



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Meeting of the Parliament

**Thursday 4 October 2018**

**Session 5**



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

Information on the Scottish Parliament's copyright policy can be found on the website - [www.parliament.scot](http://www.parliament.scot) or by contacting Public Information on 0131 348 5000

---

Thursday 4 October 2018

CONTENTS

|   | <b>Col.</b> |
|---|-------------|
| <b>GENERAL QUESTION TIME</b> .....  | 1           |
| Water and Sewerage Charges Exemption (Islands) .....                              | 1           |
| Flags (Criminal Offences).....  | 1           |
| International Transport Connectivity.....   | 3           |
| Railway Stations (Accessibility).....   | 4           |
| United Kingdom Immigration Minister (Meetings) .....                              | 5           |
| Fire Services (Staff Shortages) .....   | 6           |
| Universal Credit.....   | 7           |
| <b>FIRST MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME</b> .....                                       | 9           |
| Schools .....   | 9           |
| Child Poverty Targets .....   | 12          |
| Pentland Film Studio (Scottish Land Court Judgment) .....                         | 14          |
| Buccleuch Estates Ltd (Tree Planting) .....                                       | 15          |
| Moffat Church Place Surgery (Closure) .....                                       | 15          |
| Scottish League Cup Semi-finals .....   | 16          |
| Brexit (People's Vote).....   | 17          |
| Golden Jubilee Hospital (Trials) .....  | 18          |
| Amazon (Living Wage).....   | 19          |
| Carers Allowance Supplement .....   | 19          |
| NHS Ayrshire and Arran .....  | 20          |
| Domestic Abuse (Disclosure Scheme).....   | 20          |
| HIV Infection .....   | 22          |
| Harassment Complaints (Scottish Government).....                                  | 23          |
| <b>CHALLENGE POVERTY WEEK</b> .....   | 26          |
| <i>Motion debated—[Elaine Smith].</i>   |             |
| Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab).....  | 26          |
| Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP) .....                             | 29          |
| Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con).....                              | 30          |
| James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab) .....   | 32          |
| Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green).....   | 33          |
| Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab) .....                                      | 35          |
| Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP).....  | 36          |
| Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab) .....                                  | 38          |
| Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab) .....  | 40          |
| Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con).....                                   | 41          |
| The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell)..... | 44          |
| <b>HEALTH AND CARE UPDATE</b> .....   | 49          |
| <i>Statement—[Jeane Freeman].</i>   |             |
| The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman) .....                  | 49          |
| <b>WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SPORT WEEK</b> .....  | 60          |
| <i>Motion moved—[Joe FitzPatrick].</i>  |             |
| <i>Amendment moved—[Brian Whittle].</i>   |             |
| <i>Amendment moved—[Anas Sarwar].</i>   |             |
| The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick).....        | 60          |
| Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con) .....  | 64          |
| Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab) .....   | 67          |
| Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green).....   | 70          |
| Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD).....  | 72          |
| Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP).....                                | 75          |
| Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con) .....                            | 77          |
| Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP).....  | 80          |
| Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab) .....                                  | 82          |
| George Adam (Paisley) (SNP) .....   | 84          |
| Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP) .....  | 87          |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| Alison Harris (Central Scotland) (Con) .....                      | 89         |
| Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP).....                    | 91         |
| Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab) .....                              | 94         |
| Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con) ..... | 96         |
| The Minister for Children and Young People (Maree Todd) .....     | 98         |
| <b>SCOTTISH FISCAL COMMISSION (APPOINTMENTS) .....</b>            | <b>102</b> |
| <i>Motion moved—[Derek Mackay].</i>                               |            |
| <b>PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTION.....</b>                           | <b>102</b> |
| <i>Motion moved—[Graeme Dey].</i>                                 |            |
| <b>DECISION TIME .....</b>  | <b>103</b> |

---

# Scottish Parliament

Thursday 4 October 2018

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

## General Question Time

### Water and Sewerage Charges Exemption (Islands)

1. **Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government whether an islands impact assessment was carried out when it removed the water and sewerage charges exemption for charitable bodies, such as public community halls. (S5O-02439)

**The Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment (Mairi Gougeon):** No islands impact assessment was carried out as they were not required when the scheme was renewed in 2015. All organisations that were no longer eligible for exemption following the renewal of the scheme were provided with a two-year transitional period to help them to adjust to the changes.

**Tavish Scott:** Does the minister accept that community public halls are run by volunteers on a not-for-profit basis, their bar income is reinvested in a facility for nursery classes, youth clubs and community events, and they do not compete with pubs? Does she therefore understand that removing water relief is costing some Shetland halls £2,000 a year and could close the doors of these essential community buildings? Will the Government therefore conduct an islands impact assessment and reinstate that necessary rates exemption?

**Mairi Gougeon:** I completely understand the member's concerns. There are provisions in the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 for island impact assessments but those provisions have not been commenced. When they are commenced, we could consider a retrospective impact assessment if we receive a qualifying request from a local authority.

I hope that that answers the member's questions but if he requires any further information, I am sure that the cabinet secretary would welcome a discussion with him.

### Flags (Criminal Offences)

2. **Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with Police Scotland regarding the reported list of flags that it could be a criminal offence to fly. (S5O-02440)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf):** This is an operational matter for Police Scotland, which has confirmed that the list of flags was produced to assist officers in differentiating between legitimate flags and those which include illegal images, such as the symbols of proscribed terrorist organisations. Police Scotland has clearly confirmed that, in the absence of other associated criminal behaviour, it is not illegal to fly any national flag in its unaltered state.

**Sandra White:** The cabinet secretary will be aware that some of the flags on the list were the national flag of Ireland, the Vatican City, Israel and Palestine. Perhaps the cabinet secretary could speak to Police Scotland and provide details of who created the list and the rationale behind it. The document that I received says that if the flags are

"flown or displayed in a provocative manner"

—I would like to know who defines "provocative"—the people doing so would be subject to section 38 of the Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2010.

**Humza Yousaf:** I will try to give the member some reassurance. I have the guidance in front of me and the flags that she asked about come under the heading of "Flags which do not in themselves constitute criminality". The document and the list of flags were prepared by Police Scotland and it is for Police Scotland to determine.

The member asked who is to judge what is provocative. It is very much within the law and statute. She will recognise that, for example, any threatening gestures and so on could lead to some criminal offences under the appropriate legislation. If Sandra White has any further questions, I am more than happy to provide her with details of who in Police Scotland she can correspond with directly.

**James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab):** It is simply unacceptable that flags that demonstrate religious and political beliefs should be restricted. It is a breach of civil liberties. It is outrageous that the Vatican City flag can be considered one that might get somebody criminalised. Can the cabinet secretary make it clear to Police Scotland that, as lawmakers, the Scottish Parliament finds it deeply offensive and unacceptable that such flags are listed and that people's civil liberties are being breached?

**Humza Yousaf:** I will give James Kelly the benefit of the doubt, because he might not have read the guidance in detail. As I said in my previous answer, the guidance states that flying the Vatican City flag, for example, in its unaltered state—that is important—would not, in itself, be a criminal offence. Police Scotland has said that, and it is happy for me to say that, too. Particular

actions, such as altering any national flag, could make flying that flag an offence. As attendees at football matches, James Kelly and I know that flags could be altered to include the names of organisations that are proscribed under the Terrorism Act 2000. Flying national flags, such as the Vatican City flag, in their unaltered state would not, in itself, be a criminal offence. I give that reassurance to James Kelly and other members.

### International Transport Connectivity

**3. Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what efforts it is making to improve international transport connectivity. (S5O-02441)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson):** Improving Scotland's international air connectivity is one of the Government's top priorities, because that will help to build stronger business links and provide a real boost to our tourism industry. Our support has helped Scotland's airports to secure new routes to other parts of the United Kingdom, and to Europe, the Middle East, North America and China, including Emirates' new service from Edinburgh to Dubai. The Scottish Government will continue to promote Scotland as a destination that can sustain more direct air services and better global hub connectivity, and we will work with Scotland's airports to achieve those objectives.

On international ferry links, the Scottish Government would welcome international ferry services to Scotland. Such services would need to operate on a commercially viable basis and would be for ferry operators to consider. We work closely with Scottish Enterprise and VisitScotland, and we will work with any ports, ferry operators and other partners that could be involved in new commercially viable ferry services to Europe.

**Murdo Fraser:** Two weeks ago, the low-cost air carrier, Norwegian, announced that it was pulling its transatlantic flights out of Edinburgh, citing the Scottish Government's failure to deliver a cut in air passenger taxes as the reason for its decision. We know that there are legal issues to be overcome around the devolution of air passenger duty, but the Treasury has signalled its willingness to work with the Scottish Government to overcome those issues. Is the Scottish Government still committed to a cut in air taxes? If so, will there be any progress before further routes are lost?

**Michael Matheson:** The member raises an important point. It is disappointing that the flights have been withdrawn from Edinburgh airport in the past two weeks. My ministerial colleague Derek Mackay has been pursuing the issue of air departure tax for a considerable period of time. The tax is defective in the way in which the power

has been passed to the Scottish Government. Derek Mackay has raised that matter with the Treasury, and continues to pursue it, because it needs to be addressed. As soon as it is addressed, we will be in a position to take forward our policy of reducing ADT by 50 per cent and then abolishing it completely when the money is available in budgets.

However, the UK Government could take action on the matter on 29 October, when its budget will be announced. I hope that Murdo Fraser will press the Chancellor of the Exchequer to take action on ADT in the coming weeks.

### Railway Stations (Accessibility)

**4. Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to improve accessibility at railway stations. (S5O-02442)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson):** There are 359 stations, and 254 of them are wheelchair accessible, which is 45 more than in 2007. Of the 105 remaining, 75 provide no access to either platform, and 30 of them provide access to one platform.

For inaccessible stations, ScotRail provides appropriate alternative transport for disabled passengers, at no extra charge, between the inaccessible station and the nearest or most convenient accessible one for their journey.

Rail accessibility is reserved to the United Kingdom Government. The UK Department for Transport is currently considering the Scottish Government's proposals for accessibility funding and projects for the next five years.

The Scottish Government remains committed to improving access at stations beyond the UK Government's programme. For example, the Scottish Government will fund accessibility works at Pitlochry and Aviemore stations as part of the Highland main line project.

**Jamie Greene:** I thank the cabinet secretary for that informative response. As he said, a number of stations are completely inaccessible to disabled users. Burntisland, on the Fife circle line, sees 330,000 passengers a year but is available to disabled passengers only on the northbound service, not the southbound service. That seems quite ludicrous.

I appreciate that the real estate is owned by Network Rail, but Network Rail is part of the ScotRail Alliance. Will the cabinet secretary therefore impress on the alliance the need to continue to improve accessibility across Scotland so that our rail network is truly open and accessible for as many users as possible?

**Michael Matheson:** The access for all programme, which is involved in improving accessibility at train stations, is a matter for the UK Department for Transport, as it concerns a reserved area. We continue to work with that department to consider where further improvements can be made, and we are going through a programme of work with it at present to identify other stations in the Scottish network for which we believe that it should provide resources in order to improve accessibility. That work is due to be completed by 2019, and I hope that the Department for Transport will listen to the recommendations and views of the Scottish Government, including on issues relating to the station at Burntisland.

Where we have the opportunity, through modernisation work that is being taken forward by the Scottish Government, we are making accessibility improvements to stations where that can be achieved through Scottish Government funding. However, it is certainly the case that the UK Department for Transport has to take more action on this matter in order to deal with the backlog of stations that do not presently have adequate accessibility.

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I am glad that the issue of Burntisland station has been raised. As a Fife MSP, I want to emphasise that it continues to have poor accessibility.

Is the cabinet secretary aware of the high percentage of stations across Fife that perform poorly in terms of accessibility? Does he agree that Fife should be a priority with regard to any additional funds?

**Michael Matheson:** The important element in terms of funding is for the Department for Transport to allocate funding that allows that work to be undertaken. Transport Scotland has been identifying stations where there are continuing accessibility matters that need to be addressed, including those in the Fife area that do not have adequate accessibility for individuals with a mobility issue, in order to ensure that the UK Government is aware of them. The UK Government will then determine which stations will have access improvement work taken forward. That will be set out in 2019. However, we are ensuring that the Department for Transport is very much aware of the concerns that we have around the range of stations in Scotland that need to have accessibility improvements carried out soon.

#### **United Kingdom Immigration Minister (Meetings)**

**5. Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government when it last spoke to the United Kingdom immigration minister. (S5O-02443)

#### **The Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development (Ben Macpherson):**

During summer recess, the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government and I had introductory meetings with the UK immigration minister, Caroline Nokes, and I expressed my concerns to her about UK policy on immigration. Although we hold profoundly different positions, I hope to work professionally and constructively with Ms Nokes to ensure that the rights of EU citizens in Scotland are protected and that Scotland's needs on migration and population are met in future policy.

**Rona Mackay:** Does the minister agree that the fees that are charged to UK-born children of migrants who register as British citizens should be scrapped or drastically reduced? The current fee is £1,012, with £372 going on administrative costs, leaving a £640 profit for the Home Office. Is that not simply immoral profiteering?

**Ben Macpherson:** It is clear that current UK immigration policy is simply not appropriate for Scotland. The current costs are prohibitively expensive, as has been articulated, preventing eligible children for applying for British citizenship. Indeed, Stuart McDonald MP highlighted that very issue in a Westminster debate last month. The immigration system should be easy to access and focused on what a prospective migrant will contribute, not on their ability to pay. As a result, any fees and charges should be proportionate.

People who choose to make their lives in Scotland are our friends and neighbours. They strengthen our society, and we welcome them. We need an immigration system that values their contribution to Scotland, is fair and compassionate and puts people first, and this Government will continue to argue for that in stark contrast and opposition to the United Kingdom Government's hostile environment policy.

#### **Fire Services (Staff Shortages)**

**6. Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the impact of staff shortages on local fire services. (S5O-02444)

**The Minister for Community Safety (Ash Denham):** Operational decisions, including the deployment of firefighters and other staff, are a matter for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. SFRS staff play a vital role in protecting our communities, and they continue to deliver the high standard of services required to keep Scotland safe.

In the 2018-19 budget, the Scottish Government has increased the spending capacity of SFRS by £15.5 million, which includes providing an extra £5.5 million of direct funding and ensuring that the

service keeps the full £10 million from VAT costs, to invest in transformation plans. We will continue to press the United Kingdom Government to return the £50 million that has been paid to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs since 2013, because Scotland's fire service is the only one in the UK to have paid this unfair Tory tax.

**Dean Lockhart:** I thank the minister for that response, although I point out that the Scottish National Party reformed the fire service in full knowledge of the financial implications of doing so.

I would rather focus on the needs of the constituents in my region. Last week, I met the senior fire officer for the Stirling region, following reports that the city's second fire appliance has been unavailable a number of times this year as a result of staff shortages. The team at Stirling fire and rescue are doing all they can to address those issues, but notwithstanding what the minister has said, that will take time. What assurances can the minister give people in the Stirling region that they will have adequate fire cover while the staff shortfalls are dealt with?

**Ash Denham:** Fire appliances can be safely deployed only if a full crew is available, and there can be instances when appliances are off the run as a result of crewing levels falling short through either unplanned absence such as sick leave or planned activity such as crew training in specialist activities or new equipment. SFRS uses a variety of methods to ensure that a fully planned and safe level of coverage is maintained at all times, and that includes offering overtime to cover short-term staff absence and bringing in crews from other fire stations. That is normal practice for any fire and rescue service.

I reassure the member that there have been no instances when the SFRS did not respond to an incident without the appropriate level of resources.

### Universal Credit

**7. Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to provide flexibility for recipients of universal credit. (S5O-02445)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville):** Since 4 October 2017, the Scottish Government has given people in Scotland the option to receive their universal credit payment monthly or twice monthly and to have any housing costs in their award paid directly to their landlord. That gives people more control and flexibility over how they manage their household budget in a way that best suits their particular circumstances.

I make it clear, though, that universal credit is entirely reserved, and we have very limited flexibility over it. As was highlighted in the report

that we published this week on the impact of the United Kingdom Government's welfare reforms, universal credit is causing hardship and deprivation, and it is not fit for purpose.

**Gordon MacDonald:** Given the evidence of impacts seen in other areas of Scotland where universal credit has been introduced, I am very concerned that constituents of mine will face even further hardship. Does the Scottish Government agree that the UK Government should take heed of the evidence, listen to organisations that support the most vulnerable people in society and halt this shambolic and fatally flawed system?

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** Absolutely. We have repeatedly urged the UK Government to halt the roll-out of universal credit, as have many organisations, and we have been repeatedly refused. The UK Government chooses to ignore the mounting evidence of the sharp increase in food bank use and rent arrears in universal credit full-service areas. Universal credit is now being rolled out to Scotland's largest cities, and I, like the member, am very concerned about the impact that it will have.

Evidence from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities shows that the housing arrears in full-service areas are more than two and a half times the arrears of those on housing benefit, and, according to Trussell Trust analysis, food bank demand in full-service areas increases by 52 per cent in a roll-out year. However, despite that and other evidence, the UK Government is ignoring our calls. That said, it is not too late for it to recognise the impact of a damaging policy that is undoubtedly driving people into debt and arrears and causing extreme anxiety and distress to many people across this country.



## First Minister's Question Time

12:00

### Schools

**1. Ruth Davidson (Edinburgh Central) (Con):** Presiding Officer,

“When you visit schools, people are most likely to tell you what you want to hear, through fear of repercussions.”

That is the message from a primary school teacher in today's press to the education secretary, speaking anonymously, because she fears being disciplined for speaking out.

How does the First Minister think that that reflects on her Government?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Teachers, parents and sometimes older pupils email me regularly—I am sure that that is also the case for the Deputy First Minister—to openly tell me their views on schools. Often, they talk about the many positives of school education; at other times, they point out things that they think we should be doing better.

I have read the letter that Ruth Davidson refers to and my message to any teacher is that nobody should feel unable to come to me or to the education secretary to raise concerns at any time. I encourage that, I have always encouraged that and I always will encourage that.

It is important that we remain focused on making sure that we are investing properly in our schools, reducing where we can unnecessary workload for teachers, and taking action through, for example, the pupil equity fund and the governance reforms in our schools to do what is a driving priority for this Government, which is to raise standards and close the attainment gap. We will remain absolutely focused on doing exactly that.

**Ruth Davidson:** The First Minister talks about reducing workload but if that work is being undertaken, why do international studies show that our teachers are among the most overworked in the world?

I will just read out a little bit more from the letter to Mr Swinney, which we all saw a copy of last week. In it, the teacher says:

“the ... Scottish Government are not tackling the real underlying issues in education but are rather just putting a plaster over a gaping wound”.

Speaking directly to Mr Swinney, she adds:

“The most concerning thing that has happened so far, is that one of my colleagues arranged to meet with yourself, to discuss issues that were of great concern to them. However, this person was ‘warned’ by their manager, that if

they went ahead with the meeting, they would be disciplined”.

Could either the education secretary or the First Minister say whether they knew that that had happened, what action they took and whether they will end this culture of fear right now?

**The First Minister:** First, it is important to be clear on this and I want to be crystal clear on this. I would say not just to people across the chamber but perhaps particularly to local authority employers in this regard that, in the case that Ruth Davidson has mentioned, the Deputy First Minister agreed to meet the teacher. It is not the Deputy First Minister who said that that meeting could not go ahead.

To be clear—it is not acceptable for local authorities to say to any teacher or any member of staff, whatever job they are doing, that they will be disciplined if they approach or raise concerns with Government ministers. I cannot be any clearer about that. I will go on being clear about that and I hope that that message is heard loudly and clearly by local authorities across the country. I hope that Ruth Davidson would agree with that and join me in sending that message.

**Ruth Davidson:** I am not sure that the First Minister fully gets this. It is her Government that is decreeing to local authorities. We are not talking about a political opponent here; this teacher is not point scoring. We are talking about a teacher who, in the letter, makes it clear that she is a Scottish National Party supporter and voter and yet now feels that she is not being listened to and has to speak out under the cloak of anonymity in order to avoid being stamped on.

What has it come to when public servants with experience and knowledge of their area are being strong armed to keep their mouths shut because it might embarrass the education secretary? Can the First Minister answer me that?

**The First Minister:** Having read the letter that Ruth Davidson opened with in her question, I would say that there are many serious issues in that letter that Ruth Davidson could have raised today—issues that the Government is working hard to address with the teaching profession and others. On this issue, however, she is on extremely weak ground.

Let me recap for Ruth Davidson's benefit. In this case, the Deputy First Minister agreed to meet a teacher. The local authority advised the teacher not to meet. We do not decree that local authorities should do that. On the contrary, if there is any decree coming from me to local authorities today, it is that that is unacceptable, and that teachers should be free to contact me as First Minister, the Deputy First Minister as education

secretary, or indeed any member of my Government.

I am not sure how I can make that any clearer for Ruth Davidson. Perhaps she would be doing teachers a greater service if, instead of standing here and pretending that there is some other policy on the part of the Government, she underlined the fact that any teachers anywhere in the country are perfectly free to approach any member of the Government. She would be doing a greater service to teachers if she got that message across loudly and clearly.

**Ruth Davidson:** I think that the transparency and openness of Government is a serious issue, which is worth highlighting. As the teacher says in the letter, their issue is not just about resources, but about workforce planning, a failure to implement policy properly and a failure to listen to people on the front line—a charge that is made front and centre. It is about a culture of fear and secrecy, which is stopping people from speaking out because of the repercussions for their careers.

We need an openness in government in Scotland—one that welcomes transparency and scrutiny, and not just because a letter was written—and a Government that asks teachers to tell it what is happening, not one that forces them to keep their mouths shut. Does the First Minister not agree?

**The First Minister:** Let me issue this message to teachers or any other public sector worker across the country, “Come and tell the Government how you feel about your job and your public services, whether that is good or bad, and whether it is about positives or things that we want to do better.” Ruth Davidson would be better advised to join me in putting that message out there.

Openness and transparency is hugely important. That is why the Deputy First Minister is in schools every single week, and that is why he and I talk to teachers regularly, not just in my capacity as First Minister but in my constituency surgeries, of which I do many. That message is one that we should all convey to teachers.

For the third or fourth time, let me be clear to teachers that they can come and raise anything they want with the Government. Let me be very clear to every single local authority, of every party administration, across the country that it is unacceptable to say to any teacher that they will be disciplined for doing so. I think that I have made that pretty clear, and I hope that is widely understood, not just by Ruth Davidson but by everybody across Scotland.

## Child Poverty Targets

### 2. Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab):

This week, the highly respected Joseph Rowntree Foundation published its annual “Poverty in Scotland 2018” report. It showed that one in four children in Scotland today lives in poverty. The First Minister has set a target to make that less than one in 10 by 2030, but what is her target for 2019?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** We welcome the Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s report. It clearly outlines the challenges that we all face in tackling poverty. The Scottish Government has set targets; I think that we are the only part of the UK that has binding statutory targets in place. We have also set out a range of initiatives that we will take to meet those targets under our child poverty action plan.

It is important to consider some of the detail of the Joseph Rowntree report. Jim McCormick, the Scottish director of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, said on “Good Morning Scotland” on Tuesday:

“It is ... right to say that the single biggest reason why child poverty is now going in the wrong direction again, the first sustained rise in 20 years, is down to the long run benefits freeze at the UK level, the two-child limit and the freeze in tax credits and universal credit.”

Perhaps the attack by Richard Leonard on the Scottish Government would have more credibility if he was also arguing for welfare to be completely devolved to this Parliament.

The report goes on to praise the forthcoming Scottish Government strategies on disability employment and on the gender pay gap, describing them as “transformational”. It also praises our approach to the new social security system. Where we have power, we act. The problem is, we do not have enough power to do all that needs to be done.

**Richard Leonard:** Let us be clear: the First Minister has a target for 12 years’ time, but not for 12 months’ time. One action that would make an immediate difference to child poverty would be to increase child benefit.

