting as we announced in the programme for government today with the expansion of perinatal care services and support to pregnant mothers. There is the delivery of the baby box, in which we are now seeing huge participation around the country. From what I can see, there is also an appreciation and a valuing of the commitment that is shown to every child when they are born by giving them some support from the state—from the country. It says to every child that they are equal and valued and precious. That is at the heart of the idea behind the baby box, symbolising our attitude to ensuring that every child has the best start in life.

The measures include the expansion of early learning and childcare. This morning, I was at an early years centre in Edinburgh that is already operating 1,140 hours seamlessly. That is a fantastic transformation. The staff are saying to me that access to early learning is transforming the opportunities of individual children.

We then move into investment in pupil equity funding and the attainment challenge, which is focused on ensuring that the children and young people who have the greatest challenges in life can receive the best additional support to enable them to overcome the burden of poverty. I accept that, as Mr Rowley said, poverty is an obstacle and a challenge for young people in what they have to face. We are putting in targeted resources to help them to overcome those challenges.

Then there is the education reform programme. In 2016, we committed ourselves in our manifesto to empowering schools. Parliament said to us, "Go out to the communities and engage and discuss." We reached an agreement with local government about how to empower schools, and how to put in place a headteachers charter that would empower schools quicker, earlier and faster than waiting for legislation. Which education secretary would turn down the opportunity to deliver reform faster than could be delivered through legislation? That is exactly the option that I have taken.

We are making investment across Government, whether it is in Jeane Freeman's portfolio, Aileen Campbell's portfolio, Shirley-Anne Somerville's portfolio or Humza Yousaf's portfolio to tackle the consequences of adverse childhood experiences. We recognise those to be central to determining some of the impacts that young people and adults will face throughout their lives. We as a state will have to wrestle with them, making sure that we have got cross-cutting Government activity.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): The Deputy First Minister touched on child poverty and cross-cutting interventions. Jenny Marra raised the point

today that there have been 1,000 drug deaths. If those deaths were from flu, meningitis, measles or something else that is contagious, it would be a national emergency with cross-cutting interventions, money and working groups. Why are we not doing that, and why are we not declaring the issue to be a national public health emergency?

John Swinney: I am in agreement with Mr Findlay on the significance of the issue that he raises. I contend that the Government is working across portfolios to do on drug deaths exactly what we are doing about adverse childhood experiences—to ensure that we have across the policy spectrum measures and interventions that are designed to be complementary in achieving their objective. Aileen Campbell is leading that work to encourage cross-portfolio activity, and I give Mr Findlay the assurance that objectives of the type that he fairly raises will be pursued right across Government.

Monica Lennon: I appreciate the commitment to work across portfolios. Before the reshuffle, I wrote to three different cabinet secretaries, including Mr Swinney, about the number of children and young people in Scotland—51,000—who are affected by alcohol harm in their families and the many more who are affected by drugs. I have not yet heard about any commitment or any practical steps that will be taken to address that issue in a cross-cutting way, and I would like it to be kept on the table.

John Swinney: My comments are just as relevant to the issue that Monica Lennon raises as they were to the one that Neil Findlay raised. I accept that poverty, alcohol, neglect and drug use are all impediments to young people fulfilling their potential in the education system. If they do not fulfil their potential in the education system, that will have consequences for them in later life.

The Government is working across portfolios. On Tuesday night, I delivered a lecture to Apex Scotland that set out the cross-cutting work that the Government is doing on adverse childhood experiences, and the thinking behind that work and the rationale for it apply to many of the questions that Monica Lennon raises.

I want to touch briefly on the two other major issues that form the radical substance at the heart of that agenda. On the impact of mental ill health, Mr Dornan made a speech of outstanding personal honesty and integrity. The Government is pleased that the measures that have been set out in the programme for government to ensure that we support people's mental wellbeing have been widely welcomed. On the national infrastructure mission, the commitment by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work to increase capital expenditure to £1.5 billion above 2019-20

levels by the middle of the next decade is a clear indication of the importance—especially in a post-Brexit climate—of investing in the capital estate of the country. That is an investment in employment and productivity in the Scottish economy.