Over the past year, Parliament has passed the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 and the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. In voting through both those acts, SNP MSPs opposed proposals to increase child benefit, yet the policy has support from across civic Scotland—from anti-poverty organisations to faith groups, and from children’s charities to the Scottish Trades Union Congress. They all support the give me five campaign to raise child benefit by £5 a week because it will lift children out of poverty. Does the First Minister know how many children would be lifted out of poverty by that increase?

**The First Minister:** The estimate shows that the policy would lift 20,000 children out of poverty, which would mean a drop in child poverty of just two percentage points. I am not saying that that is insignificant, but we are committed to introducing an income supplement, and in doing so we must ensure that the money that is invested in it has maximum effectiveness in tackling child poverty. We are considering what is the best way to do that.

Under the policy that Richard Leonard is proposing, £7 out of every £10 would go to families who are not living in poverty. If we are going to invest money on that scale, the question is how we can use that money to lift not just 20,000, but even more children out of poverty. That is the work that we are doing. I hope that Richard Leonard and his party will get behind it.

**Richard Leonard:** The answer to the question that I asked is not 20,000 children. It is that 30,000 children would be lifted out of poverty. That could be the First Minister's 2019 target: to lift 30,000 children out of poverty.

The report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation makes it clear that it is time to take

“decisive steps to make transformational change.”

The report also makes it clear that many of the tools to tackle poverty and its causes lie in the hands of the Scottish Parliament, including more flexible and affordable childcare, better housing for all and a labour market strategy that is aligned with the goal of reducing poverty.

However, instead of that we have a childcare policy that fits on an SNP leaflet, but not around the lives of working families; a housing policy that offers help to buy to people who earn over £100,000 a year; and a labour market strategy that has been gathering dust on a shelf for more than two years.

The SNP has been in office for 11 years and Nicola Sturgeon has been First Minister for four years. This week is challenge poverty week, so I will challenge the First Minister. How much longer is her Government going to tinker around the edges and how many more children in Scotland will grow up in grinding poverty as a result?

**The First Minister:** I will address some of the points that were raised in what seemed to be a speech, rather than a question. Let us start with childcare. We are in the process of doubling childcare for three-year-olds and four-year-olds and vulnerable two-year-olds. We are also midway through the biggest house-building project in the history of the Scottish Parliament. I seem to recall that the last Labour Administration managed to build six council houses.

Let us look at what the Joseph Rowntree Foundation says about some of our policies, including the disability employment strategy and our work on the gender pay gap, of which it says:

“This could be transformational for tackling poverty”.

It also says that our approach to the new social security system

“could change the family incomes ... of thousands of children for the better.”

We will continue to focus on how an income supplement—which we are committed to introducing—will lift as many children as possible out of poverty. We will not see £7 out of every £10 that we invest going to families that do not live in poverty. If we are to be serious about tackling child poverty, that is the right approach to take.

Finally, on my tenure as First Minister, Richard Leonard has been leader of the Scottish Labour Party for a lot less time than I have been the First Minister of Scotland, and here is what someone in his party said about him this week:

“Richard has no authority over the group. If he is serious about leading Scottish Labour, he should be apologising”.

I could not sum it up any better.

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** We will now have some constituency and other supplementaries.

#### **Pentland Film Studio (Scottish Land Court Judgment)**

**Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green):** The First Minister will be aware that the Scottish Land Court has refused an application to evict a constituent of mine, Jim Telfer, who is a tenant under the Small Landholders (Scotland) Act 1911, in order to sell the land to developers to build the Pentland film studio, for which the Scottish ministers granted planning consent in December 2017. Does the First Minister agree that that proposal is now dead in the water and that the Scottish Government and its agencies should take the lead in identifying a site for a film studio, the acquisition of which does not involve unlawful eviction of anyone?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** The judgment by the Scottish Land Court is, of course, a legal matter. I understand that that decision is likely to be appealed against, so I cannot comment on the specifics at this time, for obvious reasons.

However, I will say that the Scottish Government backs expansion of the screen sector. We welcome private sector proposals to develop a range of studio infrastructure, but ultimately, it is a matter for the current owner of the site, ahead of potential sale to the studio developers. Although we have a role in the planning surrounding the project, the issue of land

ownership and tenancies is properly considered by the Scottish Land Court.

Separate to that issue, I note that in the autumn Creative Scotland will launch a tender in which it will seek investors to operate a public-sector backed film studio. Of course, those plans are not dependent on the development at the Pentland site.

#### **Buccleuch Estates Ltd (Tree Planting)**

**Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP):** Is the First Minister aware of the situation that faces tenant farmers David and Alison Telfer, who are being forced off Cleuchfoot farm near Langholm by the Duke of Buccleuch? Next week, the duke plans to value their hefted sheep, which have been on the hill for centuries, so that they can be sold to make way for trees.

Does the First Minister agree that forestry planting grants should never be given in such circumstances, that the Telfers' human rights are being violated by Buccleuch Estates and that the duke's sale of the 9,000-acre Evertown portfolio, which includes the Telfers' farm and their home, contravenes regulations that were enacted by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016, which say that landowners should formally engage with the community ahead of major changes?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I am aware of that case, and I share Joan McAlpine's concern. Guidance for landowners makes it very clear that communities should play a part in decisions about how land is used and managed. I know that the Scottish Land Commission has written to Buccleuch Estates to advise it how communities should be involved, and has offered to provide further advice. Human rights are also reflected in the guidance, which landowners, including Buccleuch Estates, should take into consideration during this or any process relating to land transactions.

Guidance on the forestry grant scheme states that applicants must have control of the land and a legal right to plant trees on the land and that, where control of land changes or comes out of farming, there must be no doubt about the applicant's legal right to plant trees. We intend to add additional guidance to clarify that, when an applicant's control of the land or legal right to plant trees is the subject of a live legal challenge or review, we would not consider the land to be eligible for a forestry grant until any legal process had been concluded.

#### **Moffat Church Place Surgery (Closure)**

**Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con):** This week, the Church Place general practitioner surgery in Moffat has closed its door for ever,

because of staffing issues. Meanwhile, patients in neighbouring Johnstonebridge have been told that there are no appointments available, because there are no doctors to see them.

Does the First Minister think that that is acceptable? In the light of those failings, will she back local calls to accelerate plans for a new purpose-built health centre in Upper Annandale?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** We will always discuss with health boards plans for new health centres. It is, of course, very much for local health boards to decide on local priorities. More generally, we aim to increase the number of GPs working in Scotland by at least 800 over the next decade. Investment in primary care is rising and we are taking a range of actions to increase the number of medical students who go into GP training. In fact, the graduate entry medicine programme, which will focus on general practice, starts this year. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport, Jeane Freeman, visited the programme earlier this week.

Jeane Freeman has also been at the Royal College of General Practitioners conference this morning. Many of the tweets that I have seen from that suggested that the United Kingdom Government should look to what the Scottish Government is doing and learn lessons from that. Perhaps Oliver Mundell might want to pass that on. The tweet that most drew my attention was this:

"Can someone please give @MattHancock a copy of @JeaneF1MSP's speech?"

#### **Scottish League Cup Semi-finals**

**Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** Members across the chamber were pleased earlier this week when the Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing agreed to engage with all relevant parties about the Scottish Professional Football League's plans to hold both league cup semi-finals in the same venue on the same day, and they were even more pleased when those plans were dropped yesterday evening. Will the First Minister continue that engagement and ensure that this is the very last time that those scheduling such major events do so without taking the interests of supporters into account?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Such decisions are for the football authorities—in this case the SPFL—although they should listen to police advice, and I am glad that the change of opinion has happened this week. To ensure that appropriate lessons are learned, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice has already arranged a meeting between Police Scotland and the SPFL to look at what happened and how we can ensure

that it does not happen again. I hope that football fans of all teams and all colours will welcome that for the future.

### **Brexit (People's Vote)**

**3. Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** I am worried about the First Minister. She is not quite herself these days. Our country is facing economic meltdown, but the First Minister is frozen with indecision. For months I have encouraged her to back a people's vote on Brexit, but she just cannot make up her mind. Then I hear this week that she has delayed another independence referendum. That is great news, but I wonder whether the First Minister believes in anything anymore. I want to encourage her. I will be with her if she commits her Government to backing a people's vote. Time is running out. Will she do that in these desperate days?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I must make clear to the chamber that I have been worried about Willie Rennie for an awful long time, so I am glad that, at long last, he is reciprocating, and that mutual concern is obviously the start of a long and happy friendship.

On the issue of the people's vote, I have made it clear to the chamber and to others that the Scottish National Party is not going to stand in the way of that, so perhaps Willie Rennie should learn to start taking yes for an answer. As I said the last time that he raised the question, it would be interesting to hear Willie Rennie address what happens if, yet again, just as in 2016, Scotland votes to remain and the rest of the United Kingdom votes to leave. Is it Willie Rennie's proposition that Scotland should simply be ignored all over again? Is it really Willie Rennie's position that the only people's vote on the European Union that counts for nothing is the Scottish people's vote? If he can address that question, we might make some progress.

**Willie Rennie:** Even her own party does not agree with her on that anymore. This is getting serious. Last week the car manufacturers spoke out. Yesterday a life-saving drugs trial was cancelled because of Brexit. Today it is the Royal Bank of Scotland. They are all warning about Brexit, and more people are coming on board to support a people's vote. The First Minister is not leading the country; she is falling behind the country. Let us look at the list. Former Conservative cabinet ministers, senior Labour politicians and now the whole SNP council group in Aberdeenshire have backed a people's vote. In supporting a people's vote, one SNP councillor said that the only way out of this is to take it back to the people. He is right, is he not?

**The First Minister:** As I said, we do not stand in the way of a people's vote. If there is a people's

vote, I will be perfectly happy with that, but it does not guarantee salvation for Scotland, as we saw in 2016. Willie Rennie is right about one thing. It is really serious. The Tories are leading Scotland to disaster. In the past few days, we have heard warnings of recession, medicine shortages and pressure on food supplies, and we have seen the cancellation of a clinical trial at the Golden Jubilee hospital, and that makes the point clearer than ever. Scotland needs the option of independence, because only independence guarantees that those things cannot be imposed on us against our will, so the sooner Willie Rennie wants to back that the better.

**The Presiding Officer:** There are a few further supplementaries. The first is from Gil Paterson.

### **Golden Jubilee Hospital (Trials)**

**Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP):** The First Minister will be aware that the Golden Jubilee hospital in my constituency conducts numerous world-leading trials on heart disease and heart failure. Yesterday, it was reported that clinical trials of a new drug have been stopped at the hospital because of concerns over Brexit.

The work that is undertaken at the Golden Jubilee is of national, if not global, significance. Will the Scottish Government therefore raise the issue with the UK Government as a matter of urgency and demand action to allow that groundbreaking research to go ahead? Just as important, will it ensure that the situation does not reflect on the world-leading research that is carried out at the Golden Jubilee hospital?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Is not it very telling that, as Gil Paterson was asking that really important question, almost every member on the Scottish Conservative benches was looking at their phone or engaging in conversation? They do not want to hear about or engage with the real damage that their Brexit policy is doing to this country.

Gil Paterson is absolutely right to raise that issue, which is incredibly serious. The Golden Jubilee hospital is particularly active in the field of cardiovascular research, and this year we have invested a further £431,000 to continue to support its research activity. This is the first clinical study that we are aware of to be suspended in Scotland as a result of Brexit. That is deeply concerning, and it is a real sign of what could happen down the line. I understand that the trials are continuing elsewhere in Europe, which just underlines the seriousness of this issue to Scotland.

We are working hard, and we will continue to work hard, to protect Scotland's interests in spite of a lack of clarity and meaningful engagement

from the United Kingdom. We will continue to push the UK Government for answers to legitimate questions and concerns about the very real risk that Brexit poses to research, clinical trials and access to medicines and staff.

### **Amazon (Living Wage)**

**Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab):** Amazon, which is a company with profits of \$2.5 billion that has received more than £3.5 million of Scottish public money, has finally agreed to pay its employees the living wage, which will affect 300 workers in the west of Scotland. The First Minister has welcomed that, as we all would. However, is she concerned about reports today that many workers, without any consultation, will be financing their own pay rise with cuts to stock options and benefits, including to the seasonal incentive just as we approach Christmas?

Many workers apparently believe that they will be worse off as a consequence. If that is the case, does she agree with the GMB that this could be a case of giving with one hand and taking with another? Before handing out any more money to Amazon, will she take into account this and other bad employment practices, including the company's continued failure to recognise the trade union?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** First, I welcome Amazon's announcement earlier this week about payment of the living wage. The Scottish Government, trade unions and others have put a significant amount of pressure on Amazon, so the announcement is particularly welcome.

Neil Bibby talks about public money given by this Government to Amazon. The previous Labour Administration gave public money to Amazon as well, but it is this Government that has pressured Amazon to pay the living wage. A bit of recognition of that from Neil Bibby would not have gone amiss.

On the share options issue that has been reported today, we will seek further detail from Amazon. If what has been reported is true, it is completely unacceptable and I would absolutely, unequivocally condemn it. We will seek to meet Amazon to find out what the situation is there and we will continue to put pressure on it and all other companies to treat all their workers fairly.

### **Carers Allowance Supplement**

**James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):** Will the First Minister update Parliament on the payments of Scotland's new carers allowance supplement? How many payments have now been made, and how will that financial support help carers and their families?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** More than 75,000 carers have now received the first instalment of the carers allowance supplement. The supplement is an additional payment of £442 made in two instalments throughout the year. That is a big investment—it is an increase of 13 per cent on the current carers allowance.

Over the past couple of weeks, I have had a lot of messages from carers to say how much it means to them. In practical terms, the money is obviously important to carers, who will often be struggling to make ends meet, but I have been struck by how many carers have said to me that it is actually about more than the money—it is about the message that we send about how much we value the contribution that carers make to our society. Let me today, yet again, put on record my heartfelt thanks to them for all that they do.

### **NHS Ayrshire and Arran**

**John Scott (Ayr) (Con):** The First Minister will be aware of the Audit Scotland report into national health service funding and, in particular, NHS Ayrshire and Arran's ability to work within its budgets. Does the First Minister have any advice for NHS Ayrshire and Arran on how it might live within its means in future and does she share my concerns about the growing indebtedness of NHS Ayrshire and Arran to the Scottish Government?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** John Scott is obviously referring to the Audit Scotland section 22 reports issued this week, which refer to NHS Ayrshire and Arran and NHS Highland. We are working closely with those boards to ensure that we have a full picture of their position in relation to financial management, operational performance and quality of care. Following that work, we will consider whether any further action needs to be taken or support provided.

I am aware that the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport will make a statement to the chamber this afternoon, setting out her views on the financial position of the NHS now and how we can ensure the sustainable financial position of the NHS in future.

### **Domestic Abuse (Disclosure Scheme)**

4. **Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister what impact the disclosure scheme for domestic abuse in Scotland has had since its introduction in 2015. (S5F-02679)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** The disclosure scheme for domestic abuse in Scotland, introduced after Clare Wood's tragic death, has enabled more than 3,500 people to request information for themselves or for someone who they feel may be at risk of domestic abuse.

The Police Scotland scheme, which I was proud to help announce when it was introduced nationally in 2015, has informed almost 1,600 people about their partner's abusive past. Put simply, the scheme may well have saved lives.

It is one of a number of measures that make a difference for victims. The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018, which was passed earlier this year, creates a specific domestic abuse offence that covers not just physical abuse but coercive and controlling behaviour. It sends an unequivocal message that any type of domestic abuse is completely unacceptable.

**Ruth Maguire:** Based on figures out this week, it is hard to argue that the scheme, rolled out after a successful trial in Ayrshire, has been anything other than a success. Scottish Women's Aid acknowledges it as a great tool for breaking the silence around coercive control and the violence of domestic abuse, and helping women who may have been unaware of their partner's past. How will the Scottish Government continue to promote the scheme and other supports to those who face the threat or live with the reality of a violent or abusive partner?

**The First Minister:** The scheme has indeed been a success and is a credit to the dedicated Police Scotland officers and victim support organisations who work tirelessly to support people through the disclosure process and to prevent people from becoming victims.

Applications from individuals using their right to ask have increased by almost 40 per cent in the past 12 months, which demonstrates that the scheme is being used. The Scottish Government is investing record levels of funding to support victims of gender-based violence through a range of front-line services. That includes funding to Scottish Women's Aid to train a pool of expert coercive control trainers throughout Scotland, and the development of a range of resources to support groups and external organisations, including local violence against women partnerships. We will continue that support to ensure that domestic violence is reduced and that victims have as much protection as possible.

**Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** This week, as we celebrate older people and Age Scotland's 75th anniversary, can the First Minister advise whether the Government has linked up with Action on Elder Abuse to make older people aware of the disclosure scheme, as domestic abuse knows no age boundaries?

**The First Minister:** Domestic abuse is an abhorrent crime and Christine Grahame is absolutely right to point out that it occurs across

society, regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality or wealth.

To deliver the scheme, Police Scotland already works closely with a number of independent domestic abuse advocacy and support services. I stress that the disclosure scheme is open to anyone, including concerned relatives, neighbours or friends. Anyone can make an inquiry if they are worried about someone being at risk of domestic abuse.

In addition, to support the introduction of the new act, the police have appointed SafeLives to train 14,000 officers in identifying controlling behaviours. That will reinforce the fact that domestic abuse can occur in all parts of our society, and it will include examples of abuse involving older persons.

In light of Christine Grahame's question, I am happy to ask officials to look at whether there is more that can be done in conjunction with the police to draw the attention of older people in our society to the scheme and the wider legislation around domestic abuse.

## HIV Infection

**5. Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government is taking in response to reports that there has been the biggest rise in HIV infection in Scotland for three decades. (S5F-02657)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** As we have set out in our sexual health and blood-borne virus framework, prevention of HIV transmission remains a priority in Scotland. I am very proud that Scotland was the first part of the United Kingdom to make HIV PrEP available on the national health service last year. We are working closely with NHS boards to reduce blood-borne viruses and we are providing third sector funding of more than £2 million over the next three years to organisations dealing with sexual health and blood-borne viruses. Of course, a significant risk factor for people who inject drugs being exposed to HIV is the sharing of injecting equipment. That is why we strongly support Glasgow's proposals for safer injecting facilities. The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing is meeting his counterpart in Westminster later this month to discuss the case for urgent action to consider that proposal or to devolve the necessary powers to allow this Government and Parliament to consider it.

**Alexander Stewart:** In 2016, funding for alcohol and drug partnerships was cut by £50 million and the Scottish Government asked health boards to make up the difference. The boards did not make up that shortfall and total alcohol and drug spending has been reduced since last year.

Therefore, in this year's budget, I ask the First Minister and her Government to commit to being completely transparent and providing the Parliament with a single figure for spending across those treatments.

**The First Minister:** In last year's programme for government, I indicated increased resources for drug and alcohol treatment services. Our budget in the coming year will continue to prioritise action in those areas. Perhaps a subsidiary question is whether, when it does so, the Scottish Conservatives will vote for the budget, or vote against it because they prefer tax cuts for the richest in our society, which would remove the funding that we need for these issues. We will continue to provide the funding, work with the relevant organisations and argue for the innovation in public policy that can help us to tackle the issues. That is why the safer injecting facility proposal is so important, and I say in all sincerity to the member that perhaps he can help us in trying to persuade his colleagues at Westminster to stop being a block on that proposal.

**Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD):** A freedom of information request by the Liberal Democrats reveals that in NHS Lothian there are currently 125 people waiting for up to 84 days for repeat prescriptions for the prophylactic HIV medicine, PrEP. Given that HIV infection rates are increasing and that 13 per cent of the Scots who have it do not know that they have it, will the First Minister and her Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport work with NHS Lothian to end that delay, which is the longest in this country?

**The First Minister:** The availability of PrEP is important. As I said in my initial answer to this question, Scotland was the first part of the UK to make it available on the NHS and that was the right thing to do. I will certainly discuss with the public health minister and the health secretary how we can work with NHS Lothian to make sure that it is available to people who need it, as quickly as possible. Although Alex Cole-Hamilton and I disagree on many things, I am sure that there is a lot of agreement on these issues. He has certainly on occasion been helpful to the Government in pursuing some of the policy here and I will ask the health secretary or the public health minister to correspond with him, particularly on the point that he has raised.

### **Harassment Complaints (Scottish Government)**

**6. Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government is doing to ensure that all historical complaints of harassment within its workplace are properly investigated and dealt with. (S5F-02662)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** It is, of course, a year ago that allegations emerged about Harvey Weinstein, and through the #MeToo movement the world woke up to the experiences that many women face. In light of those concerns, I asked the permanent secretary to review the Scottish Government's policies to ensure that staff could have confidence that all complaints would be fully investigated and properly addressed. As part of that, the fairness at work policy was reviewed for all staff and a new procedure was put in place that allows any historical cases to be considered and ensures that staff are clear about how they can make a complaint.

It is absolutely vital that we give people the confidence to come forward in the knowledge that they will be listened to and that their complaint will be fully investigated, irrespective of who the complaint relates to or when it occurred. I am sure that the whole chamber will agree with me that the complainants should always be at the centre of our thoughts and that we should always conduct ourselves in a way that ensures that the complainants are properly protected and respected and that complaints are properly investigated.

**Rhoda Grant:** The First Minister talked about the #MeToo campaign, which has raised hopes that we would develop a very different culture from the one that swept such issues under the carpet. However, it would appear from press reports that some historical complaints were not recorded and not dealt with appropriately or taken seriously. If that is indeed the case, perpetrators may have gone without challenge, as there was no way of seeing whether that behaviour was a course of conduct.

Is the First Minister aware of any such cases? If there are other cases, what is she doing about them? What action will she take to ensure that all historical complaints made to the Scottish Government and to any of its agencies have been properly investigated, recorded and dealt with?

**The First Minister:** No, I am not aware of any complaint having been swept under the carpet. Let me be very clear: as First Minister, I would not tolerate that being the case. Indeed, it is because I so strongly believe that complaints should not be swept under the carpet that I signed off the new procedure in December that I referred to in my opening answer.

I have been consistently clear, as has the permanent secretary of the Scottish Government, that complaints, when they are raised, should be properly investigated, no matter the seniority or the political affiliation of the person being complained about. It is important that, in all cases, due process is applied.



My final point, which is directed at all of us, across the chamber, is that we should all refrain from seeking to play party politics on issues that demand proper due process, because to do that risks doing a disservice to those who raise complaints.

**Shona Robison (Dundee City East) (SNP):** Does the First Minister agree that the behaviour that we have seen in the last week from President Trump and several United States senators, who in effect have put on trial a woman who says that she has been a victim of abuse, is utterly disgraceful? Does she also agree that we should stand together and not allow those who complain to be revictimised as part of any political or media scrutiny of any harassment investigation?

**The First Minister:** I absolutely agree. Many of us—and perhaps women in particular—have been horrified by what we have watched unfolding in the United States over the past couple of weeks. In this area, leadership is very important. The issues are not always comfortable ones—I perhaps know that more than most at this point—but it is at times when things are not comfortable that leaders are tested on whether their rhetoric is just that or whether they are prepared to put their words into action.

It is important that people who come forward with complaints are not put on trial and that there is due process for all concerned, including for those who are being complained about. We must not allow complaints to be swept under the carpet. We certainly must not allow that to happen because of the identity of the person being complained about. It is vital that women—because it is mainly, but not exclusively women who are affected—are listened to, that their complaints are treated with respect and that due process is followed. As far as I possibly can as First Minister, I will do everything in my power to make sure that that happens.

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes First Minister's question time. We will shortly move to a members' business debate, but we will first have a short suspension to allow the public gallery, in particular, to clear and to allow new members of the public to come in to listen to the debate.

12:43

*Meeting suspended.*

12:45

*On resuming—*

## Challenge Poverty Week

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-14031, in the name of Elaine Smith, on challenge poverty week. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

*Motion debated,*

That the Parliament recognises Challenge Poverty Week 2018, which runs from 1 to 7 October; notes the activities and events across Scotland to mark the week, including at the Conforti Institute in Coatbridge, to highlight the realities of, as well as the possible solutions to, poverty; understands that one million people in Scotland are living in poverty; considers that it is not right that so many people in society are locked into this; believes that it restricts the choices that people can make; notes the view that the grip of poverty can be loosened by boosting incomes, reducing costs and ensuring that everyone can participate in society, and commends the work taking place every day in communities across Scotland to tackle poverty.

**Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab):** I start with an apposite observation from R H Tawney:

"What thoughtful rich people call the problem of poverty, thoughtful poor people call with equal justice a problem of riches".

Having met the Poverty Alliance, I lodged the motion to mark challenge poverty week and I thank members for the big cross-party support that it has secured. I thank the members who have stayed to take part in the debate and look forward to hearing their contributions. Members might wish to meet the Poverty Alliance in room TG 20/21 after the debate.

This year's message is: "Challenge Poverty in Scotland? Aye we can!" There are three core themes: poverty exists in Scotland and affects us all; poverty can be solved by boosting incomes and reducing costs; and solving poverty is about ensuring that we can all participate in society. The wide range of activities that are taking place in communities around Scotland should leave us in no doubt of the commitment to offer support to those who are caught in the poverty trap while also speaking up together and taking responsibility for providing solutions.

A recent report from NHS Lanarkshire highlighted that nearly a fifth of children who live in Lanarkshire are growing up in poverty. In some parts of the Central Scotland region, that figure will be much higher. I am sure that we all agree that that is unacceptable. Such worrying statistics are to be found not only in the old industrial areas of higher deprivation in Lanarkshire. Last year, here in Edinburgh, on the doorstep of this Parliament, the use of food banks increased by 18 per cent—

more than 9,500 people—and 96 tonnes of food were distributed through food boxes during 2017. That cannot become normalised and repeated year on year.

This week, a Joseph Rowntree Foundation report stated:

“Barriers to the labour market due to disability, ill health and childcare responsibilities remain prevalent characteristics of child poverty”.

John Dickie, the head of the Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland said:

“If we are serious about ending poverty in Scotland it’s vital that we build the public support needed to make real change happen. Challenge Poverty Week is a great opportunity to work together to highlight the damage that poverty wreaks and create the pressure needed for real action to end it.”

A members’ business debate gives us the opportunity to put aside party-political differences and to promote ideas for tackling poverty. Of course, the solutions that we propose might differ—for example, Labour supports the give me five campaign—but I am sure that nobody in the chamber wants to see children going hungry in modern Scotland. Of particular concern is the fact that getting a job does not provide the security of adequate food and shelter for families that it should. Thousands of households who are living in poverty contain at least one adult in work. It used to be the case that securing employment was a route out of poverty, but that no longer seems to be the case. Changes to family and child tax credits are likely to cause more in-work poverty.

With regard to the barriers to the labour market that were cited in the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report, we policy makers can take action to change the system of work to enable more parents to access good-quality employment that suits their circumstances. The responsibility to tackle gross inequality and the poverty that underpins it must rest with us all.

I commend the work of the many charities and organisations throughout Scotland; I am sure that we will hear more details of them in the debate. My motion mentions an event at the Conforti Institute in Coatbridge, which has recently been renamed Xaverian Missionaries Conforti—I should put that right on the record. The Church Action on Poverty event, “Stories from the Edge” will bring together faith-inspired social activists to share stories, critically reflect and explore existing aspects of what makes a good society.

The Scottish Parliament has recognised in the past that faith organisations and communities have long been at the heart of providing support and assistance to those in need, and I reiterate our thanks for their work. However, although we thank and commend volunteers and churches for

their much-needed interventions, it is really not good enough that in 21st-century Scotland, those in poverty have to depend on Victorian-style Christian charity—we really must say that.

Of course we must respond to the immediate problem, but we also need a fundamental shift in social policy to ensure the eradication of poverty and inequality. I recall, as will many other members present, the make poverty history marches of 2005. I recognise the shared belief that we can and must change how our society is organised. The economy that we have today was designed—it is the result of a set of decisions about our society’s priorities and resources—and just as it was designed, we can redesign it so that it works for everyone.

Last month, the Institute for Public Policy Research’s commission on economic justice published a report entitled, “Prosperity and Justice: A Plan for the New Economy”, which was the product of a two-year inquiry. Its publication is timely as we reflect on the 10th anniversary of the 2008 banking crisis. It details the commission’s belief that a new moral purpose is needed to define the goals of economic policy, and it offers a vision of what that could be. It argues that the economy needs to deliver prosperity and justice together and it explains what is meant by those terms and how they relate to each other. On the report’s launch, the Archbishop of Canterbury, a member of the commission, said:

“Prosperity depends on the security and quality of work, and the balance of work and life, the quality of our relationships, and not just ... the amount of income we receive. It rests on the common good as well as individual wellbeing.”

Challenge poverty week shines a spotlight again on the willingness of communities to rally round and offer a helping hand, and I am pleased to have been able to work with the Poverty Alliance and the other organisations involved. However, this is also about the future—a future in which local government can provide the public services that we all need, investing in our communities; in which every family has high-quality affordable housing, access to secure, well-paid work with the flexibility to suit all and the resources to feed and clothe themselves without recourse to charity; and in which the gap between the richest and poorest in our society is no longer extreme. The question is whether we can achieve that as a Parliament, as a Government and as a country; the answer has to be “Aye we can!”—but only if we recognise that significant interventions are needed to properly challenge poverty.

Next week, Blessed Óscar Romero will be made a saint of the Roman Catholic Church. He spoke out against poverty, social injustice,

assassinations and torture; in 1980, he was murdered. I will end with his words:

“It is not God’s will for some people to have everything and others to have nothing.”

12:53

**Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP):** I congratulate Elaine Smith on securing this important debate and thank her for hosting the drop-in session, which I shall attend afterwards. She and I might disagree on many things, but we very much agree on a range of other things, including the scourge of poverty.

As we know, poverty affects too many households and people across the country and globally. It blights lives, diminishes hope and can lead to a feeling of helplessness and be a contributing factor in addiction. If dealing with it were easy, it would have been done by now, but exacerbating it is totally unforgivable; I shall return to that point in a moment. Ultimately, poverty is one of society’s challenges that we need to take seriously, irrespective of our party affiliation.

The motion highlights the event that will take place tomorrow in the Conforti Institute in Coatbridge, which has now been renamed, which Elaine Smith spoke about. I want to highlight a challenge poverty event that Ronnie Cowan MP and I will host tomorrow at the Aves Business Centre in Greenock in my constituency. We have promoted the event as a money and heating advice surgery.

We will be joined by representatives from the Inverclyde home energy advice team, the Inverclyde delivering effective advice and support team, Financial Fitness and Christians Against Poverty. The first three are local organisations that have helped, and continue to help, many people locally. The event will run between 11 am and 1 pm. If anyone watching the debate or reading the *Official Report* knows of someone locally who could be helped, they should please let them know about it.

I thank the organisations that provided briefings for today’s debate. To some people, the figures might just be numbers on a sheet of paper, but in reality, they represent people whose lives are being challenged every single day. According to the Poverty Alliance briefing, 1 million people are living in the grip of poverty, including 230,000 children, and 65 per cent of all children who are living in poverty live in working households. According to Oxfam, 8 per cent of adults experienced food insecurity in 2017, which was defined as being worried that they would run out of food because of a lack of money or resources. In our most deprived areas, that figure is 18 per cent

and one in 10 people reported running out of food during a 12-month period.

What kind of society thinks that it is fine for people to worry about eating? What kind of society thinks that it is fine for parents to worry about how they are going to feed their kids?

I have spoken in the chamber previously about food banks. In fact, I led the first members’ business debate on the issue. The situation has got worse. My office is a food bank collection point, I help the food bank, and I am in regular communication with its representatives. During the summer, I spent a few hours in the Inverclyde food bank and I put out an appeal because it was running out of food. Last night, we were informed on Twitter that, once again, the food bank was running out of food. The Inverclyde food bank needs pasta sauce, cereal, tinned fish, tinned fruit, rice pudding and custard, UHT milk, diluting juice and coffee.

This situation is disgusting, and Westminster policies such as the rape clause and welfare reform, including the roll-out of universal credit, have made it worse. Universal credit was introduced in Inverclyde in November 2016. Given the six-week lead-in time before payment, how could anyone seriously think that it would be seamless? Then there are the poverty wages that some businesses pay, as well as the continual short-term contracts and zero-hours contracts, to name further examples.

When the UK Government creates a new minister for food supplies to deal with the post-Brexit situation, what comfort does that provide to those who are already living in poverty and food poverty? Absolutely none!

We have a heartless Tory Government that has spent eight of the past 10 years delivering austerity. That cannot continue. People are already struggling and they cannot continue to live like this.

I will end with this point. When a primary school child tells the staff in the food bank that, in the past, they fed that child and their family, what impression does that leave on the staff of that child and their bravery? This is the reality of poverty in our communities. It is disgusting and it is abhorrent. If the Tories start considering all the communities that they represent and not just the rich chosen few, maybe their colleagues in Westminster might just consider the less well-off in Scotland and elsewhere across the UK.

12:58

**Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I welcome the opportunity to take part in

today's debate and I commend Elaine Smith for her motion and congratulate her on it.

As we have heard, challenge poverty week 2018 runs from 1 to 7 October and highlights the challenges and realities of people who are suffering from poverty. This is an annual event; we have already talked about the Poverty Alliance, which is actively involved and has been working in the field since 1992. Having grown out of an informal network of groups, individuals and activities since the 1980s, the membership of that organisation is wide and varied—that is what it needs to be to ensure that we can look at the issues of social inclusion and the poverty that individuals are suffering. Its membership includes a wide range of organisations, including grass-roots community groups, individuals who are facing poverty, voluntary organisations, statutory organisations, policy makers and academics. It also acts as a national poverty network in Scotland, working with organisations and policy makers in the UK and Europe.

Two of the challenge poverty week aims are to highlight the reality of poverty and challenge the stereotypes that exist about it, and to demonstrate what individuals and organisations are doing throughout Scotland to address poverty.

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** I am sure that every one of the groups that the member has spoken to in his region over the past week or so has told him that the introduction of universal credit and the benefits cuts are key components of the increase in poverty. Does the member accept that, and that every one of those groups is telling him the same story?

**Alexander Stewart:** I acknowledge that individuals feel that they are being challenged. The Westminster Government has been mentioned in this Parliament today, and the rules on occupation that it sends out to individuals might well have an impact. I see that in parts of my constituency, and I acknowledge that.

Each organisation tries to ensure that its groups tackle the challenge of poverty. To achieve the aims of challenge poverty week, organisations throughout Scotland are organising events to try to ensure that individuals are able to be involved. Organisations will support individuals by distributing information or by ensuring that they speak to politicians—it is vital that politicians listen to the views and opinions of individuals. Organisations should also focus on ensuring that individuals get the right and the opportunity to go out into their communities and undertake those activities. Given their clear focus on their priorities, organisations want to highlight and tackle poverty throughout Scotland.

We should look at what we can all do in future to have a bigger impact on everyone's lives, and we should examine ways in which organisations can ensure that people have self-confidence and dignity.

Challenge poverty week's vision is to end child poverty, to listen to people who are affected by poverty and to invest in high-quality education. That is vital. It is also vital that we respect everybody's human rights and give people dignity in the circumstances in which they find themselves. That vision should be highly commended.

We need to address poverty by tackling inequality, supporting individuals on low incomes and supplying them with access to money and debt advice. We need to ensure that people who face the injustice of poverty get the support that they require to give them the confidence to manage their money and their resources effectively so that they can make responsible decisions.

I commend and congratulate Elaine Smith and others on all the work that they do in this area. I look forward to seeing progress as we move forward.

13:02

**James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab):** I congratulate Elaine Smith on securing the debate in support of challenge poverty week. Challenging poverty is a very important issue and, as other members have said, it resonates throughout our constituencies and regions.

We can look at some of the statistics in the briefings. The recent Joseph Rowntree Foundation report illustrates that 230,000 kids live in poverty in Scotland, and the Oxfam briefing highlights the fact that 860,000 individuals live in poverty in Scotland. That is a scandal in a modern progressive country, and we all have a responsibility to address the problem.

We should also think about the stories that lie behind the statistics. What is actually happening on the ground? The reality is that there are still too many people who are not in work or, as others have said, who are struggling due to the aggressive policies on benefits changes that the UK Government is pursuing.

People who are in work might be working in two or three jobs, and more than 400,000 people are not being paid the living wage. That means that those people do not have enough money to live in proper housing or to heat and clothe their families. Their kids grow up unable to have breakfast before going to school in the morning, which means that they are not best placed to make the

most of their educational opportunities or to have the best chance in life.

There is a big story behind the poverty statistics—people struggling on low wages, living in poor housing, living with poor health and not getting the opportunity to live their lives with respect and dignity. There is a challenge to all of us in fighting against that.

I want to talk about the work of one local group. Earlier this week, as part of challenge poverty week, I visited the Whitlawburn resource centre to look at the work of the Whitlawburn hub, and I spoke to Fiona Boyle there. The hub has an information technology facility that people who are out of work can use to get advice about their skills, to access training and to build their CVs. Importantly, it lays a foundation through volunteers training people in use of the IT facilities. The hub has helped people to get back into work and has raised their confidence and self-esteem, which can often be destroyed as a result of living in poverty.

Stuart McMillan was rightly critical of the UK Government, because a lot of the policies that are causing poverty are being driven by the UK Government. It is right that we speak out against that and campaign against it, but there is also a responsibility on us here in the Scottish Parliament to do something.

We heard yesterday that the Scottish budget will be published on 12 December. There is an onus on the Scottish Government to look at the policies and spending commitments in that budget to ensure that we are doing something real and live to tackle poverty. If we are going to tackle the statistics, we need a commitment from all levels of Government and all MSPs.

13:07

**Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** I, too, congratulate Elaine Smith on giving us the opportunity to begin to make more of a difference in challenge poverty week. I thank all the organisations that have provided us with briefings today.

Elaine Smith noted that members' business debates should not be as confrontational as other debates, but I find it difficult to contribute today without noting the context within which the debate takes place.

It is clear that there is a very important role for employers and for schools in addressing poverty. Let us consider schools. We regularly discuss the education attainment gap. Quite frankly, it is simply impossible to reduce that gap if we do not address the gap that is caused by poverty. How can a child possibly do their best at school if they have not had a decent meal the night before and

their parents have not had enough time to help them with their homework because they have been busy at their second or, perhaps, third job that day, which is one that does not pay enough? There is a role for all of us in this.

**Elaine Smith:** Does Alison Johnstone recognise that holiday hunger is an issue and that schemes such as the club 365 programme in North Lanarkshire help with that, as well?

**Alison Johnstone:** I could not agree more. Holiday hunger is an issue that is starting to be acknowledged. We can only imagine how some families feel when faced with a six-week or seven-week school holiday knowing that the school lunch was the one hot meal—or perhaps the only meal—of the day for their child. That recognition is welcome.

I have always felt conflicted about the food-bank issue. I congratulate the people who donate to, collect for and work in the food banks, but the fact that food banks have become a normal part of life in this country is a matter of huge concern that we must seek to address. Nobody should have to go to a food bank; people should have enough money in their pockets to be able to choose with their families the food that they want to eat.

Stuart McMillan mentioned the emails that we parliamentarians receive about what food banks are running short of. Are those the foods that we should be recommending if we want to become a good food nation? All too often, they are not. For a start, they are tinned. As we know, many families in poverty are living in bed-and-breakfasts and do not have access to food, heating and so on. All those issues are, of course, interrelated.

The Parliament has done a lot of good work on the issue. For a start, dignity and respect will be put at the heart of the social security system; we are already seeing some of that in action. We need to do as much as we can to boost incomes, and schemes such as healthier, wealthier children will have an impact in that respect. Moreover, I massively welcome the fact that we are beginning to recognise that carers need more support.

However, we have also heard what the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has said about the impact of cuts to social security and other support for disabled people. Families with a disabled parent or child are bearing the brunt of the cuts, so when we look at challenging poverty, we have to recognise that such things are having a devastating impact.

At the moment, our schools in Edinburgh and the Lothians are being asked to contribute to food banks as part of their harvest festival events. Has it really come to this, in one of the wealthiest economies on the face of the planet?

I have run out of time, but again I thank Elaine Smith for the opportunity to challenge poverty this week. As we in Parliament move forward, we should ensure that we do exactly that in everything that we do.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Given the number of members who still wish to speak in the debate, I am minded under rule 8.14.3 to accept a motion without notice that the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.

*Motion moved,*

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.—[*Elaine Smith.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

13:12

**Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):** I, too, thank Elaine Smith for bringing this grave matter to the chamber for debate.

This year's challenge poverty week gives us an opportunity to highlight some brilliant organisations that help to alleviate the scourge of poverty across Scotland. One such organisation is Healthy Valleys, which is based in Lanark in my South Scotland region. It works to promote health and wellbeing across the Clydesdale area, and is helping to transform communities and individuals' lives by working with them to solve problems, build resilience and empower them to find solutions to tackle and relieve the impact of poverty, particularly on children, vulnerable adults and older people. The national average for child poverty is intolerable in itself, but in some areas of rural Clydesdale, the figure is 46 per cent. Healthy Valleys provides practical support and opportunities to improve people's circumstances through, for example, child health and wellbeing programmes, parental support and, importantly, social prescriptions.

It is a real challenge to engage people who are hard to reach, and to ensure that they can participate equally in the life of a community. One particularly successful Healthy Valleys scheme has been the creation of community health cafes, which I have visited. They are led by volunteers and help to reduce isolation and loneliness. People can have a cooked meal on site and take one home with them. I commend Healthy Valleys for its work in my region, as I do other organisations and groups across Scotland, and I wish them every success in the future.

However, I cannot stand here without saying that we should not have poverty in Scotland in the 21st century. Of course people want to do things for themselves and their communities, and as a member of the Scottish Co-Operative Party MSP group, I have heard about—and support—

empowering co-operative models across all sectors, including energy, farming, housing and childcare. Indeed, last week, the cross-party group on co-operatives, which is convened by my colleague James Kelly, heard about a student co-op organisation here in Edinburgh that is successfully bucking the trend of rip-off rents by private student landlords.

That said, zero-hours contracts, in-work poverty and child poverty are systemic in our society, and tax cuts for the rich and benefit cuts for the most vulnerable are a stark legacy of Tory rule—a fact that should not be ducked by the Tories in Scotland.

The Resolution Foundation has highlighted that the largest single-year increase in child poverty since the 1980s happened last year. The increase has been made even more obvious by the recent release of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's report "Poverty in Scotland 2018", which also highlights that the SNP is not using the powers of the Scottish Parliament effectively. It is clear that the failure of the Scottish Government to use its powers to tax the rich and share the proceeds across local authorities and voluntary sector organisations is contributing to destroying lives.

Alison Johnstone highlighted carers. As convener of the cross-party group on carers, I heard yesterday of cuts to respite care, inability to secure funding for transition programmes and much more. Last week, at the—

**Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Claudia Beamish:** I am afraid that I cannot. I am in my last minute.

Last week, at the cross-party group on co-operatives, I heard about serious challenges that are faced by co-operatives. We need a system change. A future Labour UK Government would invest in transformational funds, a statutory £10 living wage and so much more. Here in Scotland, in Government Labour would introduce the Mary Barbour law, increase child benefit and do so much more here with the powers that we have. We would tax those who can afford to pay more so that we have a more equal society in Scotland. Let me make it clear: just one person in poverty is one person too many.

13:16

**Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** I thank Elaine Smith for lodging the motion and I congratulate her on securing the debate. As members have already said, 21st century Scotland is a rich nation, but we are looking at 230,000 children living in poverty. It is absolutely unacceptable.

I will go on to the social security element in a minute, but I have to say to Claudia Beamish that perhaps if her party had given support for full powers over social security, things would be different, so she should please remember that. We could have had the full powers—

**Claudia Beamish:** Will the member give way?

**Sandra White:** No, I am sorry. I have to get on.

Challenge poverty week is an opportunity for everyone to raise their voices against poverty and to show what is being done to tackle poverty across Scotland. As others have said, the main aims of the week include highlighting the reality of poverty. I appreciate what Elaine Smith said about members' business debates normally being consensual, but like other members including Stuart McMillan and Alison Johnstone, I think that there is absolutely no doubt that the actions by the Tory Government in Westminster are making more and more people worse off and driving them into poverty.

We have to give some credit for what the Scottish Government is trying to do without all the powers of an independent country. I will mention a couple of things—I cannot go through them all. We are the only part of the UK that has legally binding targets to reduce child poverty, which were brought in by the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. The Scottish Government has invested £12 million in intensive employment support for parents. It has increased funding for the workplace equality fund and there is a new minimum payment of £100 per child through the school clothing grant. It is a shame that kids even have to get a grant for clothes; we are way back to the 1950s and 1960s.

There is also, of course, the new Social Security Scotland, which will treat people—as Alison Johnstone has said—with dignity and respect. I come back to my earlier point—what a pity it is that we do not have all the powers for that agency so that we could tackle poverty better.

Members have spoken about different events that are happening. Tomorrow in my constituency, Patrick Grady MP and I are holding a roadshow on universal credit, on the eve of its introduction to Partick in my constituency this month. It covers some of Patrick Grady MP's constituency, too. It is not just we two who will be there: there will be community groups, people from Citizens Advice Scotland and people from the Department for Work and Pensions to give advice. It has been said, even by Alexander Stewart of the Conservatives, that our post bags are full and that we see people every other day in our constituencies who are suffering from cuts due to universal credit.

I want to mention something else that is happening in my constituency. The Refugee Survival Trust is taking part in challenge poverty week in the Kelvin hall next week. Many people do not take this into account, but poverty and destitution affect every part of society, and their impact falls disproportionately on refugees and asylum seekers. They find themselves in a precarious position, so I am pleased that the Refugee Survival Trust is participating in the event and providing information to people who are becoming destitute—who are sleeping in the streets and are impoverished.

We must all strive to end poverty. It is a disgrace that it exists in Scotland in the 21st century.

13:20

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I congratulate Elaine Smith on securing the debate.

I wish to focus on food insecurity, which other members have mentioned. It is a disgrace that, in recognising modern-day poverty in Scotland and across the UK, food insecurity is an almost accepted part of poverty. When food banks first opened, there was a degree of shock that people could not afford food and a feeling that it was immoral for people to have to access a charity in order to feed themselves.

In 2011, when I first went to talk to people at a food bank, I had to go up to Dundee, because there was none in Fife at that time. There are now eight in Fife, run by and supported by volunteers, who are working really hard day in, day out to support the needs of their communities.

Food banks are now an important part of our support infrastructure, although they often struggle to meet demand. Kirkcaldy food bank is having to spend at least £8,000 a month to supplement its donations. Research from Fife Council suggests that at least 24,000 adults are living in food-insecure households in Fife, although that is thought to be an underestimate.

The drivers for that have been identified as changes to the welfare system, rising living costs, job insecurity and continuing low wages. The Scottish health survey was published last week and, for the first time, included a question on food insecurity. It revealed that 8 per cent of adults experienced food insecurity in 2017. That figure rose to 21 per cent for single parents. As well as concerns over food shortages, there is the issue of the quality of food that people on low incomes are able to access. The recent Food Foundation report highlights that the poorest fifth of families would have to spend 40 per cent of their weekly income on food if they were to meet the Government's healthy living advice targets.