I have two final observations about speeches of members of the Opposition, both of which are about things that the Conservatives told us. Miles Briggs had the nerve—the total brass neck—to demand that the Government spend more money on something, while simultaneously arguing for tax cuts. Mark my words: the Tory party will be hounded on that point, because it is hypocrisy of the lowest level to call for more money while demanding tax reductions for individuals.

Miles Briggs: The cabinet secretary will be aware of the £2 billion in extra funding that is coming to our health service and how that can make a huge change.

I spent time back in Perth, where I grew up, meeting Mr Swinney's constituents and they told me what has happened to their health service in Perth. Under Mr Swinney's watch as the local MSP, emergency surgery and weekend general practitioner out-of-hours services have been cut from Perth royal infirmary, the maternity ward has been closed and paediatrics and pathology have been cut. I will take no lectures from the SNP, given its centralisation of our health service.

John Swinney: And I will take no lessons from the Tories, given their scaremongering and hypocrisy. Mr Briggs's colleague Murdo Fraser was caught wondering where the talk of removing accident and emergency cover from Perth royal infirmary had come from, only to find that the source of that ridiculous scaremongering story was Murdo Fraser himself.

My final delicate observation on the day—my last moment of unbelievable lack of self-awareness from the Conservatives—was Donald Cameron telling us that what was missing from the programme for government was the First Minister's explanation of a post-Brexit vision for Scotland. We are terrified by the post-Brexit vision for Scotland because of the farce that the Tory party has inflicted upon us and this country, and for Jackson Carlaw to say that we have not tried to come forward with positive suggestions about how the UK—[*Interruption.*]

They laugh, but how about continuing membership of the single market and continuing membership of the customs union? The First Minister and Mr Russell have exhausted every conversation in Whitehall, trying to get somebody there to open their ears and listen to something sensible, but the Tories are so divided and so damaged by the whole issue that they are going to take the country down with them. The Tories

should be ashamed of their shocking contribution on that issue.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): That concludes our debate on the Scottish Government's programme for government.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of three Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move motion S5M13781, on committee remits and size; S5M-13782, on committee membership; and S5M-13783, on substitution on committees.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revisions to the remits and size of committees:

Name of Committee: Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee

New name: Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee

Remit: To the remit set out in Rule 6.8 shall be added—Culture and tourism matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Relations.

New remit: To the remit set out in Rule 6.8 shall be added—Culture and tourism matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs.

Name of Committee: Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee

New name: Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee

Remit: To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work

New remit: To consider and report on economy and fair work matters falling within the responsibilities of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work; matters relating to the digital economy within the responsibilities of the Minister for Public Finance and Digital Economy, and matters relating to energy falling within the responsibilities of the Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands.

Number of members: 9

Name of Committee: Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

Number of members: 9

Name of Committee: Finance and Constitution Committee

Remit: To the remit set out in Rule 6.6 shall be added—Constitutional matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution

New remit: To the remit set out in Rule 6.6 shall be added—Constitutional matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations.

Name of Committee: Health and Sport Committee

Number of members: 9

Name of Committee: Justice Committee

Remit: To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Justice.

New remit: To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Justice, and functions of the Lord Advocate other than as head of the systems of criminal prosecution and investigation of deaths in Scotland.

Number of members: 9

Name of Committee: Local Government and Communities Committee

Remit: To consider and report on communities, housing, local government, planning and regeneration matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities.

New remit: To consider and report on communities, housing, local government, measures against poverty, planning and regeneration matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government.

Name of Committee: Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee

Remit: To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity.

New remit: To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and the matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity.

Name of Committee: Social Security Committee

Remit: To consider and report on matters relating to social security falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities.