Prior to the school summer holidays, I wrote to the local authorities in my region to ask them how they were planning to address the issue of holiday hunger. Children who receive free school meals—in some schools they also get a breakfast—do not get that support during the holidays. We know that parents will often not eat in the holidays so that they can provide for their children.

There were different responses. Clackmannanshire Council was not preparing any support, reporting that it had previously run a pilot that had resulted in a lot of food waste, although it would explore options for next summer. The other local authorities, Stirling, Perth and Kinross and Fife, were running a variety of targeted schemes, which were referral based and built around a programme of activities with meals.

I recognise the efforts that are being made, but I also recognise the scale of the demand. Speaking to people at food banks, community cafes and support organisations, I could see that they were preparing for an increase in demand.

As part of challenge poverty week, I held a round table in Kirkcaldy on Monday with Fife Gingerbread, Home-Start, Citizens Advice Scotland, the Linton Lane centre, Kirkcaldy YMCA, Glenrothes food bank, Kirkcaldy food bank, the Ore Valley Housing Association, the Poverty Alliance and Fife Council to provide an opportunity to discuss the provision that was available over the summer holidays, what the demand was like, how organisations were responding to that and what the best way forward is. The issues raised included sustainable funding, the reach of the provision, the extent of the referral system, how to avoid stigma and how to recognise hidden hunger. I thank everyone who came along to the discussion, and I sincerely thank them for their effort in responding to a desperate need in Fife to reduce food insecurity and build resilience in our communities.

What can Parliament do to make their jobs easier? We need, as soon as possible, a comprehensive food bill that includes a right to food. That would give a statutory underpinning to efforts to tackle food insecurity. We should do all that we can to raise income levels. Food insecurity is a symptom of poverty. We need to ensure that the benefits system delivers a recognised minimum income standard. We need to ensure that the new income supplement, which the Scottish Government is committed to, is as ambitious as possible, and I will continue to argue that a top-up to child benefit is a good way to do that. By strengthening the Scottish welfare fund, we can ensure that people receive the cash support that prevents them from having to access emergency food provision. Finally, we must do all that we can to avoid in-work poverty.

Although I have focused on food, poverty has many negative impacts on people's lives in our society. We must all redouble our efforts to end it.

13:24

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** I thank Elaine Smith for securing the debate. People have mentioned the million people who cannot afford the basics to live a decent life. If that does not make members angry and emotional, they must have hearts of stone.

Across Scotland, we can see the education attainment gap growing and the mental health crisis unfold before our eyes, with people desperate for help, but unable to get it. Recently, I spoke to a group of 15 young carers and 13 of them had sought help for a mental health problem. We see 1,000 people a year die from the effects of drugs. As members have said, food bank use is rising rather than falling. We have a housing crisis: people are unable to afford deposits, they are being ripped off by exploitative landlords, and landlords and councils are not even remotely able to meet housing demand.

All those issues affect women, the poor, the weak, the low paid, the disabled and the vulnerable the most. Over the years, we have had report after report on the issue. In challenge poverty week, we come here, stick our badges on, get our photo taken, take part in a debate, maybe hold events in our constituency and all feel very good that we have contributed something—yet nothing much changes. In fact, poverty is increasing and, shamefully—this did not get the coverage that it deserved last week—life expectancy in Scotland is falling for the first time in many years. That is an utter disgrace and an abject failure of public policy.

We know that the Tory benefit cuts, the stagnation of wages, precarious work, public spending cuts and attacks on local services all leave communities and families isolated and struggling to pay bills, buy food, buy clothes and pay the rent—never mind buy luxuries, such as toys for children, books or a short break. We know that under a Tory Government, poverty increases, just as night follows day. There was no mention of food banks or disability cuts or the increase in suicide rates in Theresa May's speech yesterday or in Alexander Stewart's speech today. Members should not give us compassion today when talking about the extent of poverty in Scotland, having yesterday cheered the very people who are causing that poverty.

If we want to do something different, we need a concerted cross-Government response to make the eradication of health and wealth inequality the core objective of Government policy. I have



always believed that responsibility and accountability for that should lie in Scotland with the First Minister and at UK level with the Prime Minister, with every other minister and department contributing to an overall plan to eliminate those inequalities.

Where the Government has powers, it must use them and it must act. In Scotland, we could make work pay through a living wage of at least £10 per hour in all contracts that the Scottish Government gives out—we have the power to do that. We need to end the cuts to council services, which disproportionately impact those groups that I mentioned earlier. That could happen with the right political will. We need to invest in childcare and in policies such as North Lanarkshire's club 365 school meal scheme. We have the power.

We need to increase the money going into the pockets of the most needy people. We could do that by topping up child benefit. I fail to understand the First Minister's logic when she argues for universal provision in relation to tuition fees, the baby box and bus passes—all of which I support—and then argues against universal provision to put extra money in people's pockets. That is utterly inconsistent.

We need to ensure that no one in our country sleeps rough or has no food to provide to their family. We have the power to tackle that and we could do it if we had the political will. We need to end the failing war on drugs and declare a national public health crisis. I repeat: we have the power.

If education is the Government's priority then the approach is failing, because the gap between rich and poor is growing, not narrowing. We need to reverse that trend. We have the power to do it.

Debates come and go, and in many subjects, things are getting worse instead of better. If the Government were to act on the issues that I and other members have identified, it would have our full support. Tackling poverty and inequality should be the overriding priority of any Government.

13:30

**Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con):** I am grateful to have the opportunity to speak in this afternoon's debate to mark challenge poverty week, and I thank Elaine Smith for lodging her motion. I am sure that there will have been many interesting contributions to the debate, and I might be glad that I did not hear some of them. I apologise for my absence—I was hosting a delegation of alpacas outside. I hope that, when the debate has finished, other members might be able to go and see them, too.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Before you go on, I should advise the chamber that the Presiding

Officer gave Ms Ballantyne permission to do that—it was the Presiding Officer's decision.

**Michelle Ballantyne:** I was just about to say that I was very grateful that the Presiding Officer gave me permission to be late, because I wanted to participate in the debate.

Although we might disagree on many things, we all agree that it is shameful that 1 million Scots are living in poverty. Despite some of the commentary—the accusation has been made that that state of affairs is all the fault of Conservatives—the situation is not one that has arisen solely as a result of the actions of a single Government. Administrations of all colours are responsible to one degree or another.

I say to members on all sides and of all colours that, here in Scotland, we have been handed a golden opportunity to tackle poverty and end the destructive cycle that has blighted our country for so long. The new Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 sets an ambitious target of reducing child poverty to only 10 per cent of children by 2030. Of course, if we are to advance that aim, the way in which we measure poverty will have to change, because if we measure it against the median, we will always have people in poverty.

Therefore, I hope that the Parliament will give consideration to the new indicator of poverty that was recently published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which looks at income and expenditure and the impact that that combination has. What is important is how we measure what families actually have to live on and what surplus they have to bring opportunity into their lives.

**Stuart McMillan:** Does Michelle Ballantyne agree that, as a consequence of the welfare reform process, some of our constituents are getting less money, which means that they have less money to live on, and that, as a result, unfortunately, more people—our constituents—are being put into poverty?

**Michelle Ballantyne:** I do not dispute that. There is no doubt that there have been winners and losers as a result of the welfare reform process. Everybody is monitoring that and looking at where the impacts are, whether those are right or wrong, and what needs to be adjusted. It would be utterly wrong to say that the UK Government is not looking at that, because it is. We can see that it has already made adjustments. We are talking about a radical change to the way in which welfare is delivered, and we must ensure that, in the way in which the system is altered, it is made fit for purpose, so that, although people might not always agree with the decisions that are made, they can say that the process has been fair.

We in Scotland now have a significant part to play, given that the Social Security (Scotland) Act

2018 is enshrined in Scots law, 11 benefits have been devolved and Social Security Scotland is now open. I was pleased to visit the agency on Monday, and I will go back there again to talk to staff. We must remember that the 2017 and 2018 acts gained unanimous support in the Parliament. That is a clear sign that, when it comes to poverty, there is a will within the four walls of this Parliament for us to come together and take decisive action.

However, passing legislation is just the beginning. Solving a problem as complex and deep rooted as poverty cannot be done just by passing laws or, indeed, by focusing only on the social security system. That is why I welcome the motion. It recognises that the key to lifting people out of economic hardship is to boost their income and ensure that they participate in society by providing them with a range of choices and options to build a better life.

I have stood in the chamber and made that point before, but it deserves to be repeated. I know that other members have done that since I came back into the chamber. We must take a wider, joined-up approach when it comes to poverty.

When members debated the Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill, I made the point that educational underattainment has been identified as a key contributory driver of child poverty. It restricts the life chances of our young people and prevents them from breaking the cycle as they go on to be parents. I take Alison Johnstone's point that it is extremely difficult for a child to be effective in the classroom if they do not have a full stomach. We can address such things, and there are ways to do so that sit outside social security.

I see that the Presiding Officer is waving the pen at me, so I will lose a bit of my speech. I will say something quickly, if you will allow me some leeway, Presiding Officer.

I have spent most of my life working with people in poverty. That is my professional background, and I feel strongly about the matter. There is not enough communication between the services. The third sector does a phenomenal job and the public sector tries its hardest to do a phenomenal job, but the communication between everybody and the joining up of how we approach things, from the Government right the way down to the front line, is not that great at times.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You have had six minutes, so you must conclude.

**Michelle Ballantyne:** We need to sort that.

**Sandra White:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I have a feeling that it will not be a point of order. If it is not, I will cut you off.

**Sandra White:** You can cut me off if you like. My understanding is that, if a member is not in the chamber in time for the summing up of a debate—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That is not a point of order. I said at the beginning—

**Sandra White:** Is there anything that we could do—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Please sit down, Ms White. Do not argue with me. The Presiding Officer gave advance permission to Ms Ballantyne to not be in the chamber for the start of the debate. That is the Presiding Officer's ruling, and you must just accept that.

13:36

**The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell):** Like other members, I thank Elaine Smith for bringing forward this members' business debate during challenge poverty week. The debate is a chance for Parliament to collectively assert and raise our voices against poverty in Scotland and, as Elaine Smith said, to put aside party politics and focus on putting forward ideas instead. That should not necessarily come without the appropriate challenge to Government and people in power. The space that has been created today has provided members with an opportunity to consider what more needs to be done to challenge poverty. I appreciate Elaine Smith providing that space and commend the work that will happen in Coatbridge, which she mentioned, and the storytelling, because people's individual stories are powerful and illustrate the horrifying impact of poverty in Scotland.

A number of key poverty publications have been published during this challenge poverty week, including the Scottish Government's annual report on UK Government welfare reforms and the "Poverty in Scotland 2018" report, which was published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. That report was launched at the Scottish Storytelling Centre, and it ensures that people's experiences and stories are at the forefront of the consideration of what we need to do to challenge poverty. Both reports highlighted the on-going UK Government austerity and the devastating impact that it will have. It will lead to more families in and out of work falling into poverty and it has been forecast that it will increase child poverty in Scotland. Some £3.7 billion will be cut from the benefit income of people in Scotland by 2021.

Welfare reforms have explicitly focused on reducing benefit generosity to families with

children, and that is affecting the priority families identified in the Scottish Government's tackling child poverty delivery plan. For example, over the first year of implementation of the two-child limit, around 3,800 larger families in Scotland saw their incomes reduced by up to £2,780. That was simply for having more than two children, and that situation is only set to worsen year on year.

It is estimated that the reform that will bring about the biggest reduction in spending in Scotland—of around £370 million by 2020-21—is the benefit freeze. The Scottish Government is taking action to mitigate the impact of UK Government welfare reform policies, including spending an expected £125 million this year alone, but unless the UK Government reverses the reductions in social security spending, it will be even more challenging for the Scottish Government to meet the ambitious targets in the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. We will be challenging that poverty with one hand tied behind our back.

**Michelle Ballantyne:** I agree that there has been a cut in the actual spend in the budget, but does the cabinet secretary accept that there has been a 1 percentage point increase in spending on benefits within the whole envelope of Government spending? It has gone up from 34 to 35 per cent of overall Government spend. The cabinet secretary talks about mitigation, but does she accept that, to a degree the issue is about choices on where to spend money on education, health or other such issues—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** It is a short intervention and not another speech.

**Aileen Campbell:** I am talking about—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Just a wee minute, cabinet secretary. I know that you are desperate to reply. I call the cabinet secretary.

**Aileen Campbell:** Sorry, Presiding Officer.

I am talking about the mitigation that we have to do to cope with, cover up, sweep up and clear up the mess that the UK Government has left. To be frank, unless the Tories accept that, it is probably not worth their making contributions on the issue in the chamber. Unless they adequately challenge their party colleagues and the Westminster Government on poverty, they are perhaps better suited to having meetings with alpacas than to contributing to the debate.

The reports that have been published this week outline the importance of continued concerted Scottish Government action in the area and the need to maintain a strong focus on child poverty across all policy areas, and that is exactly what we are doing. In developing the tackling child poverty delivery plan, ministers recognised that it is not the

responsibility of just one cabinet secretary to deliver on child poverty, so the plan takes a cross-Government approach. My ministerial colleagues have been looking at opportunities during this week and beyond to raise awareness of the reality of poverty in Scotland; to highlight what needs to be done and what is being done to tackle the issue; and to encourage debate and discussion about how to identify more solutions.

Our delivery plan is already making progress and having an impact in a number of areas. We have agreed a new national minimum level of £100 for school clothing grants, which started this academic year and which will benefit around 120,000 families this year. Those are choices that we are making in the here and now to mitigate and help families cope with their poverty.

In September, Social Security Scotland made its first payments of the carers allowance supplement, which puts an extra £442 in carers' pockets. Last month, Fair for You was the first lender to borrow from the £2.5 million affordable credit fund. The Scottish Government has invested £1 million in the fund, alongside investment from the Carnegie UK Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, to increase choices for people on low incomes and to provide genuine alternatives to high-cost credit providers.

**Neil Findlay:** I ask the cabinet secretary to answer a very direct question. Why is it that the policies on the baby box, the bus pass and tuition fees help people out of poverty but a £5-a-week increase in child benefit would not?

**Aileen Campbell:** During First Minister's question time, we heard that we want to target and direct the money and resource that we have in the best and most appropriate way to lift more children out of poverty. Although it is absolutely appropriate and right for people to take forward the give me five campaign and to raise the impact that the measure would have, our analysis shows that it would not lift as many children out of poverty as the income supplement that we are working on in the here and now, which will deliver more for children across the country.

**Neil Findlay:** How is it that those other policies that I mentioned help but an increase in child benefit would not?

**Aileen Campbell:** I have listed a whole host of policies, initiatives and other things that we are doing in the here and now to help families to cope with poverty that has been inflicted on them through the welfare reforms that have taken money out of their pockets. All those things contribute to ensuring the wellbeing of our country. It is important to recognise that we want to direct our funding to where it will have the most impact on families and children across the country. That

is the most appropriate way in which to use and target our funds.

We will continue to do what we are doing, but with one hand tied behind our back. It is appropriate to reiterate Sandra White's point that, if we want to radically transform the society that we live in, perhaps we have to think about what powers we need to have an impact and to transform lives and bring people out of poverty. Unless the Labour Party thinks about that, we will be stuck in a crisis of not being able to do things and implement policies without having to mitigate the impact of decisions that are taken elsewhere.

**Claudia Beamish:** Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

**Aileen Campbell:** I want to make a bit of progress, if that is okay.

We are taking forward other measures that target people who need help the most. We are working towards delivering the best start pregnancy and baby grant before Christmas, which is more than six months earlier than planned. The grant will provide low-income families with payments of £600 on the birth of their first child and £300 on the birth of any subsequent child. Further payments of £250 for each child will be introduced by summer 2019 at key transition points in their life.

Across the Government, we are taking forward work to maintain a focus on poverty. We have implemented the fairer Scotland duty, which asks all public bodies actively to consider how, in making decisions, they can reduce inequalities of outcomes that are caused by disadvantage.

Members commented on particular issues. I completely agree with Alison Johnstone, Stuart McMillan and Claire Baker that it is unacceptable that, in a country as prosperous as Scotland, people are struggling to put food on the table. Everyone has a right to food, and people should not be forced to turn to food banks. That is why we announced in the programme for government that we would increase funding for our fair food fund to provide a dignified response to food insecurity. Of that £3.5 million of funding, £2 million will be focused on supporting families during the school holidays.

We need radical action to achieve the ambitious targets that we set out in the 2017 act. That is why we intend to develop a new income supplement, which will provide additional financial support for people who are living in poverty. It will top up income sufficiently to lift those households out of poverty.

I have listed a suite of actions, policies and strategies to make an impact towards eradicating poverty, but we can and must do much more to

shift the curve on child poverty. That means ensuring that every member of the Government recognises their role. Tackling poverty does not mean work only by me or by Shirley-Anne Somerville; we must work across transport, the economy, work and employment to maximise the impact of those policies.

We work to tackle the social injustice of poverty with one hand tied behind our back, but we will continue to exert our influence and take action that is needed, while mitigating the worst impacts of welfare reform. Alexander Stewart acknowledged the appropriate and pertinent intervention from Neil Findlay, but the uncomfortable truth for the Conservatives is that such acknowledgement will not stop the trauma, the lack of food and the lack of dignity that people in Scotland face as a result of welfare reform. Acknowledging the problem will not put food on people's tables.

Challenge poverty week is important and will continue to be so until we solve this, which means stopping in-work poverty—when folk work hard but cannot get out of the bit—as well as removing the barriers that people with disability face to entering the workplace, closing the gender pay gap and being ambitious in our plans to introduce an income supplement.

By preventing poverty, we will end its horrifying impact, which is felt across our communities. I do not think that anybody in the Government or across the Parliament is content just to stick on a badge and take a pic or a selfie to mark this week. My position in the Government is a privilege and with it comes opportunity. This week gives the Government and the Parliament the opportunity to come together and understand that, until the change that we need happens across the country, we must drive our effort and our work every day, every week and every year. As Elaine Smith said, we must reimagine and create the good society in which everyone has their fair chance to flourish.

13:47

*Meeting suspended.*

14:30

*On resuming—*

## Health and Care Update

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani):** The next item of business is a statement by Jeane Freeman on a health and care update. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman):** This year, we are rightly celebrating 70 years of our national health service. Across this chamber, we have expressed our pride in our health and social care services and the remarkable commitment of our staff across the country. While there is indeed much to celebrate, it is also our responsibility to look ahead to see what must be done to make sure that the whole system is equipped for the future. Over the coming weeks, I will set out what I believe to be important milestones in the journey that we need to take.

Today, I am publishing our understanding of the overall financial climate in which we will be working, our expectation of future demand and the demand that that will place on future resourcing. Over the coming weeks, I will also provide an update on our NHS estate, setting the scene for a more detailed capital investment strategy that I intend to bring to Parliament before the end of this financial year and, as I set out to the Health and Sport Committee, I will bring to the chamber our plan to substantially and sustainably improve waiting times.

Those important strategic developments underline our commitment to transparency and accountability and are supported by the regular reporting of the financial position of NHS boards and integration authorities. All those elements combined will provide the clarity necessary for the important discussion that we need to have about the future shape of our NHS and social care services.

The Scottish Government's "Health and Social Care Delivery Plan" highlights the necessity of achieving long-term financial sustainability of our health and care system. The financial framework—the "Scottish Government Medium Term Health and Social Care Financial Framework"—directly supports the delivery plan and sets out in more detail the potential approach and the types of initiatives that are required to deliver a financially balanced and sustainable health and social care system.

It is important to view the health and social care system within the context of the overall Scottish Government budget, the greater fiscal

responsibilities of the Government and this Parliament, and the continued pressure of United Kingdom Government austerity. The financial framework is, therefore, firmly set within the context of the Scottish Government's first medium-term financial strategy, which was published in May this year.

Today's publication of the framework has required close and effective working with our partners across the whole sector, and I am grateful in particular for the support of colleagues at NHS boards, integration authorities and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, who have supported this publication. I am grateful, too, for the support of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, which has welcomed the financial framework and encouraged other areas of the UK to consider the principles underpinning that work.

The financial framework sets out the financial environment for the period to 2023-24. It follows the principles set out in the Scottish Government's medium-term financial strategy and reflects our current understanding of the UK Government's funding announcement in June for the NHS in England.

The implications of the UK Government's announcement are still far from clear. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work sought immediate clarification on the true level of the Barnett consequential that would come to Scotland as a result of the plans in England. Derek Mackay sought confirmation that the claimed levels of consequential would be a true net benefit to our budget. He also sought clarification on the implied income tax changes that had been suggested as a result of the UK Government's announcement. It is deeply disappointing that we still do not have the clarity that was sought from the UK Government on those issues, but the limited information that is available indicates that we will receive consequential amounting to £3.3 billion between now and 2023-24.

In finalising the financial framework, I have made the perhaps bold assumption that the UK Government will honour its commitment, deliver the consequential as a true net benefit and not reduce the Scottish Government's funding by cuts applied elsewhere or by other measures. I very much hope that that is a matter on which we can all agree.

I confirm that the Scottish Government remains committed to passing on health consequential in full. That is reflected in the financial framework.

Our commitments on health and care funding have delivered more than £13 billion in health funding this year, including more than £550 million of investment in social care and integration. Other

key investments that we are committed to delivering include £500 million for primary care by the end of this Parliament and £250 million additional investment in mental health services over the coming years.

However, increased funding alone will not be sufficient to meet the challenges that lie ahead. Our health and social care services are faced with clear challenges, not least those of demographic change, price pressures on areas such as medicines and rising demand and expectations. We require to address all those issues against a backdrop of the uncertainty caused by Brexit, its impact on our existing and potential workforce and the estimated economic damage to Scotland's gross domestic product of £12.7 billion by 2030.

If we follow the status quo, running costs would increase by £5.9 billion in 2023-24 compared with 2016-17. In order to meet the challenge, as a responsible Government, it is critical that our significant planned investment is twinned with reform to drive further improvements in our services to achieve better outcomes for patients.

The reforms include the development of regional working and better collaboration between the national health service boards to improve services, including improved regional approaches to the planning and delivery of services. That will help to drive change in how clinical networks are formed and help to reduce duplication in services and functions.

I recognise that it will take considerable effort for NHS boards to deliver the necessary reforms to achieve what has been outlined in the financial framework, so today I am offering NHS boards a new deal. In return for their efforts to deliver the reforms, I am facilitating a new three-year financial planning and performance framework for our NHS territorial boards. The change will require boards to deliver a break-even position over a three-year period, rather than annually as is the case currently. In each year, boards will have 1 per cent flexibility on their annual resource budget to allow them scope to marginally underspend or overspend in that year.

For the new deal to be successful, it needs a new start. In order to give all our territorial boards clear ground to move forward on the three-year planning cycle, I will not seek to recover their outstanding brokerage—that is, the expenditure that they have incurred over the past five years that has been above their budget.

I want all boards to be able to focus their attention on delivering the measures set out in the health and social care delivery plan and the financial framework in a safe and appropriate way, making sure that they maintain a strong focus on

patient care and the delivery of services that are safe, effective, person centred and timely.

In publishing the financial framework, I want to inform the mature, responsible discussion about the future of our health and social care services that I have referred to before in this chamber. I have been clear about my expectations of the UK Government's funding announcement and about how we intend to design, deliver and manage the right health and social care within our available resources. It is essential that the UK Government's commitment is delivered in full. Failure to do so will have a direct detrimental consequence on the financial position outlined in the financial framework.

I believe that we can work together to take the steps required to equip our health and social care services with the resources and the support that are required for the years and generations ahead. I commend this statement and the framework to Parliament.

**Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con):** I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of her statement. In her first statement as health secretary to Parliament on 12 September, she said that she would approach her job with "mature reflection". Twenty-two days later, I am sorry to say that this statement does not feel like that. Her Majesty's Treasury figures show that health spending in England has increased by 20 per cent since 2011 to 2016 but only by 14 per cent in Scotland over the same period. If it had increased at the same rate, NHS Scotland would have £676 million more to spend today. Why have Scottish National Party ministers short-changed our Scottish NHS at a time of record UK Government health funding?

The cabinet secretary also mentioned in her statement that she intends to provide an update on the NHS estate. Communities across Scotland that have seen services cut and centralised will be concerned that the statement could be the start of yet more SNP cuts and centralisation of our health services. What are the parameters for the NHS estate review and will Parliament have a chance to see them before it is announced?

**Jeane Freeman:** I am grateful to Mr Briggs for his questions, but I have to start by disagreeing with them. Health spending in Scotland is 7.1 per cent higher than in the UK as a whole. Let us be clear about the facts—this Government is not short-changing anyone. With regard to the estate, the only reason why people would be concerned is if, once more, the Conservatives in this chamber put out false accusations and claims that are then rebutted by us and serve to do nothing more than add to concern and upset among the constituents who Mr Briggs claims to represent. I am looking for a mature, reflective discussion and I hope that

the Conservative members show themselves able to rise to that challenge and get involved with us in planning our health service for the future.

**Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab):** I thank the cabinet secretary for early sight of her statement and also for the way in which she has engaged so far with us in the chamber as she settles into her new role.

We welcome the financial framework and the extra time that it gives boards to plan their future services. Previously, in responses to freedom of information requests, health boards have told us that they expect to make more than £1 billion savings over this parliamentary session. How does this medium-term financial framework impact on those figures and what level of cuts will health boards be expected to make over the next three years? The cabinet secretary will also recognise that local government budgets impact on social care services, so will she set out what the framework means for integrated joint board budgets and any savings that they have to make?

The statement confirms that all brokerage over the past five years is to be written off. We must recognise that the financial mismanagement by boards happened under this Government. Can the cabinet secretary say how much that will cost and whether she has confidence in health boards' future financial management?

We welcome some honesty at last from the Government on its plans for service reform. Will the cabinet secretary commit to setting out her plans to the chamber in a future debate and will she ensure full public consultation?

**Jeane Freeman:** I am grateful to Mr Sarwar for his questions. I am clear that the savings that boards are required to make will be retained by them to allocate to other areas of spend. That has always been the case; they are not cuts but savings, which we ask boards to make in order that they can use the resource in other areas of their spend. The money does not come back to me or to the Scottish Government; it stays with the boards to use to improve their services.

With regard to IJB budgets, clearly the financial framework is for the service as a whole. Through the money from local government and, most importantly, the money from this Government's health spend, we have contributed significantly to the IJBs and their work. The IJBs have a degree of flexibility already because they are part of the local government accounting system; I seek to provide the same degree of flexibility in the three-year planning cycle as IJBs have, and I am grateful to Mr Sarwar for welcoming that.

Mr Sarwar also raised an important point about financial management. All our boards are required to demonstrate, not just in their publicly available

reports, but through regular contact between their finance officers and my officials, that they are managing their budgets prudently and seeking value for money. There are pressures on boards—and indeed on the overall health budget—over which we have little control, such as from inflation in drug prices. We have also made positive decisions on pay awards, which will be another pressure.

Nonetheless, boards have to manage their financial resources with some care. I assure Mr Sarwar that, where boards have previously shown themselves to be unable to do so or in need of additional skills or improvement, my finance officials are actively engaged with them. They will continue to engage with those boards and regularly report on and monitor their work, so that we ensure that all our boards meet the standard of our best boards, which is what we expect of them when they use public funds to deliver quality health and social care.

**Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP):** The financial framework is clearly predicated on the UK Government actually delivering the Barnett consequential that it boasted about earlier this year. What will be the consequences for the framework if the UK Government's budget later this month does not deliver on its promises?

**Jeane Freeman:** I am grateful to Ms Maguire for that question. As I said, the financial framework assumes the full net benefit of those consequential; in other words, it assumes that there is no detrimental effect on the Scottish budget from other areas, including from any tax changes that the UK Government may want to introduce.

I advise members to turn to the section on almost the last page of the framework document in which we describe our anticipation of demand and expenditure in health and social care and what we expect to achieve through reform—and then imagine the effect of taking away £3.3 billion. That would be the detrimental impact from our not receiving the consequential, either in full or in part. It would destabilise the financial framework and require us to look at it again. More than that, it would be, in effect, a broken promise. That would be significant for how we work with the UK Government, as it repeatedly says it wants us to do.

Presiding Officer, may I pick up on Anas Sarwar's question about service reform? I apologise that I did not take the opportunity to do so at the time, but there are two things that I want to say. First, our health and social care delivery plan outlines what we need to do on service reform. Secondly, I am happy to speak to individual members or party spokespeople about not only individual reforms, board by board, as

they come forward, but the wider reforms that we have already set out for primary care, GP working, our increase in the workforce and any other matter that might be of interest to them.

**Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** I have to say that I was hoping that a change of cabinet secretary might bring a change of approach, but I am reminded of the words of Roger Daltrey:

“Meet the new boss—same as the old boss.”

Given the reported struggles of NHS Ayrshire and Arran—the health board for the cabinet secretary’s constituency—to meet its existing and future financial obligations, what impact does she anticipate that the new proposals will have on the delivery of a number of procedures, including cancer treatment and cataract surgery, that are already matters of concern in our area?

**Jeane Freeman:** We probably all agree—well, we might not all agree, but many of us do—that it was not actually Roger Daltrey who said that. That aside, I am sure that the shadow cabinet secretary for health and sport and I will work together very well over the weeks ahead.

On waiting times, we need to understand that we are setting out the medium-term financial framework. It sets out our understanding of the financial pressures against demand and against what we know we need to do, assuming full net consequentials from the UK Government, and what the position will look like as we go forward. Members who have had the opportunity to look will see that, even with the reforms, there is still a financial challenge. We need to work together to address that now, and I live in hope of that mature conversation.

As I am sure Mr Whittle heard me say, I will come to Parliament with a plan for improved—sustainable improvement—on waiting times, including for the procedures that he mentioned. The resourcing that I will outline then and commit to is taken account of in the framework.

**David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** Although I welcome many of the initiatives in the statement, such as waiving brokerage, I want to ask the cabinet secretary about the key underlying trends that have caused financial instability in many boards, such as NHS Highland. The cabinet secretary will know that the Auditor General made it clear that brokerage for NHS Highland was likely to be needed for the next three years. The areas of financial concern are well known to the cabinet secretary: adult social care; the drug overspend; and the cost of hiring medical locums.

What comfort can the cabinet secretary give to patients and staff of NHS Highland that the next three years will not just be more of the same? Is

she saying, as Bob Dylan said, that the times they are a-changing?

**Jeane Freeman:** I am not going to get into a competition of quoting songs, although I am pleased to note that both members went for songs from my era, which is a comfort to me.

Mr Stewart makes an important point that links to what Mr Sarwar asked me. I appreciate the fact that members have welcomed the fact that we are, in effect, clearing the slate and introducing the three-year planning cycle, which gives flexibility within those three years. However, at the end of three years, the territorial boards have to break even. We cannot continue with a situation in which boards have significant overspends on their budgets, albeit that those spends were made on patient care.

We are looking at how we deploy our resources to boards and how we expect boards to deploy their resources. Part of the reforms are about how we can ensure that the resources that we have, within all the caveats that I have outlined, are adequately targeted at patient care, meeting the waiting-times targets and so on. They are also about how we value our workforce, increase recruitment and meet the pay pressures that I have talked about.

Not every board is looking for brokerage. Indeed, the number that set out looking for brokerage at the start of the year is coming down, and if we look at previous years, we can see that that is what happens. However, we have a small number of boards where brokerage is expected at the end of the year, and I am saying that I will not seek repayment of that.

I want the lessons learned from boards in which financial management and quality of patient care are being finely balanced but are being managed to be transferred to colleague boards, and my officials will help them to do that. That is actively happening right now.

I completely accept that there are additional pressures in some boards, such as Highland, because of their geography and the demands that are placed on them. However, some of the initiatives that we have introduced on rural working and general practitioner recruitment in rural areas will help to address some of the new or different challenges for our territorial boards.

**Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** I welcome the move to a three-year financial planning cycle and the fact that the Government is not seeking to recover outstanding brokerage.

The ability of NHS boards to forecast demand, to meet it, and to deploy their resources most effectively hinges on them having access to the best data and the highest-quality information.



What is the Scottish Government doing to offer boards support in that regard?

**Jeane Freeman:** I thank Ms Johnstone for that important question. She is right that part of the key to all this is the ability to forecast demand. One of the areas in which we have the highest-quality information that goes down to a significant level is our integration authorities and integration joint boards.

We have not been triangulating to the degree that is required all the information and data that we have, so that we can adequately forecast demand in different areas. We are beginning work on that to ensure that the data that comes to the Government and the data that the integration authorities hold is not only shared as widely as it should be but triangulated. That will mean that we will get more than a one-dimensional picture of the demand on health and social care services in the decades ahead.

**Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD):** I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of her statement.

Three years ago, the Scottish Government said that it would eradicate delayed discharge, which is one of the biggest financial drains on our health service's resources. This week, the level of delayed discharge got worse. Will the proposals that were outlined in the statement end delayed discharge?

**Jeane Freeman:** We have provided the financial framework, which includes our current estimate of the financial circumstances that our health service will face and the demand that will be placed on it in the years ahead. The framework does not—nor should it—have specific initiatives within it. The waiting times plan, which I will introduce to Parliament in the coming weeks, will look at improvement and sustainability in our work on waiting times. That links to delayed discharge, as Mr Cole-Hamilton well knows. The plan will consider what further improvements can be made on delayed discharge.

I draw Alex Cole-Hamilton's attention to the successful work of the Aberdeen integration joint board, which brought down—by significant percentage points—the levels of not only delayed discharge but unscheduled bed days in hospitals. Through learning from the work in those areas, we will scale up, and transfer across, the work in all our integration authorities. That is what I mean when I talk about increasing the pace and effectiveness of their work.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I do not think that I will be able to call every member who wants to ask a question.

**Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP):** The health secretary made the welcome announcement of a new deal for health boards, which will give them greater flexibility between annual budgets. What flexibility do integration authorities have to plan beyond annual budgets?

**Jeane Freeman:** In accounting terms, integration authorities are part of local government, so they have a degree of flexibility and the capacity to hold reserves. I am trying to ensure that that degree of flexibility and capacity to plan within a reasonable timeframe is something from which our NHS boards can benefit, too.

**Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con):** The cabinet secretary stated that the brokerage to health boards will be written off. When will that happen? Will it be in the Scottish Government's budget this year, along with an estimate of how much debt will be written off?

**Jeane Freeman:** I will start with the last part of that question. Our current estimate of the cost of brokerage for the past five years—this does not relate to the current year alone—is around £150 million. All territorial boards will start with a clean slate from 2019-20, when we will begin the three-year planning cycle that will involve all the work that I have described.

In the meantime, boards will continue to work to reduce their anticipated level of brokerage. That level is reducing significantly in many boards as they refine and finalise their reform and service delivery plans. As I said, all boards will start with the new deal from the financial year 2019-20.

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** The cabinet secretary's statement mentioned Brexit, which will have an impact on the economy. There could be less money in taxes, which would put pressure on the NHS, and a shortage of skilled and unskilled staff. Does the UK Government understand those potential extra pressures on our NHS?

**Jeane Freeman:** I do not have insight into the minds of UK Government ministers but, by their actions, it appears that they do not understand—or if they do, they are not taking sufficiently seriously—the impact of Brexit on our health service not only in Scotland but in England, Wales and, indeed, Northern Ireland. All of us benefit significantly from European Union nationals being valued, skilled and experienced members of our workforce. We also all benefit from our workforce being able to work in EU countries. We benefit from the mutual recognition of qualifications. We benefit from being part of—and, in Scotland's case, leading members of—international research collaboratives that themselves produce significant input to our economy.

There is a great deal that is at risk. That is troubling and worrying. We need to repeat that. I look to colleagues in this chamber—not least those on my left—to assist us on this issue. We need clarity from the UK Government, and it must demonstrate that, if it understands the issue, it will act to do something about it.

**Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I welcome the financial framework and congratulate the cabinet secretary on it. It has been recommended for some time now and has been long awaited. The Conservative front-bench members have misjudged the advance that has been made today, because the framework allows us to make the shift to the care that we need.

I would like to ask for a clarification. The cabinet secretary said that she will write off all outstanding brokerage. She knows that NHS Tayside has a projected deficit of £18.7 million for this financial year. Will she write that off as well, so that we can start with a clean sheet to make that shift of care that we need?

**Jeane Freeman:** I am grateful to Jenny Marra for that question and for her recognition of the importance of the financial framework—I believe that that recognition is shared by all colleagues on the Labour benches, who accept what it actually is rather than what it is not.

The member asks an important question, and I direct her to what I said earlier about the fact that all health boards will start with a clean slate from the financial year 2019-20. That will be the case. No brokerage will be recovered, where that additional spend has been on patient care, from the end of this year. We move forward from 2019-20 to that three-year cycle and that clean slate.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** My apologies to Rona Mackay, who was unable to ask her question. We have eaten into time for the next debate, but we still did not manage to get through all the questions.

## Women and Girls in Sport Week

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-14194, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on women and girls in sport week.

15:03

**The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick):** I want to acknowledge the great and many successes that we have seen at the highest level in women's sport this year, including the success of the Scottish national women's football team in getting to the world cup 2019 finals, the success of athletes including Laura Muir and Eilish McColgan at the European championships, and the many fantastic performances by female athletes at the Gold Coast Commonwealth games. Those are all defining moments for women and girls in sport across the country. I thank all those fantastic role models.

I am absolutely clear about the benefits of sport and physical activity. My ministerial portfolio—public health, sport and wellbeing—signifies a deliberate, clear and connected approach that exploits the benefits of physical activity and sport to improve the health of the people of Scotland. I am more convinced than ever of that, as I have seen at first hand the powerful force that sport and physical activity can be in transforming people and communities. We want to create a culture in which healthy behaviours are the norm throughout people's lives. Only by doing that can we achieve the Scottish Government's vision of a Scotland in which more people are more active, more often.

Sport has an important role to play. As members are well aware, we in Scotland have developed a world-class sporting system at all levels that connects sport in schools and education, club and community sport, and performance sport. Through our investment in facilities, we are providing participation opportunities for people and communities across Scotland. Since 2007, sportscotland has invested £168 million in supporting local clubs, local authorities, sports' governing bodies and other organisations to deliver a wide range of new and upgraded sports facilities.

This is all about behaviour change. To ensure that children from all backgrounds benefit from access to sport and physical activity, the Government has invested £11.6 million in supporting schools to meet our commitment to providing two hours or two periods of physical education a week. The number of schools achieving that went up from 10 per cent in 2004-05 to 98 per cent in 2016, which is a success.

That activity is backed by investment of up to £50 million in active schools between 2015 and 2019. Figures on uptake under that programme that were published in September showed that 7.3 million participant sessions were delivered in 2017-18, which is an increase of 6 per cent on the previous year. Of the female school roll, 44 per cent participated in active schools in 2017-18, which is a 2 per cent increase on the previous year. Those 147,655 females made up 48 per cent of the distinct participants in active schools in 2017-18, which represents an increase of 7,604 on the previous year.

Although that 48 per cent is not the 52 per cent that it probably should be—more young men than young women take part in active schools—the trend reverses in leadership opportunities. More young women than young men take part in sportscotland supported leadership opportunities, as we see in the applications for and membership of sportscotland's young people's sport panel. Such leadership opportunities help to build strong role models and inspire other girls and young women.

In our 192 community sport hubs across the country, there are nearly 56,000 female playing members, and 27 per cent of coaches are female—which relates to a point that Alison Johnstone raised in her amendment, which was not selected for debate. Progress is being made, but we have a distance to go. In the hubs, which are embedded in our communities, more than 55,000 women and girls are members. The community sport hub programme is made possible only by an army of more than 19,000 volunteers who deliver sport and physical activity opportunities in their communities.

The Government accepts that we have work to do, and we are committed to doing more to encourage women and girls to participate in sport. The number of women and girls who take part in a wide variety of sports and physical activities has increased in recent years. That includes significant progress in participation in recreational walking, netball, hockey, cycling, basketball, rugby and shinty. Physical activity levels among teenage girls are also increasing, although we acknowledge that there is still much to do to increase participation, to raise awareness across the sector and to remove the barriers that some still face to getting involved in sport and physical activity.

In recognising the challenge, the Scottish Government established the women and girls in sport advisory board to help us to understand what more we could do to increase opportunities for every woman and girl, and to raise awareness across the media and business sectors. The board's work has included helping to develop women and girls in sport week 2018, of which this

debate is part. The week provides the opportunity to promote and celebrate women and girls in sport. My ministerial colleagues and I are undertaking a range of activities across the country to raise the week's profile and to encourage more women and girls to take part in sport, to try new sports and to build more regular physical activity into their everyday lives.

There is a huge range of activities. Already this week, I have been able to join women from Edinburgh in playing tennis; on Friday, I will be joining some women to play football; and on Friday night, I will be attending Dundee ice arena to see women and girls who are taking part in ice skating there. It is a really important part of the week. Maybe next year, we need to widen it out so that more members from across the chamber can take part.

As part of this week, I was pleased to be able to announce a £300,000 national fund to support projects to encourage female participation. Funding awards will range from £10,000 to £30,000. That will build on the 2017 sporting equality fund that was awarded to such projects as wheelchair basketball in Glasgow, netball across Scotland and bikepacking adventures in the Highlands. The continuation of funding for such projects will help to encourage inactive people to take up physical activity.

I think that everyone will agree that there is a lot of really good work going on across Scotland. As I have gone round the country in the nearly four months since I became sports minister, I have been pleased to see that the understanding of the importance of physical activity and sport to people's physical and mental health is embedded right across our sporting community at every level.

One of the first sporting events that I was honoured to be able to attend as sports minister was the European championships. The great thing for me as the new sports minister was that I was able to engage with and meet lots of people, some at the highest level of European sport. Every single one of our fantastic governing bodies in Scotland understands the importance of getting people involved at the grass-roots level for the success of their sports in the future. On every occasion, they have understood the importance of getting women and girls involved in sport as part of that.

I have attended a large number of community sport hubs, where I have seen traditional male sports clubs that have grasped the thistle and accepted that they need to do more to encourage women into their sport and into their clubs—for example, by extending the range of sports on offer. I have seen football clubs go outwith their comfort zones to encompass, for example, women's boxing, which in some areas has been

really successful in encouraging women and girls who are otherwise disconnected from the normal sporting environment into sport. They have found it really exciting. They do not always take part in the competitive element, but I do not think that that matters. If women and girls join clubs to do the training, that is what is most important. Some of them may go on to be part of competitive sport, but that is not, in my view, the primary objective. If we can encourage more people at all levels, particularly women and girls over this week, to engage in sport, we will naturally find more people moving through into the higher levels of sport—from recreational sport to club sport, and so on.

**Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** I was formerly a voluntary netball coach and umpire. I found that one of the biggest barriers for the girls in the club—it was an all-female club—was transport. The minister said that not all women need to go into competitive sport, but ultimately that is what happens if the woman is good at the sport. In my example, some of the girls could not get transport to get to events, so the school had to fund a bus, we had to take a small fee for the club, and we had to get somebody who could drive the bus. Often, the teacher was not available to drive the bus and we were not qualified to drive it, so we found that we sometimes had to turn down opportunities to develop a competitive edge because of our transport issues.

**Joe FitzPatrick:** Rachael Hamilton has made an important point. If there are barriers to participation, whether for women and girls or people from deprived areas, we need to understand what those barriers are and try to break them down, because it is so important that we get folk involved in sport.

Netball is one of the sports in which there has been a real uplift. The work that sportscotland has been leading on has prompted that uplift in participation, so that is one sport in which we have a really good success story. If there are barriers that prevent people—women and girls in particular—from taking part in sport, we need to understand what they are and see whether we can find ways around them. We will do that only in partnership with our partners—sportscotland, local authorities and schools. As I said, we need to understand what the barriers are so that we can take things forward. Rachael Hamilton made a good point.

This is an important year, and it has been a positive year for women's sport. I look forward to a huge year for women in sport in 2019, with major events taking place to inspire the nation. Scotland will be hosting the European under-19s football championship and the prestigious Solheim cup at Gleneagles, and we can look forward to roaring on

our women's football team as they head over to France for the FIFA world cup.

In moving the motion in my name, I confirm that I will support the amendments from Brian Whittle and Anas Sarwar. We would also have supported the amendment in the name of Alison Johnstone, which made important points on a matter that sportscotland has identified and is trying to address.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that increased participation in sport and physical health improves health and wellbeing, leads to improved self-esteem and, at the elite level, brings international success; recognises that, although physical activity levels among women and girls are increasing, everyone must work together to remove the barriers that some still face when it comes to getting involved in sport and physical activity; recognises the positive work that Active Schools is taking in increasing the participation of girls, and welcomes the work of the Women and Girls in Sport Advisory Board and the continued commitment to a dedicated Scottish Women and Girls in Sport Week.

15:16

**Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** I am delighted to have this opportunity to open this girls and women in sport debate on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives. We will support the Scottish Government motion, of course, because it contains laudable aims. We will also support the Labour amendment.

I was thinking about how to address how women's sport has developed over the years, and the name of Maricica Puică came into my mind—as I am sure it came into everyone else's. I will be more than impressed if some members know who I was talking about. If I mentioned Zola Budd and Mary Decker Slaney, more members would probably recognise the race that I am talking about. In that race, as the two of them clashed, Maricica Puică won the Olympic 3,000m title.

Why do I mention that? In the 1984 Olympic games, the 3,000m was the longest race in which women were allowed to participate on the track. That is not so long ago. They did not have the 5,000m, the 10,000m, the 20km walk or the 50km walk. They did not have the pole vault, the triple jump or the hammer. On where we are now, we nearly have parity in the Olympic games. The only event that is still missing is the 50km walk. I should also mention that Wendy Sly won the silver in that 3,000m race. She is a good friend of mine.

For me, it is interesting that in Scottish athletics terms—I will unashamedly talk about athletics—the women dominate. Laura Muir and Eilish McColgan have already been mentioned by the minister, but we also have to talk about Eilidh Doyle, who I think has now reached a record 18 major medals this year. There is also young Zoey

Clark, who I have mentioned before, coming in behind Eilidh Doyle. Long may that continue.

I was at the national training squad day a couple of weeks ago, and there are a number of young athletes coming up behind them. Alison Johnstone and I had a conversation about this. One thing that struck me at that event was the small number of women coaches. At a national squad day, with all the athletes, I counted a grand total of one female coach. That is something of which we must take cognisance. If we are to consider how we might break down the barriers to bringing more girls and women into sport, we have to think about the coaches who will lead them in.

The minister and I attended a function on Tuesday. We listened to some young women talking about their experiences of how they got into sport. What kept coming back to me was that schoolteachers, parents and coaches are the people who influence our athletes. We need to start to consider parity not just in women taking part in sport, but in women being involved in coaching. That might help to break down barriers.

Something else that came out of that event was the continued talk about school. School is the place where many children get their first experiences of sport. I have long advocated that we should take sport and physical activity to our children, rather than waiting for them to come to sport. We have that opportunity in schools. School is an important environment, so we must enhance that.

We have to consider how we link school sport to extra-curricular activity and community activities. When I consider the school PE curriculum, I do not see the point of doing a six-week introductory course to a sport if there is no destination for that sport outside the school. If we are going to enthuse a child to participate in sport, we have to give them a destination. I would like to see, in the physical education programme, greater flexibility that takes cognisance of what is available around the school in order to further physical development and education.

**Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** Some extra-curricular sports programmes can become quite competitive and children who enjoy the sport but do not excel at it can feel excluded. Does Brian Whittle agree that sports should be for all and not just for those who excel at them?