New remit: To consider and report on matters relating to social security (including the delivery and payment of benefits that help address poverty) falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Angela Constance be appointed to replace Fulton MacGregor on the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee

Keith Brown be appointed to replace Kate Forbes on the Health and Sport Committee

David Torrance be appointed to replace Ash Denham on the Health and Sport Committee

Shona Robison be appointed to replace Mairi Gougeon on the Justice Committee

Fulton MacGregor be appointed to replace Ben Macpherson on the Justice Committee

Gillian Martin be appointed to replace Alex Neil on the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

Tom Arthur be appointed to replace Ivan McKee on the Finance and Constitution Committee

Angela Constance be appointed to replace Ash Denham on the Finance and Constitution Committee

Rona Mackay be appointed to replace Richard Lochhead on the Education and Skills Committee

Jenny Gilruth be appointed to replace Gillian Martin on the Education and Skills Committee

Alasdair Allan be appointed to replace George Adam on the Education and Skills Committee

Clare Adamson be appointed to replace James Dornan on the Education and Skills Committee

Annabelle Ewing be appointed to replace Jenny Gilruth on the Local Government and Communities Committee

James Dornan be appointed to replace Bob Doris on the Local Government and Communities Committee

Maureen Watt be appointed to replace Kate Forbes on the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee

Bill Kidd be appointed to replace Tom Arthur on the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Gil Paterson be appointed to replace Clare Haughey on the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Maureen Watt be appointed to replace David Torrance on the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Shona Robison be appointed to replace Ben Macpherson on the Social Security Committee

Alasdair Allan be appointed to replace Ruth Maguire on the Social Security Committee

Bob Doris to replace Clare Adamson on the Social Security Committee

Annabelle Ewing be appointed to replace Mairi Gougeon on the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee

Kenneth Gibson be appointed to replace Richard Lochhead on the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee

David Torrance be appointed to replace Rona Mackay on the Public Petitions Committee

Ruth Maguire be appointed to replace Christina McKelvie on the Equalities and Human Rights Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that—

George Adam be appointed to replace Clare Haughey as Scottish National Party substitute on the Justice Committee

Alex Neil be appointed to replace David Torrance as Scottish National Party substitute on the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee

George Adam be appointed to replace Gordon MacDonald as Scottish National Party substitute on the Finance and Constitution Committee

Gil Paterson be appointed to replace Clare Adamson as Scottish National Party substitute on the Education and Skills Committee

Angela Constance be appointed to replace Kenneth Gibson as Scottish National Party substitute on the Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee

Gordon MacDonald be appointed to replace Gil Paterson as Scottish National Party substitute on the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Emma Harper be appointed to replace Kate Forbes as Scottish National Party substitute on the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee

Rona Mackay be appointed to replace Graeme Dey as Scottish National Party substitute on the Public Petitions

Committee

Maurice Corry be appointed to replace Michelle Ballantyne as Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Justice Committee.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Decision Time

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The question is, that motions S5M-13781, S5M-13782 and S5M-13783, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revisions to the remits and size of committees:

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New name: Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee

Remit: To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work

New remit: To consider and report on economy and fair work matters falling within the responsibilities of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work; matters relating to the digital economy within the responsibilities of the Minister for Public Finance and Digital Economy, and matters relating to energy falling within the responsibilities of the Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands.

Number of members: 9

Name of Committee: Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

Number of members: 9

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New remit: To the remit set out in Rule 6.6 shall be added—Constitutional matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations.

Name of Committee: Health and Sport Committee

Number of members: 9

Name of Committee: Justice Committee

Remit: To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Justice.

New remit: To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Justice, and functions of the Lord Advocate other than as head of the

systems of criminal prosecution and investigation of deaths in Scotland.

Number of members: 9

Name of Committee: Local Government and Communities Committee

Remit: To consider and report on communities, housing, local government, planning and regeneration matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities.

New remit: To consider and report on communities, housing, local government, measures against poverty, planning and regeneration matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government.

Name of Committee: Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee

Remit: To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity.

New remit: To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and the matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity.

Name of Committee: Social Security Committee

Remit: To consider and report on matters relating to social security falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities.

New remit: To consider and report on matters relating to social security (including the delivery and payment of benefits that help address poverty) falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Angela Constance be appointed to replace Fulton MacGregor on the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee

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Kenneth Gibson be appointed to replace Richard Lochhead on the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee

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Rona Mackay be appointed to replace Graeme Dey as Scottish National Party substitute on the Public Petitions Committee

Maurice Corry be appointed to replace Michelle Ballantyne

as Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Justice Committee.

Meeting closed at 17:01.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* for this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

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