**Brian Whittle:** That leads nicely on to my next point about how we create the pathways and destinations in sport. When we consider sport, we often think of the destination as being the very top end: when we come in at the bottom, we think that we are heading for international sport. However, there are many stops on that journey. As Gillian

Martin has suggested, sport is fun and is for enjoyment.

We need to consider what we are doing in the nursery programme with active play, because that is where we should be starting. We now have a programme to provide 30 hours of free nursery care, which is ostensibly there to help parents to get back to work, but those are 30 hours that we could use.

**The Minister for Children and Young People (Maree Todd):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Brian Whittle:** I will always take an intervention from Maree Todd.

**Maree Todd:** I must correct Mr Whittle. The purpose of the expansion in early years in childcare is about improving the attainment gap and closing it before it occurs and is apparent in school. Mr Whittle is right that 30 hours is an incredible opportunity to define a different kind of learning, including outdoor learning. I passionately hope that naturally child-led and play-based learning will give children many physical skills and will be part of the new core offering.

**Brian Whittle:** Suitably chastised, I come back to my feet. The minister and I agree that early years provision is an opportunity for development, active play and physical literacy so that when children go on to primary school they develop in games and play, and in secondary school, they have the option to take physical literacy into sports.

There are many examples of sports in which participation does not mean competition. I have talked many times about Sam Mullen at Doon Valley Boxing Club, who has revolutionised the way in which the club is seen. The majority of the kids at that boxing club are not competitive, but go along just to enjoy themselves.

I will go straight to the end of my speech. In support of the Labour amendment, I quote Anna Kessel:

“The schools with kids facing the biggest academic hurdles are often the those facing the biggest cuts to their PE programme. And those are often the kids for whom extracurricular sports clubs are not an option, so when it comes to physical education school is their lifeline. Little wonder, then, that privately educated athletes are overrepresented in the Team GB medal tally, with one third of Britain’s Medallist at Rio 2016 having attended fee-paying schools.”

We will, of course, support the Scottish Government motion’s recognition of the development of women’s sport over the years and we will continue to celebrate those achievements. In doing so, we must also recognise that, in many cases, women and girls have fewer opportunities than their male counterparts, and that that

inequality of opportunity exists in many groups in our society. Our aim should be to have equality of opportunity regardless of background or personal circumstances.

I move amendment S5M-14194.1, to insert at end:

“; recognises the inequality of access to sport and physical activity across demographics, which is especially significant to women and girls’ participation, and considers that the goal must be equal access for all irrespective of background or personal circumstances.”

15:25

**Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab):** This is an important debate, and I welcome the content and the tone of the Scottish Government’s motion. The debate is important not because of what we say in here, but because of the need to involve more women and girls in sport and physical activity.

The reality is that we are talking about a long-standing issue that is a tough nut to crack: it has been an issue for not just the present Government but previous Administrations. There is still a huge disparity between the participation levels of women and girls and those of men and boys. Although there are close similarities in participation rates in the early years, sadly, those rates move apart significantly over a short period from around the age of 11 or 12. From that age onwards, the gap is intolerably large. Between the 11 to 12 age group and the 13 to 15 age group, the level of participation drops by a third among girls but by only 1 per cent among boys. In the 13 to 15 age group, the number of girls who meet the recommended physical activity guidelines is half the number of boys who do so. In the 16 to 24 age range, nine out of 10 men meet the guidelines, whereas only six out of 10 women do so. Even in the oldest age range, a third of men meet the guidelines, whereas only one in five women does.

This afternoon’s debate is important because of the need to address that participation gap. That is also partly why a dedicated women and girls in sport week is important. The benefits of participating in sport and physical activity are well documented and well recognised. They range from the obvious physical health benefits and the role that physical activity plays in tackling weight-related health problems, such as obesity, to the role that physical activity plays in promoting mental wellbeing. I am told that it also helps people to sleep better and improves their mood, so I can tell that many members, including me, do not get enough exercise.

There are many benefits to being active, and there should continue to be a focus on early years activity. If a child is inactive, it is much more likely that that child will grow into an inactive adult. If we expose children to enjoyable sport or physical

activity at a young age, it is much more likely that they will continue those activities into and throughout adulthood. A child who is involved in a club while still at school is much more likely to be a club member after leaving school. That is why I welcome the Scottish Government’s continued support for the active schools programme, which was started by Labour almost 15 years ago. As well as supporting pupils to enjoy a huge range of activities, it has helped thousands of young people to get involved in volunteering in sport.

Although there has been a small shift in participation rates in recent years, it is clear that there is still a long way to go. Labour’s amendment recognises the success, but I say gently to the minister—this is not a party-political point, as it applies to all political parties and to previous Governments as well as the present one—that progress has been very limited. It concerns me that we are still not making sufficient progress quickly enough in this area.

**Brian Whittle:** I did not say this in my speech, but we will support the Labour amendment.

The health budget is £13 billion, whereas the sport budget is £29 million. We have not made sufficient progress because we do not have the finances to upscale some of the good work that is being done.

**Anas Sarwar:** Brian Whittle makes a fair point. I would also make the point that it is the national health service, not the national ill health service. We want the national health service to promote people’s health and wellbeing so that we save money in the longer term and allow people to live longer, healthier, happier and more active lives.

Our amendment recognises the link between poverty levels and levels of physical activity. Participation rates among women in the least deprived areas are 50 per cent higher than they are among those in the most deprived areas. That is a staggering difference. Participation in sport can come with a hefty price tag, whether for clothing, equipment or even venue hire—not every family can afford to pay the £40 or £50 that it costs to hire a five-a-side football pitch on a weekday evening. That is why we have to look at how we can make access to sport affordable or free.

Not only are we seeing lower levels of women and girls participating overall, but we are seeing those levels depressing even further due to the impact of poverty. It is partly for that reason that I hope that the Government will, as the minister indicated, support our amendment. Recognising that poverty is a key determining factor in levels of physical activity is crucial to addressing the issues in the future, particularly through the provision of free and affordable sport, but also by offering a diverse range of sports for women and girls to get

active in. The fastest-growing sport in Scotland is women's football. If we encourage more diverse sports, we can tell every woman and girl that no sport is inaccessible to them.

We should also look at what we do with the consequential from the United Kingdom-wide sugar tax. That money should be going into access to and provision of free sport, but perhaps that is a debate for another day.

The final reason why I am pleased that the Government will support our amendment is the recognition of the part that role models can play in encouraging and inspiring others. In women's football we have the fantastic success of the Scottish women's football team in reaching the world cup finals in France next year. Alex McLeish was here last week for a Show Racism the Red Card photo call, and he was quick to highlight the success of the women's team and to pray that we have the same success for the men's team. I warmly welcome the First Minister's announcement of support for the women's team in its preparations for the tournament. I also overheard the Scotland manager asking the First Minister for a similar commitment if the men's team qualify for the world cup too, and I am sure that everyone wishes them well—both the women's team and the men's team—in those efforts.

There is good work going on across Scotland—in schools, communities and clubs—to help reduce the gender pay gap. I apologise, Presiding Officer. I meant to say the gender gap. I am so used to talking about the gender pay gap, which is also an extremely serious issue, but that is probably a debate for another day, and one that is perhaps connected.

We should recognise the huge role played by the third sector in our communities. I am concerned that, despite those good efforts, the gap remains stubbornly wide. Perhaps when the minister gets the opportunity today, she can set out what more the Scottish Government thinks can be done and how we can measure the impact in the future, so that in 10 years' time we are not still talking about a stubborn gender gap or about a women and girls in sport week, but are instead talking about having successfully closed the gap and the fact that women and girls of all ages and backgrounds are enjoying the many benefits that sport and physical activity have to offer.

In closing, I want to say that, in any endeavour that the Government makes in this regard, it will have our full support.

I move amendment S5M-14194.2, to insert at end:

“; notes the continued disparity in participation rates between boys and girls, as outlined in the most recent

Scottish Health Survey, as well as the ongoing link between deprivation and low participation rates, and raises concern regarding the Scottish Government's limited success in making progress on this issue; recognises the importance of having inspirational role models that are representative of all backgrounds to encourage more people to get involved in sport; congratulates the Scotland women's national football team on qualifying for the World Cup finals in 2019, and warmly welcomes the Scottish Government's support for the team as it prepares for the tournament.”

15:32

**Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** I draw attention to my entry in the register of members' interests. I am pleased to be taking part in this afternoon's debate on a subject that needs greater focus. I welcome women and girls in sport week and I thank the organisations that have provided briefings. I thank sportscotland and I would also like to thank the Edinburgh Mavericks korfball club. Korfball is a sport where the team is made up of four men and four women, and three female players from Edinburgh will be competing in the European korfball championships in the Netherlands from 12 to 21 October.

It is absolutely right that we recognise and celebrate the work that is being undertaken to properly understand what the gap in participation in sport is, why that gap exists, and what action is being taken to close the gap. Why do some young women turn away from competitive sport? Why do some young women never get involved in the first place? Of course, as Anas Sarwar has said, boys drop out too, but far more of them do not. What are the implications of that gendered non-participation? I am pleased that we are discussing the issue and I think that we have much more to learn and understand.

According to research by Women in Sport, published in its statistics report for 2017, coverage of women's sport makes up 7 per cent of all sports media in the UK. Just over 10 per cent of televised sports coverage is dedicated to women's sport, just 2 per cent of national newspaper sports coverage is dedicated to women's sport, 5 per cent of radio sports coverage is dedicated to women's sport, and 4 per cent of online sports coverage is dedicated to women's sport. I actually think that it is pretty incredible that the gap is not much wider; we are hearing literally nothing, to judge from those statistics. We should also note that some of the spaces where sport takes place are very masculinised indeed.

We know that physical inactivity is one of the leading risk factors of death globally. Professor Nanette Mutrie, in evidence to the Health and Sport Committee, said that the evidence for the benefits of being active is solid and cannot be ignored, and that physical inactivity is more harmful than smoking.

The Parliament has shown that it can be really bold when it acts to improve public health, and I am very proud of the action that the Parliament took to prevent smoking in public places. The evidence was clear that smoking was a leading cause of disease and premature death, and Parliament acted. We need to get bold when it comes to physical inactivity. I appreciate that the issue of physical inactivity is broader than the issue of the low rates of women and girls taking part in sport, but they are closely related. I was pleased to learn, via the Scottish household survey, that people have become more active. However, we know that participation is greater among those who are more highly qualified, and that participation is lowest in the most deprived areas.

Last week, I was privileged to host the wonderful Paths for All Partnership awards in Parliament. It was a truly memorable evening—the minister enjoyed it, too—and it demonstrated that the benefits of walking go way beyond physical health. I cannot commend walking enough. As the minister said, it does not all have to be about competition, but if he wants to take up the step count challenge, I remind him that it begins on 29 October—we will see how we get on.

Walking does really well in terms of gender equality, with 69 per cent of men and 71 per cent of women taking part in recreational walking—well, it is recreational now, but it will soon become very competitive. We know that if we take walking out of the equation, just over half of adults take part in physical activity, and we see that—as Anas Sarwar mentioned—far more men than women participate in sporting activities. The impact of habit and beginning early in life cannot be overstated.

Dr Morgan Windram-Geddes—who has spoken to the cross-party group on children and young people in the Parliament—pointed out in her PhD thesis on “Everyday geographies of girls’ experiences of physical activity, gender, health and bodies” that:

“policy is concerned with children’s bodies in respect to weight, fat and obesity, and to what children can and should do to decrease their body weights to satisfy health policy.”

She comes to the conclusion that the way to improve girls’ participation in sport is to get away from the obsession with weight and begin to focus more on enjoyment. She writes:

“Girls’ experiences are multiple and diverse. An activity which one girl enjoyed was loathed by another girl. Having to wear white t-shirts and black shorts for PE kit was hated by one girl but not given another thought by a different girl. Doing PE with the boys was reflected on positively by some girls and met with fear and anxiety by others.”

Girls and women face particular barriers and challenges in engaging with sport. The obsession with women’s bodies, their fitness or otherwise and the need to appear on the beach in a bikini has become regarded as completely normal. I do not see many magazines selling themselves with pictures on the cover of men in or out of their bathing shorts before or after an exercise programme. We have to change the focus, and play has an essential role.

The cost of access to sports centres has been mentioned. There should absolutely be a cost beyond which we cannot go at a national level, as the cost of access to some sport centres in this city is quite frankly prohibitive.

We have seen some really good work in specific sports. I have been involved in athletics all my life, and I think that we are a particularly good brand with a very strong story to sell. Other sports are beginning to catch up, but I would like us to come back to the chamber next year and seek to ensure that the gap has closed markedly. There is still much more to do, and I look forward to working with colleagues to achieve our aims.

15:39

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** There are many high points of being Orkney’s MSP but, as a sporting fanatic, being asked to co-host Orkney’s sportsperson of the year awards over the past couple of years has been right up there. BBC Radio Orkney’s Robbie Fraser does a good Des Lynam to my poor man’s Gary Lineker, and we have bagged the gig again for next year, which proves that we must be doing something right—or perhaps just being cheap is the clincher.

At the most recent awards, I was delighted, but not at all surprised, when the shortlist for the top individual award was made up of three of Orkney’s highly impressive young female athletes: Hannah Beaven, who is already a Scottish powerlifting champion and earlier this summer announced herself as a British record holder in the 47kg class; Sarah MacPhail, who has stormed her way through various development pathways in netball to the point at which she will captain Scotland’s under-21 team at the Netball Europe competition in Belfast this weekend, and hopefully stake a further claim to be in the full Scotland squad for the netball world cup next year; and the eventual winner, Anna Tait, whose victory was sealed on the back of a season that saw her smash records on the track at the international island games in Gotland, compete for Scotland at 1,500m and perform well in Great Britain trials. All three—Hannah, Sarah and Anna—share the same commitment, tenacity and determination to make the very most of their talents.



They are no flash in the pan. Anna Tait's predecessor as Orkney's sportsperson of the year is Rachael Sutherland, who has captained Scotland to success at the European pool championships and was recently selected in Scotland's A squad for the world finals next month. Those are young women operating at or near the top of their respective sports. I appreciate that the focus of women and girls in sport week may be more about encouraging and supporting participation at a grass-roots level, and unlocking the benefits that we have heard about that come from playing sport and being physically active. There are health benefits, both physical and, as Anas Sarwar reminded us, mental. There are also the benefits of self-confidence and skills such as team work, perseverance and communication. All those skills are not only invaluable in a sporting context—at whatever level—but stand any individual in good stead, whatever they choose to do and, in return, benefit wider society.

As Anas Sarwar's amendment underlines, having role models is key to our effort to encourage greater uptake of sport and physical activity, providing examples for young girls, and those of all ages, to look up to and be inspired by. That can be the Laura Muir or the Eve Muirheads, or, frankly, the entire Scotland women's football team, whose exploits—along with those of others—have undoubtedly inspired a nation. When we see those inspirational people within our own community, it is perhaps even more tangible and powerful. It is easier to say, well why not me?

That link between grass roots and elite sport is crucial. It is not a question of investing in one and not the other. Failure to do both will inevitably undermine our chances of achieving our ambitions or allowing each individual to fulfil their potential, whatever that may be. I know from speaking to Rachael Sutherland that she takes very seriously her role in supporting other girls and young women and has enjoyed real success, with the numbers of women competing regularly up threefold over recent years.

Being a woman in a male-dominated sport such as pool is not easy, though, even—or perhaps particularly—when that woman is good deal better than most of her male counterparts. I suspect that the same applies in other sports, including rugby, yet having watched the spectacular rise in popularity and success of the Orkney Dragons, I am pretty confident that that is a group of women that can take most of those challenges in their stride. Capturing the BT women's north league last season, soon after first starting to compete, their success is inspiring more girls and women to get involved—a pattern that I understand is being seen in other parts of the country.

The great thing about rugby, as former Dragons captain Jo Inkster observed, is that rugby is “a place for everyone.” Whether in the men's or the women's game, rugby helpfully accommodates those of all shapes, sizes and abilities. On the downside, however, availability of training facilities, including floodlit 4G pitches, can be a challenge; so too female-friendly changing rooms, without which I understand some younger players can be reluctant to sign up. Getting enough competitive games throughout a season is also an issue, although not just for the Dragons. That applies to age group teams—male and female—across the Highlands and Islands.

Then, of course, there is the question of costs. Whether, like Sarah MacPhail, someone is travelling regularly to take part in development pathways training or is one of many individuals or teams heading to the Scottish mainland to compete, travel costs for island athletes are high and can be prohibitive. Welcome steps have been taken recently to provide grants to specific island athletes across a wide range of sports. The sponsorship from local businesses and travel providers is utterly invaluable. Without it, and the time put in by parents, coaches and volunteers, sport in our island communities would be a pale shadow of what it is.

That said, despite the obvious talent that there is, it can often be the case that only those going away to university or college get spotted and selected. Orkney's Beth Thomson, who has broken into Scotland's under 21 rugby set-up, is perhaps a case in point, getting her break only after she started at Edinburgh university. Beth's former captain in the Orkney Dragons, Jo Inkster, is also firmly of the view—channelling her inner Brian Whittle—that more rugby and, indeed, more sport needs to be part of the curriculum. As she says,

“playing sport should be the norm, every day, like going to English or Maths classes”.

Jo added that keeping girls involved in sport through the teenage years is vitally important.

Anna Tait observed to me that, unsurprisingly, many young girls are affected by image in sport. Many, she says, are worried about appearance when taking part, particularly where the culture or perception of sport is about being muscly, sweaty and, by extension, ugly. Anna made a specific plea to raise greater awareness of the importance of sports bras. As she says,

“it is a huge barrier to many girls and woman when exercising and taking part in sport. I believe girls should be educated about this at school as it may increase participation and make girls more comfortable and able to enjoy sport”.

It is small ask, but one with the potential to make a big difference, perhaps.

I welcome today's debate, thank the minister for the way in which he set the tone and thank Anas Sarwar and Brian Whittle for commendable and worthwhile amendments. We will support both of them at decision time.

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** We move to the open part of the debate.

15:45

**Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP):** I welcome the minister to his new role. For me, his constituency of Dundee City West is synonymous with sport. Any Fifer of my vintage will recall the former Olympia swimming pool that once stood close to the site of the new V&A Dundee. A more stark contrast in architecture you would be hard pushed to find; Olympia's flumes, including the terrifying yellow cannonball, glowed brightly as you crossed the River Tay from the Kingdom.

This week is a time to celebrate women's and girls' involvement in sport; so, what do we know? Ninety-eight per cent of schools in Scotland provide at least two hours or periods of physical education per week, up from 10 per cent in 2004-05, the daily mile has children from primary school out and about for 15 minutes a day and Scotland's women's football team is off to the world cup. That is all very welcome news.

However, to celebrate properly we must reflect on the inequalities that still characterise Scottish sport, from the classroom to the football pitch. According to Scottish Qualifications Authority data, this year 10,302 boys in Scotland were presented at national 5 level in physical education. That compares with just 5,095 girls—less than half the number of boys. Of that cohort, 53.1 per cent of the girls secured 'A' passes, compared with 41.9 per cent of their male counterparts.

Girls are simply not choosing PE in our schools. We need to reflect on why that is and why, if they do go against the grain, they outperform their male counterparts. Who will replace the Scotland's women's football team in generations to come? In 1998, a case study by a former colleague of mine found that if girls wanted to succeed in PE at standard grade they needed to act "like boys". Boys were more likely to be selected to demonstrate in class. My colleague argued, some 20 years ago now, that physical education had created a generation of "lost girls".

We must look at what the data is telling us. What are the reasons why, in 2018, fewer than half the number of S4 pupils who chose PE were girls? On that note, I was delighted to see yesterday's announcement from the Government to commit £300,000 to projects to help get more women and girls into sport. I have previously

raised the idea of linking the health and education portfolios to tackle the attainment gap, and perhaps there is an opportunity to link sport with promoting academic attainment more broadly, as Brian Whittle alluded to in his contribution.

I am a former member of the Parliament's Health and Sport Committee, which published the report "Sport for Everyone" in November 2017. Abertay University told us:

"Children who have had a poor experience in school are less likely to stick with sport and exercise as they go into adulthood".—[*Official Report, Health and Sport Committee*, 26 September 2017; c 4.]

Much like closing the poverty-related attainment gap, therefore, early intervention is key to ensuring that children develop a positive affiliation with sport. There are proven links between academic attainment and sport. A 2014 Public Health England report on the link between pupil health and wellbeing and attainment found that

"A positive association exists between academic attainment and physical activity levels of pupils".

Although the Greens' amendment was not selected, I was glad to see specific mention in it of the socio-economic disadvantage that exists. We must acknowledge that access to sport from the youngest age is predicated on social stratification. The poorer someone is, the less likely they are to have access to sport from the outset. Physical education in school holds the key to closing the socioeconomic gap in opportunity, because if mum, dad or someone else is not running girls to football, hockey, swimming or dancing, what chance do they have to succeed in sport? What chance do they have even just to try it? School is the leveller, and I firmly believe that more should be done to invest in our PE departments nationally.

I am grateful to the Scottish Sports Association for providing information on women and sport ahead of the debate. I note from that that sport leads to a 20 to 40 per cent reduced risk of breast cancer; that it leads to increased confidence—and young women in the UK have some of the lowest levels of confidence in Europe; and a pay gap difference of potentially up to 8 per cent higher earnings.

Reducing cancer rates, improving wellbeing and closing the gender-related pay gap are all policies that this Government seeks to advance. Perhaps sport could be the answer to all three.

It is welcome news that the SSA will receive an extra £70,000 of Government funding for 2018-19 to increase the representation of women and minority ethnic communities in sport. I very much hope that some of the funding will be used to work directly with our secondary schools to make a difference where it counts, such as widening

access to the school estate, which was highlighted as an opportunity in the Health and Sport Committee report that I mentioned earlier.

I remember the last time that the men's football team qualified for the world cup. The year was 1998, Del Amitri was singing "Don't Come Home Too Soon" and I had managed to buy myself a reduced-price Umbro strip from the Wellgate in Dundee. It was a good time to be a Scotland supporter—briefly. In 2018, that hope exists, encompassed in the ethos of the women's team. I am so proud that this Scottish National Party Government has committed to fund our national squad, thereby allowing those who are not professionals to train full time from January.

Perhaps we can all be proud of Vivienne MacLaren, the chair of Scottish Women's Football, who explained to this week's *Scotland on Sunday* why the team rejected bids for sponsorship from alcohol or gambling companies. She said:

"We don't want to take money when there's girls playing football out there who can't afford to get to training. We're trying to help clubs support their players. There's kids that can't afford football boots and yet there's alcohol and gambling brands around a lot of sports."

She is right.

Vivienne MacLaren's attitude is inspirational. There are so many other Scottish women like her involved in sport. Liz McColgan, Eve Muirhead and Lynsey Sharp are all role models of their time who deserve to be celebrated. Scotland needs more female sporting role models and, to get them, we need to find out why so few continue to pick PE in school. It is not aptitude, as the exam results tell us. To challenge gender segregation in sport, we need to go back to the classroom and ensure that there is sport for all.

15:52

**Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con):** Thank you, Presiding Officer and fellow athlete. [*Laughter.*] In expressing my delight in taking part in this debate, I declare an interest as a lifelong sports fan and a father of a daughter whom I regard as my sporting star.

I was pleased to see the Scottish Government hold the first-ever women and girls in sport week 12 months ago. Here we are again, celebrating it across the country. Back then, we saw the creation of a women and girls in sport advisory board, which has the aim of encouraging more women into sport. That is absolutely a step in the right direction, but a year on, as we take part in the debate, a lot of hard work remains to be done to ensure that there is equity and equality of provision, not just with regard to addressing the disparity between boys and girls, but with regard

to the link between deprivation and low participation and between rural and urban areas.

Many barriers remain, and they are particularly prevalent in rural Galloway and West Dumfries, where our budding female athletes often find that their opportunities are limited, or they face barriers in the form of transport costs and poor access to suitable facilities. Galloway athletes such as Jo Muir, who is an international modern pentathlete, or Kirsty Yates, who competes in the shot put, have had amazing success despite the barriers that rurality brings—barriers that are still there for young athletes in our region. Jo Muir's, Kirsty Yates's and my daughter's sporting careers require them to travel in some instances more than three times a week from Galloway to Glasgow, Edinburgh or Sheffield for coaching, and to travel hundreds of miles to take part in various competitions.

The Government motion refers to the "positive work" being done by active schools to increase the participation of girls in sport. That is not the case when we look at what is happening in Dumfries and Galloway. Only this year, the Labour-SNP Administration saw fit to restructure and cut its active schools budget by £81,000, which in turn affected the matched funding from sportscotland. Sadly, that trend is set to continue in the coming years, with a potential further £120,000 set to be cut over the next two years, on the current projections.

That hardly sends out a positive message when we want to increase participation. Last week, a teacher contacted me bemoaning the lack of sports in school. The inter-school games, such as netball and basketball, have been cancelled because of transport costs. That is wholly detrimental to sporting development in school, at a vital age when our youngsters may be deciding whether to pursue a sporting career or simply whether to keep active. Rural communities already suffer social isolation and this debate offers a perfect opportunity to raise those concerns and make the Government aware of the reality in many rural schools.

**Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP):** Will Finlay Carson explain how cutting taxes would help to support sport in our schools and communities?

**Finlay Carson:** The important thing is to grow the economy, but that is for another day.

Earlier, I mentioned my daughter, Vicky, who has succeeded even though those barriers were put in front of her. She has carried on pursuing her dreams of reaching the top in ice hockey, despite 6 am starts and 1 am finishes and often having to drive 360 miles a week to play for the Solway Sharks. We only had to travel to Dumfries, which

was close for us, but others had to travel as far afield as Aberdeen. Vicky recently played in the Czech Republic and I could not be more proud of her, because she got there despite rurality being a major barrier. Her family were there to support her, but many families who have sons or daughters with equal ability have not been in that position. In some cases, it costs £60 a week just to play ice hockey.

Dumfries and Galloway has other female sports star success stories. There are too many to mention, but one is pentathlete Jo Muir from the Haugh of Urr. She has enjoyed success at the European championships and the World Cup in her discipline, progressing from being a junior world champion in 2013, to overcoming altitude to claim a top 20 finish in the world modern pentathlon championships in Mexico City only a few weeks ago. Her achievements were despite an initial lack of funding and sporting opportunities in Galloway. She is a terrific role model and we are all very proud of her.

The success stories are not just in athletics. Vicki Adams, a curler from Portpatrick, was part of a squad that won bronze at the Winter Olympics and has had gold medal success at the 2013 world championships and at the European championships in 2011 and 2017. We also have the fantastic Stewartry Sirens women's rugby team.

A lack of role models is not a barrier to encouraging girls into sport in my constituency—we have them in abundance. For rural communities, it is about having the facilities and training opportunities that will allow our girls who wish to participate in sport to hone their skills. Progress continues to be slow, and there remains a concern that the money, both centrally and locally, is not being filtered through to rural communities, which need it most.

The commitment to increase women's participation in sport in the SNP's programme for government in 2017-18 was welcome, but as we celebrate this week, we must see a renewed focus on how best to achieve that and ensure that all areas of Scotland benefit. Sportscotland's corporate plan has equalities and inclusion as one of three priorities for improvement and it recognises the exclusion that can be experienced in some parts of Scotland. One priority is a commitment to ensure that young people from our most deprived areas, as well as girls and young women, will have access to greater sporting opportunities. That commitment must also focus on rural Scotland, where there is a great need for parity. Facilities are not on the doorstep, unlike in many urban areas. Quite simply, we need—literally and metaphorically—the promise of a level playing field.

Sport can be a fantastic tool for bringing people together and my daughter Vicky has forged wonderful friendships through participating in ice hockey. The benefits cannot be overstated, which is why I am contacted regularly by constituents who want to see not only greater development of sporting facilities but better and clearer skills-development pathways. Those must be delivered where they are needed most. We need local authorities like Dumfries and Galloway to be in a position to lead by example. Only then will further female champions and happier and healthier constituents emerge in my constituency and, indeed, across Scotland.

15:59

**Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** It may seem difficult to imagine, but I was very sporty when I was younger; I played hockey and netball and ran in relay teams. One reason for that was that my school was quite close to where I stayed—I walked to school; indeed most schools at the time were close to where their pupils stayed. The school was open at night and at weekends, so we could go along and play netball and hockey on the sports fields.

This is not just about encouraging women to do sport; it also dips into the health and education portfolios. When I was on the Equal Opportunities Committee, we ran an inquiry into the huge gap that Anas Sarwar, Alison Johnstone and others have described. All the matters that they raised came up in our inquiry, but so did other factors such as social pressure from peers and cultural issues. It is important that we address this through all parliamentary portfolios, not just one.

Like other members, I am very pleased with the £300,000 of Government funding that Jenny Gilruth mentioned. That is to be welcomed, because it will encourage women and girls to join in or go further with sports. I know that applications for money for programmes to get more women and girls into sport are open to Scottish sport governing bodies and local authorities, and I encourage them to apply as soon as possible.

On a more recent note, I congratulate the Scotland women's squad on its amazing success, which others have already mentioned. They are great, but we should not be surprised—we all know that women excel beyond men in lots of things. It is just a question of encouraging them to come forward in sport.

**Keith Brown:** Will Sandra White join me in congratulating Hibs Ladies, who have contributed substantially to the success of Scottish women's football? She mentioned recent successes, and Jenny Gilruth asked who will follow on. The

Scotland women's under-17s beat Lithuania 2-1 today in their first match in the European championships. Will she congratulate them as well?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** I think that you have already done it for her.

**Sandra White:** There is no harm in doing it again. I absolutely congratulate them; they are all great models for women and girls, and may they go on to great success in the future. We are in safe hands in that respect.

I would like to mention my constituent Leanne Crichton, who has had a very successful footballing career both locally for Glasgow City and for the national squad. She was part of the women's under-19 squad that qualified for the UEFA European championships in Hungary in 2005. A midfielder, she won two senior caps before being recalled to the squad after four years for a double-header against the USA in Jacksonville and Nashville in February 2013. She scored her first senior goal in a 3-2 friendly win over Iceland in June 2013.

I am very pleased that, as Jenny Gilruth mentioned, the First Minister has given a huge boost to Scotland's national women's team with additional funding to enable the whole squad to train full time for the FIFA world cup. That says something about our commitment, and there are lots of other things going on as well.

Let me highlight two cycling initiatives in my constituency. Cycling might not be for everyone, but these projects are also about giving people confidence. The first is the Glasgow branch of Bike for Good, which has teamed up with Simon Community Scotland to work specifically with women and girls, many of whom have faced significant challenges in their lives. It gives women the opportunity to learn bike maintenance and build a bike from scratch. At the end of the course, each person gets to keep the bike, which ensures that they have a cheap and reliable mode of transport and the skills to maintain it. The project also improves their health and gives them confidence.

So far, 24 women have built their own bikes, and they have all said what a positive effect it has had on their physical and mental wellbeing. One of them said:

"I was so nervous before and thought I would be too unfit to go the bike but I have been out on it everyday since I finished building it".

The camaraderie of the women on the course makes it worth while. Another of the women said:

"I have learned new skills I didn't know I had. I thought I would be too old and too unfit to learn to get cycling but I'm not!"

The second initiative, Belles on Bikes, is a cycling group for women who live in and around Glasgow. It offers a mix of rides to cater for all ages and abilities. The group is supported by the CTC Bike Club, funded by Cycling Scotland and delivered in partnership with Youth Scotland and Bike for Good. Over the years, Belles on Bikes has trained female cycle trainers to organise, lead and inspire women of all ages to get out on their bikes. Whether someone wants to start community biking, cycle with family and friends at the weekend, or just meet like-minded people, Belles on Bikes is a great community and it introduces people to cycling.

One of the best things that we can do for our health is be physically active. I have highlighted two initiatives in my constituency and I am sure that there are others in other constituencies. By debating this today, I hope that we will encourage more women and girls to get active and be fitter.

16:06

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I welcome today's debate on women and girls in sport. We have already heard about women and girls who are achieving fantastic results in elite sports. We should recognise the commitment, hard work, talent and dedication that they have given to their chosen sport and celebrate their achievements. Labour's amendment congratulates the Scottish women's football team and recognises the Scottish Government's announcement of financial support. Women who participate at a high level often still have to earn a living and cannot dedicate themselves to the sport, so I welcome the funding that will enable the team to concentrate on the tournament.

Recognition and sponsorship can be difficult for women to receive, and we can see gender disparity across elite sports where women still receive less financial reward and have lower profiles. Although we have global woman sport stars, they are often at the forefront of fighting for greater recognition, respect and parity in their sports. We should consider ways of achieving a sustainable funding base for all women's competitive sport.

I want to focus on other aspects of the debate. The Scottish health survey, which was published last week, confirmed some attitudes and behaviours around sport and gender. As the minister recognised, male participation in recreational sport is higher on average than women's. Women are less likely than men to meet the guidelines for moderate or vigorous physical activity, with the greatest gap being in the young

adult age group. The most dramatic statistic is probably that participation in sport among high school-age girls declines by 24 percentage points compared with 1 percentage point for boys.

The figures are compounded by deprivation, with higher levels of non-participation in areas of high deprivation. Although we rightly celebrate high-level achievement, a recent BBC documentary claimed that almost nine in 10 elite athletes come from a more privileged background. Sport should be the great equaliser, but the figures suggest that, for too many people, opportunities are limited, and personal as well as national potential is not being realised.

I welcome the work that has been undertaken to consider the barriers to women and girls' participation in sport. The modest but welcome investment in the sporting equity fund has provided an impetus to work in this area. In Fife, Fighting Chance Scotland received funding for a schools judo programme and Fife Council received an award to support inactive girls to take up cycling. I understand that the funding is only for a year and the minister has confirmed that additional funding will be available to support grass-roots sport. Will that additional funding be available to groups that already receive funding or is it only for new applications?

I also welcome the work of the women and girls in sport board. Its focus on four key areas looks to increase engagement and should lead it to consider how deprivation depresses opportunity. The benefits of an active lifestyle for everyone are evident, and they are not just physical benefits; it also benefits mental wellbeing.

A lot of good work is being done to challenge the way we think about sport and women and girls' participation in it. Some members have spoken about the importance of role models and leadership opportunities. I am interested in where that intersects with celebrity culture and the images of perfection that girls are presented with.

The this girl can campaign was about promoting diversity and confidence, and taking on myths about femininity and how it is expressed. Girlguiding has also done a lot of research that highlights that girls can be reluctant to take part in sport because it is not regarded as feminine. Part of that is about activity and not labelling activity as sporty or otherwise. For some, "sporty" can be a label that enforces a binary approach—either someone is good at sport and wins things, or they are not, so they start to avoid it.

At primary school, it is perhaps easier to be more inclusive. As headteacher of St Ninian's primary school in Stirling in my region, Elaine Wyllie introduced the daily mile, which is a great initiative that embeds positive behaviour and

attitudes to activity, and introduces concepts of keeping active, socialising, and building activity into our daily routine. All those are easy lessons that I hope will stay with children throughout their lives.

The significant reduction in participation occurs at high school. There is still a gender gap at a younger age, but it becomes more pronounced at high school. Last year, the Health and Sport Committee's report "Sport for Everyone" found that having a negative experience of sport at high school can practically put girls off sport for life. There are complicated factors for that. Being more self-conscious about body image can be a factor, and some of our schools' changing facilities do not lend themselves to privacy. The range of sport that is on offer for girls does not suit everyone, so lack of choice is a factor in people not participating. Girls and boys taking part in sports together can sometimes encourage judgments on ability and lead to a lack of confidence among girls. The competitive nature of school sports does not suit everyone, either. Some of those factors apply equally to boys, but there is not the same drop-off in their activity.

That said, school activity is important in closing the participation gap. Although I am aware that sports clubs endeavour to keep their fees minimal, it can be a challenge for families on low incomes to afford them. The active schools network, working with sportscotland, is an important vehicle for bridging the gap between club activity and schools, and it should be supported to provide more free and affordable sports in schools.

A related issue is the financial pressures that face our schools. In Fife, I am aware of reports of the reduction in the number of teacher posts, and I have heard concerns about the continuing viability of some girls sport teams representing their schools and taking part in competitions, because of a lack of teachers who can provide the coaching. That must be avoided and, if budget cuts are creating that situation, the cuts need to be reversed. Although such cuts might look like easy cuts that will not impact on core teaching, they are letting down a generation of girls who have shown a commitment to their sport and deserve our support.

16:12

**George Adam (Paisley) (SNP):** Sport is an important part of life for the majority of Scots—we cannot get enough of it. However, on the whole, we tend to be spectators rather than participants. For the sake of our nation's health, we need to do better by changing things and becoming more involved.

I cannot remember the last time I played five-a-side football—well, the truth is that I can remember, but I am slightly embarrassed for the young man who was fitter and faster than I was and who I halved in two as he tried to run past me. However, when I have played football at other times with people of a certain age, speed, ability and fitness, I seem to enjoy it slightly more. We need to ensure that people enjoy sport with their group of peers.

It is said that men's attitudes change when they have a daughter. That is true, but it is equally true when they have a granddaughter. They want them to achieve, and be part of, absolutely everything. It is important for women and girls to see sport as something that they should be involved in.

Sometimes we can be too hard on ourselves, because Scotland has a proud tradition in female sport and physical activity—not least with the recent success of our national football team in making the world cup finals. Our women footballers are showing the men that Scotland can still qualify for major tournaments. The women's team's qualification has excited us all, particularly in Paisley, as St Mirren Park has been the venue for many of the home games for Scotland's national women's team. It has excited us so much that my wife, Stacey, has stated that she wants to go to France next year to follow the tartan army girls, but she will be going by herself, Presiding Officer, because unless you change the sittings of Parliament next year, I will be at work.

As our national sport, football should be leading the way, and there is much development in the women's game in Paisley. This summer, St Mirren Football Club launched its women's team and, as is the norm with a club such as St Mirren, funding will always be an issue. However, it was agreed with a group of female footballers that Paisley would have its first major female football side. St Mirren Independent Supporters Association, which I am the convener of and which owns 28 per cent of the club, sponsored the team's strips, and the women involved raised funding for league entry and their on-going expenses. That shows that there is no such thing as an impossible task—it might have been difficult and challenging, but the team managed to kick off at the start of the season.

**Brian Whittle:** The minister and I heard a story the other night from a young female footballer who was not allowed to play football at school because the teachers thought that she would be too fragile but who has managed to continue. That sort of attitude is something that we have to tackle.

**George Adam:** Mr Whittle is correct. That is an example of some of the attitudes that we have to deal with. We have to ensure that everyone can have access to sport.

The St Mirren women's football team is not the only thing that is happening with the women's game. There has been an increase in teams from what were traditionally called our boys clubs but which are now called youth football clubs. Gleniffer Thistle FC, which brought us players such as St Mirren legend and now sports pundit Stephen Thompson, has a girls section and a women's team. St Mirren youth football club, which is not connected with the professional club, has a girls section, as does St Peter's FC. To move away from the centre of the known universe to faraway Linwood, we can see that Linwood Rangers—which is former Scotland captain Paul Lambert's first team—has a girls section, too.

You might have noticed, Presiding Officer, that not only have all the famous former professional players I have mentioned played for St Mirren, all are male. We must ensure that young women and girls have their own sporting heroes to look up to and aspire to be like. There needs to be some form of parity between the women's game and the men's game. That will not be easy. It will require funding and a change of attitude to our national sport on the part of the Scottish Football Association, the Scottish Premier Football League and the clubs and, as Mr Whittle explained, at other levels within the game.

Supporters also need to look at women's football more positively. That might be the biggest issue for us all. Scotland's women's team qualified for the world cup finals. As Jenny Gilruth said, their male counterparts have not been there since 1998—ironically, again in France. We have to ensure that these sportswomen who are heroes to young women today continue with their success. That is why I welcome the fact that Scotland's national team squad will be able to train full time from January 2019 for the FIFA 2019 world cup, with additional funding from the Scottish Government. That will strengthen the women's and girls' game in Scotland.

St Mirren chairman and majority shareholder Gordon Scott has already announced that the club is going to go beyond just having its own women's football team. He wants to create St Mirren women and girls football academy. Our club in Paisley already knows the success that having an academy has brought to our men's team and sees the opportunity that it has to develop that further. The St Mirren academy has produced Scotland internationals such as John McGinn, Kenny McLean and Lewis Morgan, and the supporters see the value of the academy in financial terms and on the field.

Gordon Scott's plan is to have the women and girls academy in Ferguslie Park in Paisley and to take it forward using St Mirren community trust, with Gayle Brannigan leading the way. Gayle

Brannigan is well known in Renfrewshire for running sports trusts and sporting community programmes. We have an opportunity to use this project as a pilot scheme. We can say to young women in places such as Ferguslie Park that it does not matter where they live or where they are from—they can be part of our national sport and play for the famous Paisley St Mirren.

There will be challenges associated with the project, involving funding and so on. I ask the sports minister to come to St Mirren Park and discuss the project with Gordon Scott and Gayle Brannigan.

St Mirren uses the tag line “Our Town, Our Team”. Now, we are looking to take that further and ensure that St Mirren is Paisley’s team for our whole community. I look forward to the day when I sit with my granddaughter, my daughter and my wife and I see St Mirren lift the Scottish women’s cup. Only then, when that date goes down in history alongside those other famous dates from St Mirren’s past, will I say that we definitely have equality in Paisley.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I do not know whether anyone noticed the name “St Mirren” in that speech. No doubt somebody has been counting the references.

16:19

**Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP):** It is a pleasure to speak in the debate, although it is a little unexpected. Stuart McMillan had expected to speak in this slot, but he has been called away to his constituency.

I add my congratulations to our women’s national football team on reaching the world cup finals, which is something that has not happened for Scotland since the world cup in France in 1998. I look forward to the world cup tournament in France next June, when everyone will be rooting for them, if not attending the actual event.

It is true that taking part in physical activity or sport is one of the best ways to maintain our physical and mental health. It is definitely on my to-do list and long overdue, although I might start with the chair yoga that I tried at the event that I held in Parliament on Tuesday evening, which might well be exertion enough.

Taking part in sport can not only benefit physical and mental health but be an incredibly social activity that builds confidence, relationships and friendships. Sport can be fun. However, there are still barriers to women and girls taking part in sport, which we must address.

In elite sport, our women’s national football team and our incredibly successful women’s cycling and swimming teams clearly inspire women and girls

and encourage them to be involved in sport and get active. Elite sports absolutely have a role to play in such encouragement, but we must ensure resource and accessibility at the grass roots to break down the majority of the barriers and encourage more women and girls to take part.

Through the active schools and active girls programmes, the Scottish Government and sportscotland have increased the number of children who do two hours or two periods of PE a week from less than 10 per cent in 2004-05 to 98 per cent in 2016. That was an SNP manifesto commitment. PE has a positive impact not only on physical health but on educational attainment and life chances, as the minister, Maree Todd, mentioned in her intervention on Brian Whittle. To take one of the simplest forms of exercise—walking—the roll-out of the daily mile in schools across Scotland has significantly improved pupils’ health and wellbeing, but it has also had a positive effect on learning in the classroom.

As part of the manifesto commitment, the Scottish Government invested £11.6 million between 2012 and 2016, and that has been backed by the investment of £50 million in active schools between 2015 and 2019 through sportscotland, which is welcome. The Government’s vision of a Scotland in which sport is a way of life, is at the heart of Scottish society and has a positive impact on people and communities is certainly something that we all want to be achieved. I believe that we are on the path to achieving it, but we must take into account all the issues—especially those that face women and girls, no matter what their background or stage in life is.

The women and girls in sport board is passionate about the issue and about recognising that different challenges face women and girls in relation to maintaining healthy levels of physical activity at different stages in their lives. The board will focus on four areas, which are intervention—what is needed to get more women and girls physically active and into sports; prevention—what measures will ensure that women and girls do not drop out of physical activity or sport and that they have opportunities to continue; reconnection—how women and girls can get back into physical activity or sport when a major change to their life happens; and continuation—helping women and girls to continue with physical activity or sport throughout their lives.

Campaigns such as that using the hashtag #SheCanSheWill, which was launched ahead of women and girls in sport week, focus the discussion on women and girls in sport. Through further discussion and understanding, we will continue to make progress on breaking down the barriers that are faced.



It is clear that progress has been made over the years on getting more women and girls into sport. We have, for example, seen significant increases in women and girls participating in sport and physical activity, including walking and biking, as well as traditional sports such as netball, hockey and shinty. Funding has been provided for projects such as fit for girls, and for 192 community sport hubs, including Tryst community sport hub in Larbert, which ensure that grass-roots clubs are available in communities across Scotland.

Through active schools, participation has increased in the likes of karate and dodgeball—the figures quadrupled between 2011-12 and 2016-17—and in sports such as tennis, football, cross-country running and gymnastics, for which figures have doubled. Those sports have had the biggest increase in girls' participation in sessions, which shows that, although much more can still be done, we are certainly doing something right.

In closing, Presiding Officer, more can be done—clearly, more will be done—to increase the participation of women and girls in sport and physical activity and certainly more will be done to understand and break down more of the barriers that prevent such participation. However, when we look at the progress that has been made over the past few years, Scotland is on the right path and we should continue to push those boundaries to make sure that we continue on that path.

We are achieving success on the global stage, with Commonwealth, Olympic, world and European championship medals to be proud of, and of course there is success to come in the future. However, we should continue to make these inroads and increase participation so that Scotland's women and girls have every opportunity to become involved and stay involved, no matter their background or their stage in life. That will lead to a healthier and better Scotland for everyone.

16:25

**Alison Harris (Central Scotland) (Con):** I am delighted to speak in this debate, which marks women and girls in sport week.

A recent study by the University of Bristol highlighted that by the age of nine, less than one third of girls met the suggested level of sport and fitness activity compared with two thirds of boys. The gap closes in adulthood, but there is still a strong bias in favour of men. The reasons why females are less involved in sport are varied; many have been mentioned by previous speakers. I am pleased that this week gives us an opportunity to turn the spotlight on the gender gap that exists in sporting activity, among young people in particular.

When I think back to my school days and my introduction to sport, or what in those days was referred to as PE or gym, members will not be surprised to hear that I was not really a budding athlete. At school, my cousin was the games captain in sixth year and when I arrived in my first year at the school, I remember vividly the excitement of the PE teachers, who were desperate to meet the potential new games captain, whom they assumed would follow in the family footsteps.

I can say without one shadow of doubt that I did not like hockey, I did not like jumping into a sandpit, and I did not like jumping over hurdles, which I regarded as positively dangerous; in fact, I did not even like jumping over a horse that had no head or tail. As I am sure that members have worked out by now, I did not rise to the dizzy heights of games captain but merely the dizzy heights of being in charge of cutting the oranges for half-time at hockey. That disastrous introduction to sport had a more serious repercussion. It meant that I was not introduced in my early school years to the importance and fun of physical activity.

Thankfully, since those days, there has been a huge expansion in the variety of sports and activities available in schools. Many secondary schools now have swimming pools, jogging has become commonplace, and there has been a huge growth in the provision of keep fit classes, along with the traditional sports of hockey, netball, and track and field. I am delighted that a higher dance course is now on offer as part of the higher curriculum; I would have enjoyed that course.

The importance of that physical activity, and indeed the introduction to physical activity, is clear. Without a shadow of a doubt, physical activity improves mental health and wellbeing and being physically fit leads to improved self-esteem, as we heard earlier.

It is important for physical activity to be introduced at primary school level. It is a common fact that children do not get to run around as much now as they would have done years ago. Bringing sport into primary schools at an early age is ultimately an introduction to keeping fit and sets up a chain of positive reactions, which those children will take through life.

By encouraging more women into sport and physical activity, raising awareness of those who regularly take part and addressing the barriers that cause the differing uptakes between males and females, this week will, I hope, build on the success of last year's inaugural event.

Many young people see gym membership as a must-have and more and more women and girls are now involved in sports such as football, rugby

and martial arts. Things have improved, yet it is clear that work still has to be done to close the gap in physical activity.

We all know the importance of role models and thanks to their success at the Commonwealth and Olympic games, we have enjoyed seeing many sportswomen such as the young boxer Nicola Adams become household names.

We have heard the saying that success breeds success and I am sure that that is very much the case with sport. I hope that the successes that our sportswomen have had will boost the amount of coverage of female sports on television and in the media from the current derisory 7 per cent, which Alison Johnstone mentioned.

Why should media interest be so low? A survey carried out for Insure4Sport contained some interesting findings. When asked which sports they watched, despite the growing profile of women's football, 44 per cent of respondents said that they would watch men's football but only 17 per cent women's. Rugby still showed a heavy male bias, while tennis, athletics and swimming showed much less disparity in people's preference for watching. Of the 22 sports included in the survey, there were only two in which the female version was more likely to be watched: volleyball and hockey.

Clearly, and despite much progress, there remains a perception that there are sports for men and sports for women, and that is a factor in discouraging some women from participating in certain sports. Some studies suggest that competitive sports are not so attractive to women as they are to men, but few will disagree that, in politics and business, women have shown that they are every bit as competitive as men—although sport does not always have to be a competition: it can just be an activity that people actually enjoy doing.

Participation in sport and physical activities is a vital part of maintaining good health and mental wellbeing, and I am sure that I join all colleagues in hoping that the spotlight on improving female participation lasts far longer than just this week.

It will be my pleasure to support the motion and the amendments tonight.

16:31

**Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** I welcome the announcement that the Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing made yesterday about supporting, with £300,000 of funding, projects that help women and girls to take up sport or physical activity. We all know the benefit of such funds in encouraging more Scots to take up physical activity. Getting active has

profound health benefits, physical and mental, so providing money to remove barriers that prevent women and girls from taking up sport or physical activity can only be a positive step towards tackling some of the challenges that our society faces, including obesity, social isolation, loneliness and low self-esteem. As we know, sport and exercise are hugely beneficial for people with depression.

I am someone who enjoys getting on her bike. As I have mentioned in the chamber before, I was very keen to use my bike to reduce my car use when I was working in Aberdeen. I will be quite blunt, however: our cycle routes and pathways are just not good enough, and they are not safe enough. Although I took the step of taking up cycling for my commute in order to try to decrease my carbon output, I quickly gave it up, because it was too damned dangerous.

Last night, I hosted an event as convener of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, at which we were considering some impacts of climate change. It was an outreach event to which people came to Parliament from places including Elgin, Glasgow and Fife. We were talking about barriers to physical activities that people might want to do that would reduce their carbon footprint. Taking up physical exercise for its own sake is fine, but it has not been mentioned in the debate that exercise can also be a means of commuting or travelling.

There are many barriers to people doing that, however. At the event, infrastructure came out as the number 1 barrier—the safety of roads and the lack of cycle routes. As I know from cycling in Edinburgh, cycle routes are not joined up enough. There will be a point when going along a safe cycle route that the cyclist finds that it stops all of a sudden, and they are at a busy roundabout with their heart in their mouth.

Participants also mentioned schools and, particularly, workplaces not having facilities for bike storage. Safe routes to such destinations and changing facilities were also mentioned by many people who attended the event.

Our youngest participant was nine-year-old Quinn Boyd from Leven. By the way, I can tell Jenny Gilruth right now that she has some competition there. Quinn came up with a fantastic idea that really struck me: she said that every child should have the right to a bike. She did not say, "Let's give everyone free bikes." She said "the right to a bike." I thought that was a good and really powerful idea. I would add to what Quinn said by saying that they should have the right to a safe route to school on their bike, as well.

Earlier in the debate, in my intervention on Brian Whittle's speech, I made the point that a person

does not have to be particularly good at sport to benefit from it. I am with Alison Harris—I was that soldier. My family found it very amusing that I was going to take part in a debate about women in sport. If she is watching—as she sometimes does—my mum will be laughing right now. I am one of those quines who used to worry about getting picked last in PE. I hope they do not do that in schools any more, because it does not build one's self-esteem to be the last lassie in the group to be picked for the team. When kids have low self-esteem, are shy or are body conscious, that can be manifested in their not being particularly confident at sport, whereas sport could build that self-confidence. There is a vicious circle.

In the formative years, when a person fails to excel at sport it can put them off—even when they enjoy sport for its own sake. I enjoyed sport—I loved basketball and volleyball, in particular. However, it was not until I was taken under the wing of a PE teacher who saw my enjoyment—rather than any particular ability—while I was a pupil at the British School in Rio de Janeiro when I was 12 and 13, that I felt that I could flourish in that often-exclusionary environment. We must remember that teenagers can be very self-conscious; if they are made to feel that they are not good at something they will probably never do it again. Under the care of that PE teacher, I became quite good at both sports. It turns out that enthusiasm can make up for lack of innate natural ability.

I want to address Finlay Carson's political points on the priorities of local councils. He is not in the chamber at the moment, although he took my intervention earlier. I remind him to take care about making such political points, because across the country local authorities are making decisions that prevent people from accessing sport. Aberdeenshire Council is a Conservative-led council and it has cut visiting specialists—sports specialists who go into small rural schools and give children access to sport that they otherwise would not have.

I have said that sport is for all and that it does not matter whether someone is good at it, but I want to make a quick mention of sports champions for women in my constituency. Everyone knows Hannah Miley—I could use up the rest of my time just talking about her achievements. Christine is shaking her head, so I will not list them all—everyone knows what they are. Hannah still trains at Inverurie pool, which gives young people from the area great confidence.

Natalie Ross, who plays midfield for Celtic and has 11 senior Scotland international caps, is from Ellon and she trained and played with Ellon Meadows Football Club—she was the only girl playing for the boys club. I want to squeeze in a

wee mention for John Duffus, who coaches Aberdeen Ladies Football Club's ladies and girls, and who recently received an award for his contribution to women in football.

I want to make a quick mention—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You cannot make a quick mention of anything, Ms Martin.

It is very nice to be friendly, but when I am in the chair I am the Presiding Officer, so you should not address me as "Christine". You might not have noticed it, but other members did.

**Gillian Martin:** I am sorry, Presiding Officer. I did not notice.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you.

16:38

**Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab):** I am pleased to be closing this afternoon's debate for Scottish Labour, marking Scotland's second annual women and girls in sport week. I am grateful for the support for our amendment from across the chamber. It has been a good-humoured debate, and we have heard a range of informative and interesting speeches that have reflected on how we can work together to make sport in Scotland more accessible for women. We have also heard about the numerous health and wellbeing benefits of sport.

In his speech, Anas Sarwar rightly highlighted the link between poverty and participation. The cost of sports kit and of entry to sporting facilities can be a significant barrier to participation. Anas Sarwar also spoke about the importance of tackling obesity and the role that sport plays in mental health, wellbeing and mood.

Brian Whittle made an interesting point about the lack of women coaches. I have to say that it was not something to which I gave much thought when I was preparing for the debate, but what better role model could there be than a woman coach? Anas Sarwar also made that point.

Alison Johnstone mentioned the massive difference between coverage of men and coverage of women in the news on sport. How can we showcase the performance of women if there is little or no media coverage of it for people to see?

Many members spoke about the long-term health benefits of sport, the disparity in participation rates and the role that we, as parliamentarians, can play in promoting and encouraging physical activity.

Liam McArthur named several of our successful athletes, and I will do the same later in my speech. I could be wrong, Presiding Officer, but I think that

George Adam might have mentioned Paisley and St Mirren in his contribution.

In all seriousness, recent research on equality in sport that was published by sportscotland illuminated the gender disparity in participation. It revealed that more men than women regularly participate in sport and that the decline in women's participation in sport begins between the ages of 13 and 15. That is why the active schools programme, which encourages young people to become more active at school, is an extremely important initiative. All 32 local authorities are involved in the programme, which will play a pivotal role in encouraging young women and girls to become more involved in sport and physical activity.

I imagine that most members will have taken part in sport at school with varying degrees of enthusiasm and varying degrees of success. Just as Sandra White spoke of her sporting prowess, I will speak of mine. At school, I was a member of the hockey team and the volleyball team, I was a regular in the relay team and I was pretty good at the hurdles, but my only claim to physical activity now is that I walk a lot—I walk very quickly, but that is the extent of my physical activity. I am pretty sure that that will be reflected across the chamber, because our participation in sport tends to diminish or stop when we leave school.

It is clear that more must be done to encourage young women to engage in sporting activity. Research shows that only 33 per cent of members of playing hubs are women. The underrepresentation of women in sport is reflective of the underrepresentation of women in the public sphere throughout society. This year might mark the centenary of the suffragettes, who fought for women's equality at the ballot box, but the fight for equality endures. Women are still fighting for their rights in Parliament, in the workplace and in all aspects of society.

I want to close on a positive note by illuminating the numerous successes of inspirational Scottish women in sport so far this year. Other members have highlighted many of their successes—in his opening remarks, Joe FitzPatrick spoke with pride about some of their achievements.

In April, at the Commonwealth games, we had the privilege of witnessing a new generation of Scottish women competing and winning in their respective sports against some of the most experienced and respected athletes in the world. On the Gold Coast, the women of team Scotland won two gold medals, five silver medals and six bronze medals. Our gold medal winners included Katie Archibald in the individual pursuit cycling and, in diving, Grace Reid in the 1m springboard competition. Our silver medal winners included Hannah Miley—who has already been

mentioned—Neah Evans, Eilidh Doyle, Caroline Brown, Kay Moran and Stacey McDougall. Katie Archibald added to her gold medal with a silver in the points race. Our bronze medal winners included Linda Pearson, Seonaid McIntosh, Claire Johnston, Lesley Doig, Kirsty Gilmour and Neah Evans.

In the summer, there was further success, as Inverness-born Laura Muir became the first British woman to win the European 1,500m title at the European championships in Berlin, and in September, the Scottish women's national football team secured qualification for the FIFA women's world cup for the first time.

To achieve gender parity in sport participation, we must redouble our efforts to ensure that organised sport is more accessible and inclusive for young women and girls. The increasing visibility of Scottish women in sport is extremely positive and I am extremely hopeful that the myriad successes that have been achieved by Scottish sportswomen throughout 2018 can act as a catalyst that inspires our country's stars of the future—our next Gemma Fay, our next Katie Archibald and our next Laura Muir.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You got to the finish post just in time.

16:45

**Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** I am delighted to close what has been a really good debate on behalf of my Scottish Conservative colleagues. We wanted to mark and be involved in the women and girls in sport week. In my experience, sport is vital for physical and mental health. It encourages the creation of friendships, teamwork, national pride and community spirit. I could hear the pride in everyone's voices today, and I would like to take this opportunity, on everyone's behalf, to thank the Scottish sportswomen who do so much for our country.

My constituency is in the Scottish Borders, as many of you know, and it is awash with fantastic sportswomen, including team GB and Scotland hockey midfielder Sarah Robertson from Selkirk, Sammi Kinghorn from Gordon—the fastest ever female British wheelchair racer, regardless of classification—and freestyle swimmer Lucy Hope from Jedburgh, who won a gold medal at the 2018 European aquatics championships.

Like many MSPs—like Liam McArthur supporting Orkney netball star Sarah MacPhail's selection to the Scotland under-21s, or George Adam supporting Paisley's women's football team—I try to get involved in supporting as many sporting groups as possible, for example by playing women's rugby with the club at Kelso.

Claire Baker and Anas Sarwar spoke about the Scottish health survey, and the fact remains that extensive research still shows low rates of women and girls participating in sport. Participation in sport by girls at a young age is crucial, and so is keeping that going. Angus MacDonald talked about the dropouts in sport and the retention problems that we have, and barriers still exist for girls. Gillian Martin spoke about lack of self-esteem, lack of opportunities and negative experiences of school PE lessons, and I listened to Alison Harris as she talked about cutting the oranges. Actually, she was contributing, and I hope that she felt involved as well, even if she did not really like sport. Everyone has a role, including volunteers.

Research shows that girls are less positive about their school experiences of physical education than boys are. We also heard that today. According to a Women in Sport study published only last November, 64 per cent of girls said that their school encouraged them to take part in sport, compared with 72 per cent of boys. Evidence shows that, as girls move into their teenage years, sport participation reduces and stays lower than that of boys. We have got to break down those barriers. Nothing should hold girls back from taking part in sport, regardless of where they live. Finlay Carson spoke about the challenges that transport presents to access to sport in his constituency, which is a rural area.

Last year, sportscotland published eight recommendations, ranging from providing some single-sex opportunities to involving more women in the planning of sporting events. We all welcome the Scottish Government announcement of the £2 million to reduce inequalities in sport, including encouraging more women and girls into sport. Brian Whittle and the Scottish Conservatives argue that the goal must be equal access for all, irrespective of background or personal circumstance, and that includes getting the right solution to the rural-urban divide.

Many MSPs acknowledge that there are not enough female coaches and role models. In fact, 31 per cent of coaches across the UK are female. Sportscotland is encouraging more women to get involved in coaching by offering subsidies, but there is still a long way to go. As we approach the midway point of the 10-year national strategy entitled "A More Active Scotland: Scotland's Physical Activity Delivery Plan", the Scottish Government must set targets to close the physical activity gender gap that is exposed by the statistics.

Alison Johnstone talked about media coverage, and she is right. Women's sport makes up only 7 per cent of media coverage. I also learned of the excellent girls do sport development, which is run

by Scottish Women in Sport in collaboration with the University of the West of Scotland. It is an ambitious new partnership that will see 10 programmes created by students, graduates and staff at the university, focusing on women in sport and highlighting one sport per show.

Many members spoke about role models and the link between grass-roots and elite sports. More screening and coverage of women's sports will allow more girls to see female role models and to be inspired to pick up a racquet or put on football boots. It was interesting to learn that the BBC has committed to deliver a further 500 hours of live women's sports coverage. I hope to catch the netball world cup final next year, which the BBC has promised to televise.

We on the Conservative side of the chamber agree that sport for women and girls is a must, and it must be more accessible. We still have a long way to go. Poverty is a key determining factor, and there is a link between deprivation and low participation. Barriers also include a lack of transport and the cost of transport, issues with venue access and venue hire, and a lack of equipment. Extra-curricular activities rely on volunteers, who are key to delivering sport outwith the two hours that are currently delivered in schools. More must be done to encourage volunteer participation and to establish a stronger bond between grass-roots and elite sports. Role models are also key.

The Scottish Government acknowledges that

"sport and physical health improves health and wellbeing"

and improves self-esteem. It is time for the minister to galvanise the support that he has heard from members of all parties today. It is time for lasting change, not just for women and girls but for everybody.

16:51

**The Minister for Children and Young People (Maree Todd):** I very much welcome the contributions from members on all sides of the chamber. Before I reflect on the points that were made during the debate, I would like to say how pleased I am that, during our year of young people, we continue to find ways to celebrate having young people's voices heard and to be participants in shaping and driving change. Throughout the women and girls in sport week, I have been struck by the many great examples of girls who have built confidence, made friendships, built resilience and gained skills through physical activity or sport. I look forward very much to visiting Broughton high school tomorrow for its active girls day, and to hearing direct from the girls about the difference that sport has made to them.

A joined-up approach in which we work collaboratively across Government departments and across sectors and barriers will ensure that we continue to improve opportunities for girls and women throughout Scotland. Today is another great opportunity to explore how, together, we can make Scotland an ACE—adverse childhood event—aware nation. We are committed to embedding an understanding of ACEs across all of Government and to working collaboratively to drive progress across Scotland. Mitigating the impact of ACEs and supporting resilience is crucial to reduce the risk of people with ACEs experiencing negative long-term impacts and to break the cycle of future ACEs in the next generation. There is really good evidence that participation in sport builds resilience and mitigates the effect of adverse childhood experiences. There is growing interest and emerging practice in the Scottish sports sector that seeks to provide sport and physical activity opportunities that take account of ACEs and allow young people to build their resilience. For example, active schools teams in some local authorities have programmes that are specifically designed for girls who are vulnerable or who have disengaged from school, and which combine youth work approaches with carefully structured sport and physical activity opportunities.

The women and girls in sport advisory board is very keen to have conversations with different age groups in order to fully understand the issues. Consultation is important to provide a platform for girls and women to have their voices heard. It will help to shape and influence opportunities and recommendations on what more the Government can do, and empower girls and women to overcome the barriers.

As other members have done, I will talk about my sporting prowess—although, like Gillian Martin's experience, mine is much more a fine example of enthusiastic joining in rather than skill. My passion for rugby started when I was young, although I did not play it until my 20s when the hospital in which I worked had a team. I gave it a try and found that I absolutely loved the physicality, the teamwork and the body confidence that came from playing. As Liam McArthur said, rugby is a sport for all shapes and sizes. I also agree with Liam that the Orkney Dragons are an inspirational team. The captain, Jo Inkster, is a case in point. She was a rugby mum who took up the sport in her late 30s and led her team to a meteoric rise, lifting silverware within a very short time of starting.

There are other inspirational women in my sport. Jade Konkel was the first ever professional female rugby player in Scotland. Dee Bradbury, who we have heard of before, is the most amazing woman. She first excelled in athletics, Brian Whittle's sport,

then switched code in her late 30s to rugby. These are strong, fearless women who are participating and excelling in a contact sport and are pioneers, trailblazers and role models for us all.

Mary Fee and Alison Harris would be very welcome in the Scottish Parliament rugby team, which I now play in, even if it is just to cut oranges. They can come along and share in the camaraderie, because one of the other joys of sport that we have not mentioned so far is how it can bring together people of very different backgrounds and beliefs. The fact that I play in a team alongside the Tory front bench is a fine testament to that.

Before I leave the subject of Scottish rugby, I commend the partnership between Scottish Rugby and Girlguiding Scotland—a fabulous collaboration that brings together two of my favourite things. I hope that we see more links like that in future.

Brian Whittle's speech gave us an insight into his long passion about and involvement in sport. It also gave us a wonderful insight into how far we have come.

I can personally commend the daily mile to Anas Sarwar and other members as a very easy way for us all to get our exercise in. As Claire Baker said, it started in her region and has become a worldwide phenomenon.

Alison Johnstone and Alison Harris were absolutely right about media coverage of women's sport. That is a huge bugbear for me and other women in the chamber, and I agree that it is vital that that improves if participation is to improve.

Jenny Gilruth and Brian Whittle rightly made the link between sport and closing the attainment gap, which I am pleased to hear is being widely recognised. Jenny Gilruth's speech was excellent—I loved that she highlighted that Scottish women's football is leading the way in ethical sponsorship.

Finlay Carson quite rightly highlighted the particular challenges faced by rural athletes. As a Highlands and Islands MSP and indeed as a Highlands and Islands mum, I know that situation well. The growth and flourishing of women's shinty is an example of how things might be improved in other parts of the country. Sandra White mentioned a lovely project, Bike for Good, which highlighted that it is never too late to take up a new sport and learn a new skill, and that camaraderie is one of the greatest benefits that we get from sport.

Gillian Martin made some fine points about active travel. Although the £80 million in this year's budget for active travel was a doubling of investment that will make a huge difference, there is always more that we can do.

Several members made a correct observation about female coaches. Only 31 per cent of coaches throughout the United Kingdom are women. We recognise the need for more female coaches and sporting leaders to attract the next generation into sport. SportsScotland recognises that and from 2016 to 2018 it provided financial subsidies to support coaches to gain coaching qualifications—more than 50 per cent of those coaches were women.

It is also key that we enable our young female sporting leaders to shine. The sportsScotland young people's sports panel boasts a really impressive 14 women members out of 19.

We very much welcome the positive trend in the overall measure of physical activity among adults since 2012, seen in the recent health survey. A wide range of organisations in Scotland are working very hard to encourage and support people in Scotland to be more active, more often, enabling more people to experience the many physical and mental health benefits of being active.

The Scottish Government's emphasis on empowering communities is important. When communities feel empowered, evidence shows that that leads to increased confidence and skills, more people volunteering, greater satisfaction with quality of life in the neighbourhood and greater engagement in local democracy.

Access to opportunities to highlight the many benefits of physical activity and sport is a right that we want everyone to have. Achieving our vision of a Scotland where people are more active, more often is therefore both an outcome of following those principles and a means of advancing the principles in their own right. If we work together in driving forward those improvements, we will drive forward change for women and girls right across Scotland, providing them with every opportunity to participate.

I thank all members for their contributions to the debate and for the contribution that it has made to raising awareness by discussing the opportunities in sport and physical activity for women and girls. I finish by reminding members that all of us in this chamber are leaders. Let us not just talk about it, but do it. To paraphrase George Adam, we should not just spectate; let us participate.

## Scottish Fiscal Commission (Appointments)

17:01

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is consideration of motion S5M-14208, in the name of Derek Mackay, on appointments to the Scottish Fiscal Commission.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees the recommendation of the Finance and Constitution Committee that the Scottish Government nominations to the Scottish Fiscal Commission be approved.—[*Derek Mackay*]

## Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:01

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S5M-14211, on designation of a lead committee.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.—[*Graeme Dey*]

## Decision Time

17:01

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The first question is, that amendment S5M-14194.1, in the name of Brian Whittle, which seeks to amend motion S5M-14194, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on women and girls in sport week, be agreed to.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S5M-14194.2, in the name of Anas Sarwar, which seeks to amend motion S5M-14194, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on women and girls in sport week, be agreed to.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S5M-14194, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on women and girls in sport week, as amended, be agreed to.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that increased participation in sport and physical health improves health and wellbeing, leads to improved self-esteem and, at the elite level, brings international success; recognises that, although physical activity levels among women and girls are increasing, everyone must work together to remove the barriers that some still face when it comes to getting involved in sport and physical activity; recognises the positive work that Active Schools is taking in increasing the participation of girls; welcomes the work of the Women and Girls in Sport Advisory Board and the continued commitment to a dedicated Scottish Women and Girls in Sport Week; recognises the inequality of access to sport and physical activity across demographics, which is especially significant to women and girls' participation; considers that the goal must be equal access for all irrespective of background or personal circumstances; notes the continued disparity in participation rates between boys and girls, as outlined in the most recent Scottish Health Survey, as well as the ongoing link between deprivation and low participation rates, and raises concern regarding the Scottish Government's limited success in making progress on this issue; recognises the importance of having inspirational role models that are representative of all backgrounds to encourage more people to get involved in sport; congratulates the Scotland women's national football team on qualifying for the World Cup finals in 2019, and warmly welcomes the Scottish Government's support for the team as it prepares for the tournament.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S5M-14208, in the name of Derek Mackay, on appointments to the Scottish Fiscal Commission, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees the recommendation of the Finance and Constitution Committee that the Scottish Government nominations to the Scottish Fiscal Commission be approved.

**The Presiding Officer:** The final question is, that motion S5M-14211, in the name of Graeme Dey, on designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

*Meeting closed at 17:02.*



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.

---

Published in Edinburgh by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

---

All documents are available on  
the Scottish Parliament website at:

[www.parliament.scot](http://www.parliament.scot)

Information on non-endorsed print suppliers  
is available here:

[www.parliament.scot/documents](http://www.parliament.scot/documents)

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact  
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000

Textphone: 0800 092 7100

Email: [sp.info@parliament.scot](mailto:sp.info@parliament.scot)

---



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba