



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Meeting of the Parliament

Wednesday 30 November 2022

Session 6



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 or by contacting Public Information on 0131 348 5000

Wednesday 30 November 2022

CONTENTS

	Col.
PORTFOLIO QUESTION TIME	1
RURAL AFFAIRS AND ISLANDS	1
Avian Flu (Game Bird Release)	1
Rural Visa Pilot Scheme	3
Animal Welfare (Winter Support)	4
Right-to-food Commitments (Support for Producers)	5
Vertical Farms (Feasibility)	7
Carbon Neutral Islands	9
Public Sector Procurement Contracts (Local Food and Drink Producers)	10
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	12
Refugees (Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Support)	12
Pharmacists (Recruitment)	14
Gender Identity Services and Mental Health Services (Integration)	15
Hospital Coverage (Highlands and Islands)	17
National Care Service	18
National Health Service (Staffing Levels)	20
Covid-19 and Flu Vaccination (NHS Highland)	21
Crohn's Disease (Access to Treatment)	22
URGENT QUESTION	24
Deaths in Custody	24
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (MEN'S ROLE IN ERADICATION)	29
<i>Motion moved—[Christina McKelvie].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Pam Gosal].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Pauline McNeill].</i>	
The Minister for Equalities and Older People (Christina McKelvie)	29
Pam Gosal (West Scotland) (Con)	34
Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab)	37
Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD)	39
Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)	41
Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con)	43
Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)	45
Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab)	48
Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)	50
Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green)	52
James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)	54
Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)	57
Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab)	60
Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP)	63
Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab)	65
Russell Findlay (West Scotland) (Con)	68
The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown)	71
BUSINESS MOTIONS	76
<i>Motions moved—[George Adam]—and agreed to.</i>	
PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTION	79
<i>Motion moved—[George Adam].</i>	
DECISION TIME	80
STROKE (RECOVERY)	85
<i>Motion debated—[Gillian Mackay].</i>	
Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green)	85
Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP)	88
Roz McCall (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)	89
Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab)	91
Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)	93
The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf)	94

Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 30 November 2022

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

Portfolio Question Time

Rural Affairs and Islands

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): Good afternoon. The first item of business is portfolio question time. We start with the rural affairs and islands portfolio. As ever, if a member wishes to ask a supplementary question, they should press their request-to-speak button or, if they are joining us online, place an “RTS” in the chat function, during the relevant question. There is quite a bit of interest in both portfolios today, so I make the usual plea for succinct questions and answers to match.

Avian Flu (Game Bird Release)

1. Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to reduce the risk of game birds raised as poultry spreading avian flu when they are released from captivity. (S6O-01612)

The Minister for Public Health, Women’s Health and Sport (Maree Todd): Game birds may not be released if they are showing signs of disease, and they cannot be released in disease control zones around a confirmed infected premises. The Scottish Government, in collaboration with the United Kingdom and Welsh Governments, has commissioned a risk assessment on the spread of high pathogenicity avian influenza—H5N1—to wild birds from released, formerly captive game birds in Great Britain. When that is published, we will consider the findings and, if any mitigating methods are required, we will assess as necessary.

Gillian Mackay: Pheasants have tested positive for avian flu on many occasions in the UK, but, every year, 45 million pheasants and more than 10 million other game birds are released into the wild, where they continue to be fed and corralled in outside areas in huge densities until they are shot. Is the Scottish Government considering introducing registration of game birds as part of the species licensing review, in order to protect wildlife and help to prevent the spread of avian flu and other diseases in the future?

Maree Todd: My ministerial colleagues are taking that work forward, so I would be happy to get back to Gillian Mackay with further detail as to what will be included in the review. As I said in my

response to her initial question, they are also taking forward work through the risk assessment, and any lessons that we can take from that will also be very important as part of our consideration.

Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP): As we heard this morning in an extensive evidence session in the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee with the chief veterinary officer, Sheila Voas, avian flu is a major concern for poultry farmers in my constituency and elsewhere. It is therefore crucial that all parties act responsibly to get the CVO’s message to constituents that ensuring biosecurity is, by itself, the single most important thing that people can do.

I ask the cabinet secretary to reiterate to the industry that the Scottish Government hears its concerns and is alive to them, and that it will continue to be guided by the science and led by the evidence.

Maree Todd: I absolutely hear those concerns and understand why there is such concern out there. As Jim Fairlie emphasises, it is biosecurity that is critical, along with the fact that we continue to be led by the science and evidence on the matter.

We know from work that the European Food Safety Authority has done that there is a twofold reduction in risk when housing is introduced, but, with excellent biosecurity, there is a 44-fold reduction in risk. I cannot emphasise enough, therefore, just how important and vital such biosecurity measures are.

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con): Sadly, avian flu was detected at a farm in Huntly, in my constituency, and 200,000 birds in the north-east, including in Banff and Turriff, have been impacted this month alone. The member of Parliament, David Duguid, has contacted the minister, but, although the UK and Welsh Governments have taken steps to protect farms, the Scottish Government is continuing to ignore NFU Scotland and its recommendation. Will the cabinet secretary clarify what she is going to do about that and how many thousands of birds have to be killed before she will follow NFU Scotland’s advice?

Maree Todd: What is critically important here is that I take the advice of my chief veterinary officer. Alexander Burnett might not have seen the RAINE Committee evidence session that took place today with the chief veterinary officer, who was there to talk about avian flu. The decision is not a simple one to make and, when it comes to mandatory housing, to which I know that Alexander Burnett is alluding in particular, there is a balance of risks to

consider, in addition to looking at all the science and evidence.

Taking such a measure is not straightforward, which is why the work that the chief veterinary officer and her team undertake is critically important and why I will continue to listen to that advice. That does not mean that the situation will not change, however, and we will continue to keep it under review.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 2 has not been lodged.

Rural Visa Pilot Scheme

3. Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether any further engagement is planned with the United Kingdom Government regarding the proposed rural visa pilot scheme. (S6O-01614)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): I wrote to the Home Secretary on 27 September, after we published our rural visa pilot proposal, which gained cross-party support in the Parliament. Disappointingly, we have received no response, but I continue to strongly urge the UK Government to accept the Migration Advisory Committee's recommendation that it deliver a migration pilot for rural areas, in partnership with the Scottish Government, local authorities and employers.

While we await a response, ministers have contacted multiple UK Parliament committees and the other devolved Governments to request engagement on the proposal, as we believe that that could help to address challenges that are experienced by remote and rural communities right across the UK.

Evelyn Tweed: I have significant concerns about the impact of on-going labour shortages on Scotland's rural economy. Does the cabinet secretary agree that rural Scotland has been failed by all four post-Brexit Tory Prime Ministers? Does she share my concern that Labour's call to end immigration dependency will result in the UK Government continuing to fail Scotland's rural economies?

Mairi Gougeon: I absolutely share those concerns. We warned about the ending of freedom of movement and the limitations of the current immigration system. I draw members' attention to the Highlands and Islands Enterprise business panel survey that was published a few months ago, which reported that 71 per cent of businesses are being impacted by Brexit and that key employers in rural areas are more likely to report risks to their workforce as a result of staffing or skills shortages.

Migration is crucial to addressing those challenges. Lack of labour is one of the key issues that I hear about when I visit businesses across Scotland and on our islands. Migration supports economic growth, the delivery of public services and community sustainability. The negative impact that UK Government immigration policy is having is clear, and we continue to call for those failings to be urgently addressed.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): I have previously said that rural visas could be a way to help to reverse depopulation but that they would not be a magic bullet. Powers in this area are held by the UK Government, but the Scottish Government should not use rural visas as cover for inaction on policies in areas in which it has competence that are proven to help to reverse depopulation, such as infrastructure investment in fixed links and broadband.

Will the Scottish Government commit to feasibility studies for tunnels in Shetland to reverse depopulation, as the rural visa pilot scheme aims to do?

Mairi Gougeon: The one element of that on which I agree with Beatrice Wishart is that there is no magic bullet that will solve the situation that we face in relation to labour shortages and depopulation. The rural visa pilot is one element of the work that we would like to take forward. It has the support of local authorities and businesses, and we think that it is a solution that could really work. However, it will not automatically solve the problem.

That is why the national islands plan and the series of pieces of work that we are doing through it are critical. That work is about how we tackle the challenges that have been raised by Beatrice Wishart, whether on transport, infrastructure, fuel poverty or housing.

Animal Welfare (Winter Support)

4. Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking with relevant stakeholders to support animal welfare over winter. (S6O-01615)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): The Scottish Government is committed to improving and safeguarding animal welfare. That applies at all times, but it applies even more so now, as we face winter and the cost of living crisis. No one wants owners to have to give up their beloved pets, and no one wants farmers or crofters to struggle to provide adequate provisions for their livestock. The Scottish Government will continue to work with the animal welfare charities and organisations

such as the Scottish SPCA to monitor the situation and ensure that help is available.

As I have stated previously in the chamber, I encourage anyone who is experiencing difficulties and who feels that they cannot cope or cannot keep their animal to reach out and ask for help and support, because there are numerous charities and other organisations that can provide support for people who look after pet animals or livestock.

Audrey Nicoll: The cost of living crisis is indeed having an impact, and many families are facing the heartbreak of rehoming their pets. The Dogs Trust found that almost half the Scottish dog owners who were polled would now find it difficult to give their dog all that it needs, while 62 per cent said that the cost of living crisis was likely to have an impact on whether they would consider rehoming or purchasing a dog in the next 12 months.

What action is the Scottish Government taking to engage with animal charities to ensure that, especially over Christmas, Scotland's pet owners get the best advice and support possible, to keep them united with their faithful companions?

Mairi Gougeon: We are in regular communication with the various charities and organisations, including the Scottish SPCA, the Dogs Trust and Cats Protection, among others, and we meet regularly to discuss a range of welfare issues, including, more recently, the cost of living crisis and its impact on pets as well as livestock.

As I said in my response to Audrey Nicoll's initial question, there are a number of charities that offer help and support, such as the Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home. I previously highlighted to members the Scottish SPCA pet aid initiative, which supports people who are struggling and their pets. Through pet aid, the organisation supplies pet supplies and food through food banks and community larders.

I re-emphasise that, if people feel that they need help and support, they should please reach out and ask for it. The Scottish SPCA's helpline number is 03000 999 999, and people can also visit the Scottish SPCA's website to find out more about the pet aid scheme and the help that is available through that.

Right-to-food Commitments (Support for Producers)

5. Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what support it is giving to food producers to work towards meeting its right-to-food commitments. (S6O-01616)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): The Scottish ministers

are taking action to ensure that everyone in Scotland is able to enjoy the internationally recognised right to adequate food. That encompasses a range of support for food producers, including £15 million of funding for the Scotland Food & Drink recovery plan from 2020 to 2023, ensuring that we are able to grow food, process it and get it to market. We are also undertaking work to develop a food security unit, with a view to monitoring on-going supply chain vulnerability and linking into future food security work. In addition to that, our good food nation plan will be prepared with regard to the right to adequate food.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: The food and drink industry is still recovering from the pandemic and Brexit, and it is now facing new pressure from rising energy costs, which are accounting for more than a quarter of operational costs. Many people working in the industry earn below the average wage and are having to turn to food banks for support. The Government must set out clearly its plans for future energy support for business, in order to support businesses to improve pay and conditions for struggling staff. Can the minister set out whether it has a plan and what that looks like?

Mairi Gougeon: The member will be aware of where the powers to tackle some of the biggest problems that business are facing ultimately lie. On energy, we know the support that is in place at the moment. The energy relief scheme does not go far enough, and we need to see it go further. Unfortunately, we do not have the powers to influence that.

We have a number of funds available for businesses to apply to, which we hope will help with some of the increased challenges and costs that we know that people are facing. We continue to do absolutely everything within our power to ease the burden on businesses and people right across Scotland, and we have brought forward the emergency budget review and have announced £3 billion-worth of support to do exactly that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There are a number of supplementaries, which will need to be brief, as will their responses.

Siobhian Brown (Ayr) (SNP): Food producers continue to grapple with labour shortages and those businesses often require access to migrant workers. If producers cannot get the workforce, they cannot make their food available to the public, and we cannot continue to modify our food culture and thereby give effect to the right to food if fresh produce is left to rot in the field because no one can harvest it. In that context, does the cabinet secretary agree that Labour ought to consider the comments of Keir Starmer, who said that freedom of movement was a "red line" and that Labour will not be going back on it?

Mairi Gougeon: I do not think that Keir Starmer's comments were at all helpful. We know that the food and drink sector is one of the areas that have been most impacted. As I said in a previous response, access to labour is probably the number 1 issue that I hear about when I speak to businesses in the food and drink sector and right across the supply chain. It is a huge problem.

We know that some of the issues are not new, and they have been exacerbated by the pandemic as well as, of course, the impact of Brexit. Many European Union citizens have left the United Kingdom, with the resultant loss of skills that we know cannot be quickly or easily replaced. That makes the situation even more difficult for the sectors that have relied on that EU talent.

Keir Starmer appears to be suggesting a policy of British jobs for British workers, but that ultimately fails to recognise overseas workers' invaluable contribution to our society and the economic reality of businesses' on-going need for those workers. With all of Scotland's future population growth expected to come from inward migration, it is crucial to Scotland's future prosperity.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: What we just heard was neither a brief question nor a brief response.

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): A lack of clarity around the proposed Scottish agriculture bill has been highlighted by protesters outside this building, including rural stakeholders from NFU Scotland, the Scottish Crofting Federation and the Soil Association. Does the cabinet secretary understand that the lack of clarity is harming the ability of farmers and food producers to plan their future seasonal rotations and contribute to meeting the Scottish Government's good food nation commitments?

Mairi Gougeon: As the member is aware, I was with her when stakeholders had that rally outside the Parliament. I understand the calls for greater clarity and detail, which is why I made a statement to the Parliament just a few weeks ago to set out some of the timescale. We will make more detail available in the coming months.

Vertical Farms (Feasibility)

6. Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government whether it has engaged in discussions or research about the feasibility of vertical farming in Scotland's cities. (S6O-01617)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): The Scottish Government continues to explore opportunities for vertical farming in Scotland, including in cities. In

addition to granting funding towards the development of an educational vertical farm at Scotland's Rural College's Edinburgh campus, we commissioned evidence on the environmental impact of vertical farming and engaged through the local food strategy consultation.

We support vertical farming research that aims to improve production efficiency, enhance plant quality and find ways to improve returns through the strategic research programme for environment, natural resources and agriculture. That is further to a £2 million investment in the Advanced Plant Growth Centre at the James Hutton Institute, via the Tay cities deal.

Daniel Johnson: Edinburgh Southern is not the most agricultural of constituencies, but perhaps it could be, with vertical farming. The issue is of global importance, because if we are currently using an area the size of South America, we will need to add an area the size of Brazil if we are to meet global food requirements. Beyond the research that the minister described, what support is offered in the context of skills requirements, supporting infrastructure and regulatory matters, such as planning alterations that might be required to facilitate vertical farming?

Mairi Gougeon: Those are important matters, which we must consider. Vertical farming is an exciting technology and we want to be at the forefront of it in Scotland, especially when it is Scottish businesses that are driving it forward. It offers huge benefits when it comes to what we are able to do in cities about food production and growth. National planning framework 4 and what is brought forward as a result of the new framework should enable that kind of development to happen; we certainly want to see more of it.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): Vertical farming is starting to be adopted across Scotland, with much thanks to the world-leading James Hutton Institute.

Other technologies, such as precision farming, smart technology and robots on farmland, are being developed at the national robotarium at Heriot-Watt University. However, there is a technology we are not delivering at the moment that would bring climate change benefits. The Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee heard today from the chief veterinary officer that gene editing could help in the fight to make our chickens more resistant to avian flu. Will the minister set out her plans on gene editing, for which our scientific institutions and farmers and growers are calling, and on which Scottish businesses could lead the world?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That was not really relevant to the question about vertical

farming. Cabinet secretary, do you want to respond?

Mairi Gougeon: I am happy to respond, because the member continues to raise that issue in this chamber, despite the responses that we continually give him. He is aware of the significant issues with the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill as introduced—a bill of which we were given only 24 hours' notice. It is important that we deal with such issues through the common frameworks process and, ultimately, that we take decisions that are best and right for Scotland.

Carbon Neutral Islands

7. Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the carbon neutral islands project. (S6O-01618)

Mairi Gougeon: By the end of the year, we will publish a progress report on the carbon neutral islands project, which will detail the work that has been done to date.

Jamie Greene: That was a helpfully short answer.

Cumbræ, in North Ayrshire, is one of the islands that are part of the project, and I thank all residents for the great efforts that they are making. On my most recent visit, I discovered that there is only one public electric vehicle charging point for the whole island, which has more than 1,400 residents in winter and many more thousands in summer. How on earth can the islands meet their climate change objectives? There is no way that they can be carbon neutral if the Government does not invest in much-needed infrastructure. How many charging points does the island need if it is to become carbon neutral? How many will the Government install in the next 12 months?

Mairi Gougeon: Those particular points would be more relevant for the Minister for Transport. I would be happy to follow up on those and get that information to the member. As I said in my initial response, we will set out the work that has been undertaken to date and how we intend to develop the project. It is an exciting prospect, not only for the islands that are part of the programme but for the wider learning that we can take from it, because we know that our islands are at the forefront of innovation and technology.

It is also important that we want to develop the project with communities and do the work with communities. It is not a top-down approach—it is very much bottom up. It is an exciting project that will ultimately deliver for our island communities.

Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): The carbon neutral islands project will create jobs and put islands at the centre of Scotland's journey to

net zero. Jobs are key to securing populations on our islands and are often linked to tourism. Does the cabinet secretary agree that, if Opposition parties are concerned about investing in the carbon neutral islands project and reducing island depopulation, they should promote what makes islands wonderful and unique communities that have much to offer, rather than focusing on the challenges that they face?

Mairi Gougeon: Although we must acknowledge that our island communities face some unique challenges, we must also acknowledge that the Scottish Government is committed to supporting our island communities. That is evidenced by our national islands plan, which I talked about earlier, the historic Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 and the investment that we are taking forward through the islands programme. However, I also agree that language plays an integral part in how we perceive islands, because the negative language that is associated with solely focusing on challenges harms our communities, as does the use of language such as “remote” when describing our islands. We should all be cognisant of that when we discuss our islands and remember that, as Jenni Minto said in her question, they are full of life and innovation and have huge cultural significance to Scotland.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): It would help if some of the islands had ferries that ran on time, but nevertheless, it is important that we add value for the climate with policies that add substantial change. On the carbon neutral islands project, can the cabinet secretary assure us that the project is not simply badging changes that were already in train?

Mairi Gougeon: Yes; I assure the member of that, and I welcome his feedback on the update to the project when we publish it towards the end of the year.

Public Sector Procurement Contracts (Local Food and Drink Producers)

8. Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to support local food and drink producers to access public sector procurement contracts. (S6O-01619)

Mairi Gougeon: We provided funding of up to £150,000 in 2022-23 to the supplier development programme, which delivers free training and guidance on how to submit and win public procurement bids. We are also updating our guidance, “Catering for change: buying food sustainably in the public sector”, on sustainable procurement of food and catering services in the public sector. In addition, we provide broad support measures to ensure that local producers have the capabilities to access public sector contracts, which includes £15 million of funding to

the Scotland food and drink recovery plan over 2022-23, £17.5 million to businesses through the food processing, marketing and co-operation grant scheme and continued support for the food for life programme.

Graeme Dey: I am sure that the cabinet secretary is aware of the joint Tayside Contracts and NFU Scotland initiative that aims to improve access for local suppliers to the output of Tayside's largest catering organisation. Does she agree that increasing the locally grown and produced element of the meals that are served to 30,000 people daily by Tayside Contracts is an absolute must from a sustainability perspective and because it generates much-needed revenue for those producers? Would she join me in encouraging Tayside Contracts and other such bodies to maximise their efforts in that regard?

Mairi Gougeon: I absolutely would, and I could not agree more. That has been a fantastic initiative, particularly in the region that we are both fortunate enough to represent; it offers huge opportunities there. We know that small and medium-sized enterprises and microbusinesses are critical to the social, economic and environmental health of Scotland, which is why we are committed to leveraging the full procurement rules to make it as easy as possible for SMEs to bid for and win public procurement contracts and participate in local supply chains.

We have demonstrated our commitment to local food in the public sector through our local food strategy, our food for life programme and the supplier development programme, which delivers free training and guidance on how to submit and win public procurement bids. I encourage producers in Scotland to explore the opportunities that provision into the public sector offers.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): The minister will be aware that East Ayrshire Council is an exemplar in public procurement, with some 75 per cent of the food that makes it on to our pupils' tables coming from local suppliers. Why does the Scotland Excel contract remain so difficult to access, and why does so little of the food that is provided under that contract come from Scotland?

Mairi Gougeon: I agree with the member that East Ayrshire is an exemplar, and that is why we encourage all local authorities to sign up to the food for life programme; more than half of local authorities are already taking part in that. Of course, we are always looking to strengthen it, make improvements to it wherever we can and make it as easy as possible for suppliers to enter into those contracts and bid for them through the public procurement process, so I would be happy to look further at that and see what more we can do. That will form part of the work that I hope we

will take forward through the good foundation plans, too.

Health and Social Care

Refugees (Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Support)

1. **Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its work to provide mental health and suicide prevention support to refugees. (S6O-01620)

The Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care (Kevin Stewart): The Scottish Government works with partners such as Heads of Psychology Scotland and local mental health and psychological therapies services to provide access to mental health and psychological support. Along with a range of practical supports, the best first-line treatment to support refugees is psychological first aid, as not all of those who need support require to be seen by a specialist mental health professional.

If more specialist help is needed, anyone in Scotland—regardless of their nationality, residence status or the length of time that they will be in the country—is already entitled to receive mental health, psychological or emergency treatment, and they can register with a general practitioner to receive general medical services at no charge. Support can also be provided through NHS 24.

Together with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, we recently published our new "Suicide prevention Strategy and Action Plan", which will address the inequalities that can contribute to suicide and will also ensure that we take every opportunity to prevent suicide by supporting people as early as we can. Specifically, we will explore how to further support people with no recourse to public funds—that includes people seeking asylum and people who are at risk of, or experiencing, destitution—to access the services that they need to support their mental health, including where there is a risk of suicide.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I know that ministers are attempting to provide helpful answers, but we have to have shorter answers if we are going to get all the questions in, including supplementary questions.

Maggie Chapman: I thank the minister for that response and for the recognition that mental health in Scotland is our responsibility while the refugee and asylum system belongs with the United Kingdom Home Office.

Is the minister aware of the Asylum Seeker Memorial project by Liberty Investigates, which seeks to name and remember those in the system who have died either by completing suicide in despair or through the actions of others who are also severely traumatised? Does he agree that ensuring that asylum seekers and refugees have equity of access to mental health services, including specialist provision, is absolutely essential to prevent mental health crises in our communities in the future?

Kevin Stewart: I am aware of the Liberty Investigates project. The Scottish Government is very clear that all refugees and people who are seeking asylum and living here can access health services. They are entitled to receive emergency treatment and can register with a GP practice to receive general medical services, including referrals to mental health services and treatment for specific conditions.

Maggie Chapman has taken a keen interest in Baroness Helena Kennedy's asylum inquiry. One of the recommendations in that inquiry was that £5 million-worth of annual funding should be provided by the Home Office, and I completely agree with Baroness Kennedy on that front. The UK Government needs to recognise the true cost of the asylum system to individuals, our communities and our public services. The Home Office also needs to take its responsibility to safeguard people in its care seriously. It must have systems in place to recognise when someone needs support, and it needs processes in place to enable people to access appropriate services.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The answers and some of the questions are going to have to be shorter.

Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): As dispersal areas for asylum seekers expand to all council areas in Scotland, and given that we know the truly terrible impact that hotel accommodation has had on the mental health of asylum seekers, will the minister—in conjunction, I hope, with the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government—explore the community sponsorship scheme that is run by Reset UK as a means of assuming greater control over the housing of asylum seekers? The Government could thus support improved mental health and wellbeing, given that we know the link between housing and wellbeing.

Kevin Stewart: The situation that the Home Office has allowed to develop by putting people into hotel accommodation, which is often very unsuitable, is not right. The member can be assured that there will be co-operation right across the Government as we try to do our level best for these folks. However, the key thing in all this is that we should be in charge of immigration and

asylum policy here so that we can get that right for people from the very start.

Pharmacists (Recruitment)

2. **Sharon Dowey (South Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government how many pharmacists have been recruited into primary care since 2018. (S6O-01621)

The Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport (Maree Todd): The most recent data provided by health boards indicated that, since 2018, 610 whole-time equivalent pharmacists have been recruited into general practitioner practices through the primary care fund. That figure shows primary care funded posts only. Health boards will also have pharmacists funded by other funding streams who have been recruited to GP practices. That data would only be available directly from health boards.

Sharon Dowey: In Ayrshire and Arran, there is a real problem with pharmacy staff shortages. Planned pharmacy closures and reduced opening hours are becoming the norm, and that was never heard of before. That situation can make it more difficult for vulnerable people to pick up prescriptions, it can impact people who work irregular hours, and it puts more strain on other health services that are open. I have spoken to pharmacists, and they say that it is the result of the Government increasing their workload and staff leaving to work elsewhere. What workforce planning has the Government done to increase the number of pharmacists, and has the number of pharmacy places at Scottish universities increased?

Maree Todd: One thing that I must say in agreement with the member, and as a pharmacist myself, is that the pandemic has shone a light on just how significant community pharmacy is to the healthcare of the nation. Community pharmacies have stepped up during the course of the pandemic, they are providing more services than ever before and they are a very valued part of our primary care system.

There are a number of reasons for scheduled and unscheduled closures across the community pharmacy network, and these have usually been short in nature and localised. Not least, Covid is still causing staff absences and making it challenging for people to maintain community pharmacy services.

The Scottish Government has a health and social care integrated workforce plan, which commits to increasing pharmacy pre-registration training places by 120 until 2024-25, and we have increased pharmacy technician training places by 108 for the current academic year. So, we are certainly putting in place programmes to increase

the number of pharmacists available, and the answer is to encourage more people to take up pharmacy, which is a fantastic career—and I do declare an interest.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Briefly, Jackie Baillie.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): The most recent figures for pharmacy in Scotland, published in March, actually show an increase in the number of pharmacists working in primary care in Scotland and an increase overall in the number of registered pharmacists, taking the total to 5,284. Does the minister agree that those figures contradict Community Pharmacy Scotland's claim that the recent wave of branch closures has been caused by the primary care sector poaching pharmacists from community pharmacies? Furthermore, does the minister agree that the ongoing and widespread closures of branches affecting the large pharmacy chains is not, in fact, caused by a shortage of pharmacists?

Maree Todd: Undoubtedly, there are shortages in certain areas. Pharmacy is a profession in which people do a generalised undergraduate degree and a postgraduate year and then there are opportunities to specialise in various different branches—industry, hospital, community and, most recently, primary care.

Obviously, we need to be very careful about balancing that workforce and ensuring that every career stream is attractive and that there are opportunities for every pharmacist to flourish, whichever branch of the profession they go into. We work very closely with Community Pharmacy Scotland and there are concerns, undoubtedly, about people being attracted from community pharmacy into primary care posts. The solution is not only to train more pharmacists but to ensure that a career in community pharmacy is as satisfying and as worthwhile as people can make it. The conditions are as important as the salary in that regard.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We will have to pick up the pace a wee bit if we are going to get through all the questions, including supplementaries.

Gender Identity Services and Mental Health Services (Integration)

3. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it plans to integrate gender identity and mental health services. (S6O-01622)

The Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport (Maree Todd): We remain committed to improving access to and delivering the national health service's gender identity services, which is why, in December 2021, we

published a framework that sets out a range of actions for that purpose. Many of those actions are now well under way, which is why we are also allocating funding to health boards to directly support those clinical services. Gender identity services are already able to connect patients into local mental health services, if required, following clinical assessment. Finally, we are working to create a mental health system that responds to everyone's needs. That means mental health services and support being person centred, and includes supporting transgender and non-binary people with a range of issues, including gender identity, that might impact their mental health.

Kenneth Gibson: Does the minister agree that many young people who present at gender clinics have concomitant complex psychological and mental health needs? Once someone is identified as having gender-related distress, other important health issues can be overlooked in favour of an unquestioning affirmative approach to transition. What support is available for people who are seeking to detransition? Can the minister share with the chamber a protocol for dealing with that vulnerable patient group?

Maree Todd: Following clinical assessment, health services are able to connect patients to local mental health services, if required. I assure the member that the young people's gender service, which is delivered by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, works closely with a range of other services, including local child and adolescent mental health services. Public discussion about that type of healthcare can, unfortunately, be polarised, leading to misconceptions about how it is delivered. In NHS Scotland, best practice is expected to be grounded in the principles of realistic medicine. That framework supports patients and registered medical practitioners to have honest and open conversations about healthcare. It promotes shared decision making and a personalised approach to care.

Detransitioning can generally be understood to be the process of reversing social, medical or other steps towards transitioning, and returning to living as what one's sex was at birth. In cases where an individual might decide to halt or reverse aspects of a medical transition, they would be appropriately supported by their clinical team to do so. Health professionals will understand that the reasons behind any decision to detransition will be varied and incredibly personal, and they will respond appropriately.

Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con): The Scottish Government has described the current process for obtaining a gender recognition certificate as overly medicalised, and it is proposing to remove the requirement for medical evidence to change one's legal gender through the Gender Recognition

Reform (Scotland) Bill. The Sandyford gender identity clinic in Glasgow is currently offering initial appointments to patients who registered three to four years ago. Does the minister agree that the real problem that is facing trans people is a lack of timely medical care support? What does the Scottish Government plan to do about those sky-high waiting times for patients who are experiencing gender dysphoria?

Maree Todd: I agree that there is, undoubtedly, a real challenge in delivering gender identity services. The waiting lists are far too long, and people are waiting too long for the care that they require from NHS Scotland. A great deal of work is going on on that front. In the interests of time, I will point to the member to the letter that the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care provided to the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee, in which she will find the answers to all the questions that she has asked about the range of work that is going on to improve the services on the ground.

Hospital Coverage (Highlands and Islands)

4. Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of hospital coverage for remote and rural areas in the Highlands and Islands. (S6O-01623)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): It is primarily the responsibility of individual territorial national health service boards to plan and provide services, including hospital provision, that meet the needs of local people and are consistent with our national policies and frameworks. I had the pleasure of formally opening two new NHS Highland community hospitals this year: Broadford hospital on the Isle of Skye and Badenoch and Strathspey community hospital. Both facilities deliver healthcare right across the communities that they serve, bringing benefits to the people of the Highlands and Islands.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: The cabinet secretary will be aware that there is no urgent care available in the Portree community hospital on the Isle of Skye, and that the number of beds has been halved. In Shetland, there are concerns about when the proposed replacement for the Gilbert Bain hospital will be delivered, and there is no confirmed timetable as yet. In Fort William, the new Belford hospital was originally supposed to be delivered this year, but that date has now moved to 2028 at the earliest.

Can the cabinet secretary give assurances to my constituents in the north of Skye that services in Portree will face no further cuts and that urgent care will be restored? Will he confirm for my constituents in Shetland that plans for the new

hospital are progressing and that a clearer timetable for completion will be available soon? Finally, will he give a commitment to my constituents in Lochaber that the delayed new Belford hospital will be delivered by the now-extended date?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am conscious that that was a three-part question, cabinet secretary, but please answer as briefly as possible.

Humza Yousaf: In the interests of brevity, I could write to Jamie Halcro Johnston with details of each of the projects that he has listed. I have also written to community members, most recently in Fort William, about the Lochaber project. I am happy to give the member updates in that respect.

We have a limited and finite budget and have to prioritise elements within it, given the constraints around it. What does not help, of course, is having £650 million ripped out of that budget because of sky-high inflation costs.

As I said, I will write to the member with full details of the projects that he has raised.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): The Gilbert Bain hospital in Lerwick opened in 1961 and the building's current footprint does not allow for modifications to meet and deliver modern hospital requirements. The case for a new building has been years in the making. When will Shetland get a new hospital?

Humza Yousaf: I have been to the Gilbert Bain hospital and the member is right to say that it requires investment—in fact, she says that it requires replacement, and I do not disagree with her in that regard. However, I have just outlined the fact that we have a capital investment project for health that is incredibly ambitious. I will give the member an update on the situation with the Gilbert Bain hospital when we are able to make further progress on that particular site.

National Care Service

5. Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether it still plans to launch a national care service in the current parliamentary session. (S6O-01624)

The Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care (Kevin Stewart): Yes.

Craig Hoy: I note the minister's optimism, but I am not sure that I share it.

Following criticism from stakeholders and members of committees of this Parliament, the minister is well aware of the huge practical and financial risks that are involved in the massive reorganisation of staff across care services, including the potential transfer of 75,000 local

government employees to a centralised service. Therefore, is the minister able to say whether the financial memorandum to the bill fully includes the cost of asset transfers, the full cost of the transfer of staff under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations, any resulting costs associated with pay, terms and conditions and pensions, and the impact of the application of VAT?

Kevin Stewart: I think that that was a five-part question, Presiding Officer.

Any spending decisions on the national care service will be rigorous evidence-based decisions. The costs in the financial memorandum largely represent investment in service improvement and terms and conditions for front-line care staff. Any insinuation or suggestion that the figures relate exclusively to administration costs is totally false.

Beyond that, 2022-23 budget confirmed more than £1.6 billion for social care and integration to lay the groundwork for the national care service.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We will take some brief supplementaries—that means one question each.

Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP): Around one person in 25 in Scotland receives social care, social work and occupational health support, and demand is forecast to grow. To what extent is establishing the national care service a precondition of ensuring that we meet those future needs while delivering the consistent and high standards that are needed?

Kevin Stewart: We have been clear that we must design a national care service that is sustainable and future proofed, taking account of the changing needs of Scotland's population. We have also been clear about the benefits of framework legislation in that respect. Legislating for the detail of a national care service in secondary legislation will allow our laws to keep up with the pace of population change and help to close the implementation gaps that many of those folks who receive care and support say that we need to close.

Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab): Trade unions, local government, professional associations, care providers in all sectors, carers and front-line workers are calling for a pause to legislation, but they are also concerned that the legislation will not meet the aspirations of the Feeley review into social care. Therefore, can the minister explain why he has failed to introduce the key recommendations of the Feeley report, such as ending non-residential care charges—which was, incidentally, a Scottish National Party manifesto pledge—and say when he will listen to the serious concerns of those stakeholders?

Kevin Stewart: Mr O'Kane missed out one key group that definitely wants change, which is people. People who are in receipt of care and support and their carers are in favour of change, as was shown in the consultation.

The Government would like to do much more to change our social care system and to provide greater investment, but that is not possible in the current financial climate. It is a bit grim that Labour continues to support rule from Westminster, where Tory chancellors keep a firm grip on the purse strings and do not allow investment in our public services.

National Health Service (Staffing Levels)

6. Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): He had better vote Labour, then.

To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to ensure NHS staffing levels are maintained at appropriate levels. (S6O-01625)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): We have a strong track record of recruitment and staffing within NHS Scotland, especially in comparison with other parts of the United Kingdom. The Scottish Government continues to take a number of steps to ensure that NHS staffing levels are appropriate. For example, as part of our £600 million winter package of measures, we are providing funding to health boards to support the recruitment of 1,000 additional staff, as well as measures to make it easier to retain and rehire experienced staff.

Having said that, I am under no illusion whatsoever about how pressured the system currently is and the impact that that will be having on staff to patient ratios.

Neil Bibby: The cabinet secretary will be aware of Labour's plan to end non-domiciled tax status across the UK and use £3 billion in extra revenues to boost NHS staff numbers, including more newly qualified nurses, doctors, midwives and health visitors. That will represent the biggest medical training expansion in NHS history. With our NHS facing so many challenges, including unacceptable accident and emergency waiting times, does the Scottish Government agree that Labour is right to end non-dom status? Will the cabinet secretary pledge to prioritise increasing NHS staffing with the Barnett consequentials from that policy?

Humza Yousaf: I would rather talk about the powers that we do have in our hands. Of course, any powers that are held by Westminster—*[Interruption.]*

The Tories do not like that. One minute, they are castigating us for even mentioning Westminster and, the next minute, they are doing so when I say

that we should focus on the powers that we have in our hands.

If Neil Bibby wants to suggest something that we can do, which is within our gift, of course, I would welcome that suggestion. I welcome any proposal that would take the financial controls and levers away from the Conservative Party, which has already slashed our budget by £650 million, due just to financial incompetence. However, the thing that will not help staffing in the NHS is Keir Starmer's insistence on talking down our overseas workers in the NHS, who make a fantastic contribution to the NHS in Scotland. Somebody in Scottish Labour should stand up and apologise for Keir Starmer's continued anti-immigration rhetoric.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: If we are to get through the questions in the *Business Bulletin*, I will not be able to take any further supplementary questions, which is highly regrettable.

Covid-19 and Flu Vaccination (NHS Highland)

7. Fergus Ewing (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it can take to support a general practitioner-led Covid-19 and flu vaccination programme in NHS Highland, in light of reports that it would cost several million pounds less than the model proposed by the national health service board. (S6O-01626)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): The Scottish Government will continue to support NHS Highland to determine whatever delivery mechanisms it considers best for delivery of the winter programme. I give Fergus Ewing an absolute assurance that the Scottish Government has not vetoed—and will not veto—the use of primary care in that delivery.

For the other vaccination programmes, which the proposed NHS Highland model concerns, GPs have a key role in forming the local primary care improvement plans, which set out how the vaccine transformation programme and other elements of the GP contract are delivered in each area. I expect NHS Highland to benefit from the experience of its GPs in designing vaccination services that are cost effective, allow the greatest use of all funds and work towards the best experience possible for our patients.

Fergus Ewing: GPs provided the service for £1.5 million a year, but the NHS Highland model would cost up to £9 million a year. Will the cabinet secretary ask his officials to engage directly with the GP practice in Nairn and other GP representatives in the Highlands to devise a system of provision of vaccination services that is safest, most efficient, community-based, led by GPs and which, on the available evidence, would

be likely to save several million pounds for the taxpayer, when compared with the health board proposals?

Humza Yousaf: I will ask my officials to engage directly, and I will go one further—I will also engage directly with NHS Highland on the issues that Fergus Ewing has raised. He is right that such things have to be balanced; at a time of severe financial constraint, we should be looking to get the best value for money, while also ensuring that people have the access that they need to vaccinations.

The winter Covid and flu vaccination programme is nearing its end, but in advance of any potential future booster campaign, I will engage with NHS Highland on the matters that Fergus Ewing has outlined.

Crohn's Disease (Access to Treatment)

8. Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to improve access to treatment for people with Crohn's disease. (S6O-01627)

The Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport (Maree Todd): The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that everyone who is living with Crohn's disease can access the best possible care and support, and benefit from safe, effective and person-centred healthcare services.

The Scottish Government-funded modernising patient pathways programme—MPPP—has a specific workstream in inflammatory bowel disease. That workstream is driving improvements that will support a standardised and equitable service across Scotland.

The Scottish Government also funds NHS Research Scotland, which includes a gastroenterology specialty group, which leads on research into Crohn's disease, focusing on a range of areas including early diagnosis and new treatments.

Jim Fairlie: I have received emails from multiple constituents detailing instances in which they were dissatisfied with the treatment of Crohn's disease in the NHS Tayside region. They expressed concerns about a lack of communication over their care, the time taken between testing and diagnosis and inadequate availability of certain treatments. What can the minister do to assure my constituents that there will be an all-round improvement in the care and treatment in NHS Tayside?

Maree Todd: I am well aware that the diagnosis of Crohn's disease can be difficult and that the service at NHS Tayside is supported by a robust

multidisciplinary team structure to ensure appropriate diagnosis and treatment. The treatments that are provided by the board are consistent with national guidelines for the management of inflammatory bowel disease and are discussed by the multidisciplinary team when changes are required.

Another specialist consultant has recently been appointed to the inflammatory bowel disease team in NHS Tayside, which will increase the total number of specialist consultants, who work alongside the specialist nursing team, to six.

The board also offers multiple support services to patients, including the hot clinic and IBD hotline, specialist monitoring clinics for different treatments and nurse-led review clinics. In addition, one of the consultants sits on the cross-party group for IBD, and the team is fully engaged with the work of Crohn's & Colitis UK in order to hear and respond to the needs of patients with those and other IBD conditions.

Improvement work for Crohn's and colitis services is under way at the national level through the MPP gastroenterology programme, which I mentioned, with work focused on the redesign of pathways and interventions to provide timely and effective care for patients.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes portfolio question time. We got through all the questions in the *Business Bulletin*, but I am conscious that members from all parties were not able to be called during supplementary questions, which is highly regrettable. It is not helped by members asking questions that have multiple sub-questions built into them. Equally, it is not helpful when ministers give responses that last as long as they did during this session, in relation to both the initial questions and the supplementary questions. I hope that that will be taken into account for future portfolio question times.

Urgent Question

Deaths in Custody

14:54

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to reduce deaths in custody, in light of new statistics showing that a record number of people have died in prisons in the past three years.

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): First and foremost, my thoughts are with everyone who has lost a loved one in prison custody. The safety and wellbeing of people who are in prison are a priority, and we recognise that we must do more to support positive health outcomes for vulnerable people in prisons. The prison health and social care needs assessment, which we published in September, and the work that is being undertaken in response to the independent review of deaths in prison custody are key steps in our commitment to achieving that aim.

All front-line staff are trained in the Scottish Prison Service's prevention of suicide strategy, which provides a person-centred care pathway for prisoners who are at risk of suicide and promotes a supportive environment in which people can ask for help. Individuals are screened on their arrival at prison, and when needed, the SPS and the national health service work together to support vulnerable individuals, whom they review regularly. We are also working with partners and bereaved families to implement the recommendations from the deaths in prison custody review.

Jamie Greene: We, too, pass on our condolences to all families who have been affected by a death in custody. They are in our thoughts.

There have been 121 deaths in custody since 2020, and those figures are significantly worse in Scotland than they are in other parts of the United Kingdom. In Scotland, 15 per cent of prison inmates have long-term mental health problems; 30 per cent have alcohol use disorder; and 17 per cent have a history of self-harm. Despite all those challenges, there continues to be huge variation in the provision of mental health nurses in the prison estate. In HMP Barlinnie, for example, there is only one nurse per 282 inmates.

I raised that disturbing trend explicitly with the First Minister in October. With deaths in custody at a tragic new high, what further progress has been made on the First Minister's pledge to improve conditions and reduce these needless and avoidable deaths?

Keith Brown: I acknowledge Jamie Greene's point about the difference between Scotland and the rest of the UK, which is a relevant factor to look at, but I think that the situation here is more complex than is sometimes suggested. Of course, whether through deaths from Covid or the impact of Covid itself on the mental health of prisoners, particular issues have made this period more difficult. However, that is also true in England and Wales.

I acknowledge that there is a difference here that we must interrogate, so we must take the time to look at all the elements of the report. If members look at how the Ministry of Justice reports deaths in custody, they will see that it takes a significantly different approach; for example, it collates suicides and deaths, including drug overdoses, in the category of self-inflicted deaths. In 2020-21, 86 deaths in England and Wales were self-inflicted, which is an increase of 28 per cent from the previous year. However, the latest figures from the Council of Europe, which go back to 2018, show that the mortality rate in prisons in Scotland is 46 per 10,000 inmates, whereas in England and Wales it is 39.5. There is a difference in that respect that we want to get to the bottom of.

We are engaging with the NHS, the SPS and prison care networks to embed the medication-assisted treatment standards in prison settings, and additional support is being provided for the provision of health services. However, that is an on-going issue. As we heard during the previous set of portfolio questions, there has also been an impact as a result of staff difficulties, and identifying new staff for the health service has an impact on prisons, too.

I am happy to keep Jamie Greene updated as we move forward.

Jamie Greene: Clearly, this is not some race to the bottom with regard to the statistics. The numbers are rising, and that is tragic. As we all know, behind every statistic is a life lost.

It is not just suicides that are on the rise in prisons, but drug deaths. Thanks to pressure from prison officers and members on the Conservative benches, mail—which can be soaked in drugs—is now photocopied before being presented to prisoners. However, the statistics clearly show that dangerous illicit drugs are somehow still making their way into our prisons.

The cabinet secretary recently told the Criminal Justice Committee that

“We should not accept the presence of drugs in prison as inevitable.”—[*Official Report, Criminal Justice Committee*, 1 September 2021; c 36.]

I agree entirely with that sentiment. Will the cabinet secretary back my call today to make all

Scottish prisons drug free by 2025? We think that that is doable. If he does back my call, how will that be done, and if he does not, why not?

Keith Brown: Rather than backing the member's call now, I would want to take the responsible step of looking at what the provisions and measures within that would be before making a judgment. I am happy to have that discussion.

I should also say that we have initiated the photocopying of previously drug-infused items, which has had a very beneficial impact, not just on individual prisoners' health but in starting to break, to some extent, the hold of serious organised crime. Moreover, new equipment—which has been installed at Barlinnie, for example—can do a whole-body scan to ensure that no drugs come in that way. To be perfectly frank, we have been finding a consequential increase in over-the-wall attempts to get drugs into prison, but that is no different from every other jurisdiction.

This is a continuing campaign. I think that we have made significant progress in reducing the ways in which drugs get into prisons. I agree that there is more to do, and I am happy to look at any concrete proposals that the member might want to put forward.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): The report, which comes from the University of Glasgow, says:

“a person imprisoned in 2022 will be twice as likely to die in prison as someone imprisoned in 2008”,

which is quite a jolting statistic. As Jamie Greene has said—and as the cabinet secretary has acknowledged—the figure of 29 deaths by suicide is significantly higher than that in England.

What will the Scottish Government do to identify why that is the case? Will it examine whether prison restrictions—less time out of cells, for example—are leading to a loss of hope, particularly in relation to the deaths by suicide? Will the cabinet secretary assure me that he is continuing to talk to the trade unions, which provide an invaluable insight into the general availability of drugs in and around our prisons, so that we can get this right?

Keith Brown: I am happy to confirm that we are continuing to talk to the trade unions, although those talks have perhaps been dominated of late by the pay negotiations that are going on. In my visits to a number of prisons, I have found, just as Pauline McNeill says, that the people who best understand the problem and can perhaps find solutions are those who work on the front line.

The member is also right to say that the restrictions that were necessary during the course of the Covid pandemic will have had an effect on the mental health of prisoners. We understand

that, which is why we agreed to the recommendation from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland to get rid of those restrictions, as far as possible, at the same time that they were being lifted from the general population.

The recent moves with regard to mobile phones have ensured that prisoners can be in contact with their families, particularly their children. I think that the approach has had a beneficial impact; however, there is no question but that we will have to continue to examine that and work with trade union partners to get the best possible understanding so that we can find the right way forward.

Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): What steps in addition to the action that has already been outlined by the cabinet secretary are being taken to improve prisoner welfare and wellbeing and tackle the tragic issue of prison suicides?

Keith Brown: The Prison Service is developing its health and wellbeing strategy, which focuses on the prevention of suicide and self-harm. The prevention of suicide in prison strategy also aims to care for those who are at risk of suicide by providing a person-centred care pathway based on an individual's needs, strengths and assets and by promoting a supportive environment where people in SPS custody can ask for help. Indeed, I have witnessed that approach at close range, especially with those who have just been admitted to prison for the first time—which can have a traumatic impact—and I have also seen the way in which front-line SPS staff have been trained to deal with that, not least in relation to the prevention of suicide.

As I have said, individuals are screened on their arrival at prison, and the SPS and the national health service will, when needed, work together to support vulnerable individuals, reviewing them regularly. I will continue to make sure that we refine that.

Instead of giving a snap judgment on the report, I want to take a bit more time to look at it, because it has a lot to say about the talk to me strategy that is being used in prisons. I am happy to converse with the member in due course on the provisions that it sets out.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Given what has been highlighted in this new report, can the cabinet secretary confirm whether he is looking at tightening up the deadlines for commencing reviews into deaths in custody as well as improving access to legal aid for families who are navigating what is a very challenging process at the most difficult of times?

Keith Brown: I am not sure whether I caught all of that question, but I think that part of it was about the timetables in relation to fatal accident inquiries. As the member knows, the FAI system is independently run by the Crown Office, and in 2016 the Parliament voted unanimously on the way that it was to be changed. Substantial additional resources have been given to the Crown Office to address that, and there have been substantial successes. However, one way in which we can address this issue is through the deaths in custody review. For example, instead of duplicating certain processes, we might be able to reach a faster conclusion in cases where there is no evidence of criminality.

As for Liam McArthur's point about families, what we have taken forward as part of the review is a much more consistent approach to informing families at the right time. That sort of thing was not done in the past; indeed, we have had very good engagement from families who had been affected by that very issue. I now understand that, in the past three to four months, every single death in custody has been followed up by a phone call from the governor or an officer in the prison to the family or next of kin to ensure that they are advised as soon as possible.

Violence Against Women and Girls (Men's Role in Eradication)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-07002, in the name of Christina McKelvie, on recognising the vital role that men must play in challenging and eradicating violence against women and girls. I ask members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons or type RTS in the chat function.

15:06

The Minister for Equalities and Older People (Christina McKelvie): It is, of course, right that this Parliament collectively recognises the global campaign—the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence—that highlights the brutality that women across the world still face. However, it is with a sense of regret that we have to do so at all. That, in itself, ensures that the spotlight is on what remains one of the most difficult challenges our society faces here, in Scotland, and throughout the world: violence perpetrated against women by men.

Of course, it is not all men, by any means, but we need to examine the underlying causes of such violence so that we can prevent it. We must change the everyday sexism and misogyny in society, here and elsewhere, that can help to perpetuate violence or support people to look away when they should speak up. That is where we are seeing a shift in society now. Men are recognising that they have a role in standing against violence against women and girls by changing the way that they behave and calling out behaviour among other men.

Men's silence can feel supportive or even condoning of the violence that women and girls experience. As the philosopher Paulo Friere said,

"Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral."

It is vital that men speak out. We need men to lead by example to their friends, family and children.

I say to men that we need you to reflect on your past experiences and on the times that you may have inadvertently been permissive about misogynistic values because it was framed as a joke or maybe just banter. We need you to look critically at how the power imbalance has impacted those whom you know and love, and we need you to carry those messages proactively to the men around you.

Men must take the lead on this challenge. They hold a unique place in challenging their peers, even when it might be uncomfortable—believe me,

that discomfort is less damaging than being a victim of violence. That is what is refreshing about Police Scotland's "That guy" campaign. The campaign, which is an excellent example of men standing up to be counted, challenges casual sexism and encourages self-reflection. It urges men to take responsibility for their actions and those of their peers in order to help to effect a culture change to tackle sexual crime against women. The current phase asks men to challenge their friends' behaviour and to talk openly to male friends about behaviour that is damaging to women. First launched in October 2021, the online campaign has been viewed more than 6 million times globally and has been adapted for use in countries worldwide.

The campaign puts the onus on men, and not women, to change their behaviour. As women, we already modify our behaviour every single day, but we should not have to and we certainly do not want to. We should not have to stop our evening run in the park because it gets dark early. We should not have to walk from the bus stop with our keys rammed in our hands in case somebody jumps us. We should not have to take a different route home to avoid a group of men, and we certainly should not be telling our daughters to cross the road if a man is walking behind them. None of us should have to put up with sexism and misogyny or be subject to abuse and violence, yet that is still happening the world over.

Although I recognise that change is happening, it is not taking place at the pace that we would expect or can accept. Collectively, we need to do more. That is why men must speak up and act.

Last Friday—the first day of the 16 days of activism—I spoke at the north-east violence against women forum. Other speakers included Ryan Hart, whose coercively controlling father murdered his mother and sister in 2016, and Kirsty Spencer, who spoke eloquently and powerfully about her sister, Dawn Rhodes, whose husband killed her in their family home. They provided a stark message about the harm that is caused by such violence to individuals, their families and their friends, and to society. They also spoke about the necessity of professionals understanding the issues and responding in a risk and trauma-informed way.

We also heard from people on the front line who provide essential support to victims and survivors about the necessity of continuing to focus on this issue and of building the capacity and confidence to deal with it.

I fully endorse the clear messages that emerged from the forum on the need to maintain momentum not just today but throughout the year. Addressing violence against women is a task not just for these 16 days, but for 365 days a year—

each and every year. That is how we can make a difference not just today, through this debate, but every day in how we speak, work and act.

That is why the work of the equally safe strategy, which is co-authored and co-owned by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, is vital. The strategy, along with the accompanying delivery plan, has been a key driver in many of the improvements that have been made. Those include changes to legislation, increases in funding, work to drive forward prevention approaches, and capacity building for the workforce. I will continue to work with partners to continue that momentum, to ensure that the equally safe strategic approach continues to deliver the galvanising focus that it has done to date.

We are investing record levels of funding in front-line support services, capacity-building projects and prevention. Our delivering equally safe fund provides £19 million per year to support 121 projects that focus on early intervention, prevention and support services. The Scottish Government is committed to providing funding that works most effectively to improve outcomes for those who use the services. As such, an independent strategic review of funding to tackle violence against women and girls is under way, and I look forward to seeing the report's recommendations in the summer of 2023.

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Minister, you have talked about the risks, the momentum and the funding that is required, and I whole-heartedly support you in that regard. However, there is still a massive issue with capacity. Given that the number of domestic abuse incidents continues to rise, we are still at the tip of the iceberg when it comes to ensuring that momentum is maintained.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members that they need to speak through the chair.

Christina McKelvie: Mr Stewart has pre-empted the next part of my speech, so I thank him for that intervention.

Earlier this month, I met members of the equally safe joint strategic board to discuss our next steps. We recognise that it is only through all our collective endeavours, and by working together across the system, that violence against women can be eradicated. We discussed a range of issues relating to the aims and delivery of the strategy, and we talked about the importance of taking an intersectional approach that recognises that many women, including disabled women and minority ethnic women, face intersecting marginalisation. Although there has been real progress, we acknowledge that there is still much

work to do and that we need to be transparent and inclusive in relation to that work.

Our equally safe strategy has a focus on prevention. We continue to take forward a range of actions in schools to address gender-based violence and sexual harassment, and Rape Crisis Scotland provides a national sexual violence prevention programme for local authority secondary schools across Scotland. Through our delivering equally safe fund, Engender has been funded to explore primary prevention policy approaches and to create a toolkit that enables policy makers to embed primary prevention in policy making. We will continue to work with those stakeholders to further develop our approach in that area through the next phase of the equally safe strategy. If Mr Stewart is keen to hear more about that work, I would be happy to discuss it with him, because I think that that will address what he said in his intervention.

Our mentors in violence prevention programme is working to tackle gender stereotypes and attitudes that condone violence against women and girls. Although educating children and young people by challenging outdated stereotypes is important, perhaps the even bigger challenge is delivering a societal shift towards women being truly equal, because we recognise that violence against women and girls is both a cause and a consequence of systemic and deep-rooted gender inequality. We need to make progress in advancing women's equality.

Pam Gosal (West Scotland) (Con): The minister talked about ethnic minorities and BAME communities. What work is the Scottish Government doing to reach out to the men of those communities? We know that the culture is different for females, and it is different from that of western men. How are we reaching out to men in those communities to ensure they are supporting women and girls?

Christina McKelvie: That is exactly what the debate is about. Across the equally safe joint strategic board, we have been doing that work and talking to all our diverse communities. Our work is about challenging men, so we need to challenge male perspectives in those communities as well. I will pick up on that in my closing comments.

We need to make progress on advancing women's equality in a range of spaces: economic, civic, social and cultural. The work of the First Minister's national advisory council on women and girls has made a vital contribution, and a key priority for us is to continue to engage with and respond to its recommendations.

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice will say more on this, but I will touch on the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018, our new legislation that better

reflects the experiences of survivors by criminalising coercive control. If anybody has heard Ryan Hart speak about the situation that he was in, they will completely understand why we had to do what we did to criminalise coercive control. The 2018 act, which has been acknowledged as a gold standard, recognises the experience of children as victims and shows that the Government is taking action.

I turn now to our engagement—and this may answer the point that Pam Gosal raised in her intervention. Those who have experienced an issue understand it the most deeply. We recognise that, which is why victim survivors of violence against women are, and must remain, at the heart of everything that we do, and we must be held to account by them. I also recognise that those who work in specialist support organisations have amassed a wealth of experience in supporting victim survivors over many years. We value their insights and wisdom, and we will continue to work with those stakeholders as we develop our policy responses.

For example, I know that, just last week, officials who are working on equally safe met with specialists who work with minority ethnic women. I would be happy to share information about that with Pam Gosal if she is interested. The purpose of that was to ensure that there is regular engagement, so that we build our capacity to take an intersectional approach to our work. Expertise from those who deliver services is also central to the newly formed domestic homicide task force.

I pay tribute to all those organisations and workers. I know that their work, and the support that they offer, is truly transformative. I also recognise the need for greater focus on how we engage with young people. We must never presume that we know how best to involve our young people. Similarly, it would be wrong to make ill-informed judgments around how they communicate and engage with each other and with those of us from older generations. We must ask them, and involve them, which is why the Government has been working with members of the Scottish Youth Parliament to ensure and improve our engagement with younger people. I believe that we must seek their guidance on how we address the societal drivers that, so disappointingly in Scotland in 2022, mean that some men and boys still see violence against women and girls as acceptable. That must be challenged.

This year's 16 days of activism global theme is "UNITE! Activism to end violence against women and girls", which focuses on galvanising efforts, sharing knowledge and working together. As that theme recognises, it is only by uniting and taking

action that we can tackle, prevent and ultimately end violence against women and girls.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises that violence against women and girls is abhorrent and has both a devastating impact on those affected and a destructive impact on the wellbeing of society; acknowledges that the global theme of 2022's 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence is "UNITE! Activism to end violence against women and girls"; recognises that the eradication of violence against women and girls cannot be achieved without men recognising the vital role they must play on a daily basis in tackling deep-rooted sexism and misogyny that is inherent in the perpetrating of such violence; welcomes Police Scotland's Don't be that Guy campaign as a positive contribution in promoting a wider cultural shift to encourage men to take responsibility for stopping violence and discrimination against women and girls across all settings, and challenging the idea that it is the responsibility of women and girls to protect themselves from male violence, and is united in wanting a strong and flourishing Scotland, where all individuals are equally safe and respected.

15:18

Pam Gosal (West Scotland) (Con): I thank the minister for bringing such an important debate to the chamber, and I am honoured to open the debate on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives. This is my second debate this month to mark the international day for the elimination of violence against women.

It is disappointing that, in 2022, women are still suffering so many acts of violence every single day. That feeling of disappointment is no doubt shared by every member in the chamber. It is truly promising to see so many men in the chamber, advocating for the elimination of violence against women and girls. In last year's debate, as I recall, members expressed disappointment that there were not more men in the chamber. They were right to do so because, as the motion points out, the eradication of violence against women and girls cannot be achieved unless men recognise the role that they must play in that. As the minister said, it is vital that men speak out.

Today, I am thankful that there are many examples of men who recognise that responsibility and can act as role models to young men around the world. I would like to give a special mention to some of my colleagues. Week in and week out, Russell Findlay is a voice for many victims of violence and abuse. My colleague Brian Whittle proudly champions the empowerment of women and girls, particularly through sport. Alexander Stewart has always supported our debates on ending violence against women and girls, and he has spoken from the heart about his own experience of the issue. My colleague Jamie Greene's victims law would put victims, not perpetrators, at the centre of our justice system.

Those are all examples of the steps that men can take to promote a culture in which tackling the causes of violence against women and girls is the norm, and I am proud to have those individuals as colleagues.

However, as is often said in such debates, there is still more to be done. Yesterday, the updated domestic abuse statistics for 2021-22 were released, and I was sad to see that so little has changed. The tiny decrease in the number of domestic abuse incidents recorded by Police Scotland shows how little progress has been made. There has been a drop of less than 1 per cent from the record high in 2020-21, when more than 65,000 incidents were recorded. Even more shockingly, 64 per cent of those incidents were repeat offences. Those statistics are a sign that something is still not working in Scotland's justice system and that we must continue to push for further reform.

This year, I have spoken to many fantastic domestic abuse organisations that are doing amazing work out there in the community to support victims of domestic abuse. However, there is only so much that they can do when they are swimming against such a strong tide of domestic abuse incidents.

That is why I am pleased that my proposed domestic abuse (prevention) (Scotland) bill has received such strong support. More than 20 organisations have supported my proposals, and more than 90 per cent of those who responded to my consultation were supportive.

My proposed bill would aim to tackle the problem of domestic abuse from every angle. It would provide additional checks on abusers to prevent them from moving from place to place and from victim to victim. It would also introduce mandatory rehabilitation for people who are guilty of domestic abuse. As I said earlier, repeat offences make up the majority of domestic abuse incidents. We must stop the cycle in which abusers simply move on to their next victim.

Domestic abuse can affect all of us. It is an issue that is above party politics. I therefore hope that members on all sides of the chamber will consider supporting my proposals.

I am, of course, happy to support the Government's motion, but there have been developments in the past week that need to be addressed. It is important that Parliament is given the opportunity to address the elephant in the room.

The amendment in my name seeks to draw attention to last week's comments by the United Nations expert on violence against women and girls, Reem Alsalem, which we cannot ignore. Speaking about the Scottish National Party's

proposed gender recognition reforms, she stated—

Karen Adam (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): Will Pam Gosal take an intervention?

Pam Gosal: Yes.

Karen Adam: Predatory men do exist. They do not need to dress as a woman or to sign a statutory declaration for a gender recognition certificate in order to attack women. Does Pam Gosal think that it is important that we do not conflate trans people with predatory men?

Pam Gosal: The member is absolutely right, but there has to be a balance. I have said that in all the committees that I have made representations to. The balance must be equal. I am doing that so that trans people do not in any way get pointed at to say that this is wrong or right. There has to be a balance—absolutely. We do not want to harm anybody, but we want to make the legislation right for everybody: for women, girls and trans people. That is what I would like to say to the member.

Speaking about the SNP's gender recognition reforms, Reem Alsalem stated that they would

“potentially open the door for violent males who identify as men to abuse the process of acquiring a GRC and the rights associated with it”.

She has also highlighted the importance of ensuring that all voices are heard on the issue. That is very important, and that is why we have a Parliament. We always say, “It's your Parliament,” so we want to make sure that those voices are heard in here.

My amendment merely asks Parliament to note those comments. Members should be clear that it is vital that every possible threat to the safety of women and girls is acknowledged.

Until the attitudes of society as a whole change, and until every man accepts their responsibility to prevent violence against women, we will not see real progress towards eradicating violence against women. In order to bring real change, we must, first, continue to back the amazing efforts of domestic abuse organisations, which carry out such important work in all our communities. Secondly, we must acknowledge the importance of having strong male role models in the area, so that young boys can grow up aspiring to carry on their work. Last but not least, we must work together to ensure that violence against women and girls, no matter where it comes from, is condemned wherever we encounter it.

I move amendment S6M-07002.2, to insert at end:

“, and notes the comments made by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, Reem Alsalem, regarding the possible safety risks to women and girls of the Scottish

Government's Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill."

15:27

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): I am pleased to open the debate on behalf of Scottish Labour in the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. We welcome that the subject of the debate is men's role in and responsibility for violence against women and girls. As Christina McKelvie rightly said, that is the key to reversing the horrendous picture of violence, including sexual violence, against women and girls, and sexual harassment of them.

In my speech, I want to address in detail Labour's amendment on the inclusion of cybercrime and the role of social media. In closing, Pam Duncan-Glancy will address some of the wider points. I hope that ministers will understand that we were keen to support the Government's position, but we lodged our amendment so that cybercrime could be debated specifically.

We are committed to working with the Scottish Government. Last week, we launched our own consultation paper called "How to change the future for women & girls". We want to be part of the conversation.

In 2020, 31 years after inventing the worldwide web, Tim Berners-Lee declared:

"The web is not working for girls and women."

By "not working", he really means that wider smart technology is part of the problem. That is because gender-based cyberviolence—in the form of sexual harassment, trolling, messages threatening rape and murder, or the leaking of private pictures and videos without consent—has become rampant in our society. Arguably, digital technology has changed the shape and nature of violence against women and girls in the 21st century.

As many members have said in previous debates in this Parliament, there is a burgeoning rape culture in schools across the UK. Teenagers are experiencing sexual harassment on a huge scale. The *Sunday Post* found that three out of five girls have endured some form of sexual harassment. I am sure that we agree that boys need to be taught not to put pressure on girls and girls need to be empowered to say no.

I feel that, far from making progress, in some ways we might actually be losing the battle.

Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): I thank my front bencher for giving way.

Do you agree with me that, because of that prevalence in our education system, some responsibility needs to be taken by schools and education institutions in relation to the vehicle—

that is, the wi-fi—over which some of the pornography and abuse is transmitted?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members to speak through the chair.

Pauline McNeill: I recognise the issue, and I agree that we should investigate it in a deeper way and think about how we can restrict such activity.

In the social media age, the use of Snapchat, Instagram and TikTok can cause serious harm in many ways, as we have seen. We must seek to understand exactly what is going on and the origin of the problem of male violence against girls, and we must support young men in our schools to change their behaviour—if not, nothing will change.

In a report last year, academics from several universities highlighted that the sending and receiving of unsolicited—I emphasise "unsolicited"—sexual images is becoming "dangerously normalised". The team found that more than half the boys and girls who received unwanted sexual content online or had their image shared without their consent did nothing about it.

Girls are pressured to trade intimate images with boys who send unsolicited pictures. Inevitably, they are mocked or bullied when their photographs are shared among classmates.

We know that children and young people are more susceptible to peer pressure, cyberbullying and sexting, all of which are activities that involve digital communication. That makes navigating the online social world treacherous at times.

Teachers have warned of a self-styled wealth guru who is accused of spreading misogyny on social media. I will not name the person, but members who have been following the issue will know who I am talking about. He is promoting seriously harmful content online. In one video, he describes how he would punish a woman who accused him of being unfaithful:

"bang out the machete, boom in her face and grip her by the neck."

I apologise for the shocking language, but that is out there on social media.

The man is followed by literally millions of, I presume, boys and girls—certainly males. He is not a fringe personality lurking in an obscure corner of the dark web; the videos that he has put out have had 11.6 billion views.

As Christina McKelvie rightly said, most men do not hold violent, misogynistic views about women. We need more men to speak up. If they do not do so, we will not reverse the problem.

We commend Police Scotland's "Don't be that guy" campaign, which encourages men to call out

the sexist and misogynistic behaviour of their male peers, friends, family members and work colleagues. That is the only way to change things.

We want to build on that important work by tackling sexism and misogyny in schools. As I have said many times, I support the equally safe programme—I would like to know a wee bit more about it—and I would like it to be rolled out in more schools.

We need to realise that boys and men who need to change their behaviour might not seek out that kind of information. We might need to seek them out, if we are to get them to change their views.

Women and girls in Scotland cannot face the problem alone. Scottish Labour says that it is down to men to change their behaviour and down to policy makers to lead the way in changing our society, online and offline.

Now is the time to put in place long-overdue protections for women and girls from cyberviolence. Now is the time to educate boys and men on the seriousness of perpetuating violence against women and girls online. Everyday sexism is part of the problem and we need to tackle it at every level. It is about not just tackling domestic abuse, rape, street harassment and all crimes against women and girls across the world but developing a radical strategy to tackle sexism and misogynistic attitudes. I look forward to reform of the justice system that makes a difference by creating new crimes to do with misogyny, as part of this Parliament's work on the matter.

I move amendment S6M-07002.1, to insert, after "such violence":

"understands that concerted efforts are required to enhance the criminal justice response to cybercrimes that specifically target women and girls, and to ensure that women can access justice when they do become victims of cyberviolence, such as 'cyberflashing', revenge porn and threats of rape, as well as encourage the collection of data on cyberviolence;"

15:34

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): Violence against women and girls is underpinned by a culture of sexism and misogyny. Sexism and sexual harassment are normalised in our society. Daily occurrences are not called out and are not recognised as violence against women.

The Compass Centre, which is also known as Shetland Rape Crisis, ran an awareness-raising project: towards a safer Shetland. The project received almost 200 submissions, which make for sobering reading.

Anonymous contributors described experiences of sexual violence that occurred in Shetland,

including harassment, assault, abuse and rape. One wrote that

"an old man made comments about my appearance that made me feel really uncomfortable. I was only 16 and the adults standing next to me didn't do anything to help."

Another wrote that when they speak up about men leering,

"people tell me to dress more appropriately even though it has nothing to do with what I wear."

A third contributor wrote:

"One day on a bus, when I was 16, a much older man sexually harassed me ... everyone sitting near us on the bus could hear, but didn't tell him to stop."

A common thread is clear: bystanders and witnesses to sexual harassment ignore the problem, blame the victim or pretend that they cannot hear—or perhaps all three. It is everyone's responsibility to call out sexual harassment and sexist behaviour whenever and wherever it occurs, but men have a particular role to play. Police Scotland's "that guy" campaign made a positive contribution, urging men to take responsibility for ending sexual violence by changing their own behaviours and challenging those of their peers. It is only with the active participation of men that harmful norms can be fully challenged.

For many women, going to work involves facing sexual and sexist harassment day after day. In one survey, half of women responded that on starting a new job, they were warned to expect inappropriate behaviour from particular colleagues. Workplaces need clear anti-harassment policies and anti-sexism education for all employees. For women from oppressed and minoritised groups, sexual and sexist harassment interacts with other forms of discrimination, stereotyping and prejudice, all of which must be addressed to end violence against women and girls.

Key work to prevent violence against women starts in schools. Boys and young men need positive male role models who stand up to violence against women. Rape Crisis Scotland runs prevention workshops covering gender, consent and the impacts of sexual violence. Shetland Women's Aid works to prevent domestic abuse; I had the privilege of being a trustee of the organisation, and I commend the important work that it does to support women and families who are impacted by domestic abuse. As part of the 16 days of activism, Shetland Women's Aid and the Compass Centre have staged a play with creative input from survivors about the impacts of coercive control—shining a light on those stories is important. To end violence against women and girls, we must be able to have those uncomfortable conversations to understand the

extent of the problem, and men in particular must confront each other's behaviour.

The Scottish Government must make every possible endeavour to end men's violence against women and girls. Practical help is needed for organisations that work to end gender-based violence. Limited access to legal aid continues to be a barrier to women seeking justice. Scotland needs accessible and specific legal aid services for women who are affected by domestic abuse. I have repeatedly called on the Scottish Government to establish a national commission to end violence against women and girls that brings together charities and experts on gender-based violence. Such a commission could inform policy and practice in Scotland. I repeat the call for a commission today—we owe it to all women who are affected by men's violence to act now.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate.

15:38

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): I have been speaking in debates on the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence since 2016—that is six years of highlighting with other members the destructive and vile impact that gender-based violence has in society not only here, in Scotland, but globally.

This year, the theme calls for us to recognise the role that men must play in challenging and eradicating this scourge—and I could not agree more. Tackling gender-based violence should not be left to women, because we are not the problem. Men must call out vile behaviour at every level, whenever and wherever it happens. They must not turn a blind eye to their peers, family or friends when misogyny and discrimination are perpetrated, because those things violate women, diminish society and demean men. I know that not all men participate in them, but, sadly, a significant number do.

That is why Police Scotland's "That guy" campaign is a positive move to shift the wider cultural problem and is a huge move in the right direction. Campaigns and debates like this one will not change things overnight. Generations of women suffering misogyny, discrimination and violence is like a stubborn stain that requires constant reworking and a massive amount of effort to remove—but that is possible.

As the co-convenor of the cross-party group on violence against women and children, I recognise that gender inequality cannot be separated from other forms of inequality. Primary prevention should address all forms of inequality, and that prevention must start with educating and engaging

with boys and young men. That engagement can be difficult, but it can be done.

As Rape Crisis said:

"Children and young people cannot be expected to change cultural norms by themselves".

So, we need to see robust and bold leadership from adult men from all walks of society. Men must be the adults in the room and speak out against sexual violence and misogyny. I wish that we did not have to have this debate every year, because every year we highlight terrible statistics on murders, stalking, domestic abuse and disfigurement. Afghan girls are being sold to pay for food to fight famine, and sexual war crimes are currently being committed in Ukraine. All of that is beyond sickening, but everyday disrespect, name calling discrimination and unconscious bias are all sickening examples, too.

Baroness Helena Kennedy KC's excellent report "Misogyny—A Human Rights Issue" lays it bare. When Baroness Kennedy gave evidence to the Criminal Justice Committee earlier this year, she said:

"We were shocked ... I say that as somebody who is a pretty dyed-in-the-wool criminal lawyer who thought that she had heard it all ... every single woman or group that appeared in front of us said that something has to be done."—[*Official Report, Criminal Justice Committee, 27 April 2022; c 1-2.*]

Something is being done. The Scottish Government has committed to acting on the working group's recommendations by creating a new offence of misogyny. In fact, Scotland punches above its weight with its excellent third sector organisations such as Scottish Women's Aid, Rape Crisis, Engender, Zero Tolerance, Close the Gap, White Ribbon—which engages with men and boys—and many more, which protect and support women every day. We led the way in creating a zero-tolerance position to domestic abuse by creating the world's first domestic abuse offence that explicitly recognises coercive and controlling behaviours, which are as abusive as physical violence. We also continue to implement and fund the delivering equally safe strategy to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls, but there is always a need to do more, and we will continue to expand our efforts to combat this scourge.

There is one area in which neither the Scottish Government nor the excellent organisations that I have just named can help, and that relates to migrant women in the country. United Kingdom immigration law dictates that migrant women fleeing abuse who are destitute or on very low incomes are not entitled to Government benefits. How mentally damaging is it to migrant women, who are often with their children, to be trapped with an abuser? The UK law on that must change

or immigration powers must be devolved to Scotland, so that we can change that obscene system and help every woman in the country.

The theme of Scottish Women's Aid's 16 days campaign this year is around the desperate impact that the cost of living crisis is having on women who are trapped by abuse. The cost of leaving can be fatal, and Scottish Women's Aid is holding an online vigil tomorrow to remember all women and children who have died because of domestic abuse. Further details about that are on its website.

We must all make a conscious and collective effort to challenge racism, homophobia, transphobia and classism, and we must strive to promote social and economic justice. That can start in our own constituencies and regions. We are privileged to have a public platform on which to do that, and we must promote and normalise gender equality in everything that we do.

We must stand together—men and women—for all the women and girls throughout the world who have lost their lives through gender-based violence or who have been abused, degraded and traumatised. It is time to turn the tide on violence against women here and now.

15:44

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I am privileged to be able to contribute to this important debate, and I thank the Scottish Government for lodging it. According to Engender, the root cause of violence against women is gender inequality, which continues to impact all aspects of women's lives in Scotland.

I think that we would all agree that we have come some way, at least in my lifetime, in recognising the inequalities that exist in our society and we have begun to take the positive steps that we need to take to tackle them. Even in my background of sport—I have to get sport in here, Deputy Presiding Officer—women have closed the gap significantly considering the inequalities that existed. It was only in 1984 that women contested the Olympic marathon for the first time. They could not run further than 3,000m on the track, and they did not do the steeplechase, the hammer throw, the triple jump or the pole vault. Now, women have equality in the events that they can compete in.

However, let us not kid ourselves on here that we are anywhere near the journey's end when it comes to inequality. So—what can men do? We can listen. We can start these conversations, we can take part in these conversations and, most importantly, we can speak out.

It is important that we recognise that violence is not only physical; it is actions or words that cause harm. We need to get to the root of violence and assess it throughout our society. It is key that we address the myths around violence against women head on. Violence is not a one-off, isolated incident but a structural problem that is built into our society, so I will talk about structural violence—the anthropological term used to describe violence committed by structures in our society. It is the violence that is inherent in unjust social, political and economic systems. That violence cannot be traced back to or blamed on one individual; rather, it is represented by a complex web of interdependent relationships. These are the laws that we make and the belief systems that our society operates under.

Women make up just over 45 per cent of this Parliament, with men in the majority, so we need to listen when we make laws, and I have to mention here—as my colleague Pam Gosal did—the gender recognition bill. I believe that, as it is currently structured, it continues a cycle of inequality and opens up the opportunity for physical and structural violence.

Karen Adam: Presiding Officer, I am concerned that we are conflating the gender recognition bill with men's responsibility for gender-based violence. We should not be standing here, passing the blame on to rights for other people. It lies solely at the feet of men—predatory men.

Brian Whittle: I absolutely agree with the member on that point, but the trouble is that, as the UN special rapporteur Reem Alsalem said, the proposals

“do not sufficiently take into consideration the specific needs of women and girls in all their diversity”.

It is key to note that Police Scotland has received 521 notifications of sex offenders—I repeat: sex offenders—changing their names in the past three years, according to a freedom of information request by *The Herald*. It is those predators who are a danger to women, and it is those predators who are actually a danger to trans women as well, yet the SNP and Scottish Greens struck down Russell Findlay's amendment to make it harder for those sexual predators to change gender.

That is where we are just now, and that is what I would like to say to the member. This is not about anti-trans sentiment at all. It is about ensuring that we write good legislation to prevent that structural violence. We must ensure that women and trans women feel safe in accessing help, or we risk moving backwards.

I will move on to Michelle's law. Michelle Stewart was murdered at the age of 17 by John Wilson in Ayr. I met Michelle's mother several times in my constituency surgeries. John Wilson

was given a sentence of 12 years and was approved for unescorted access back into the community for eight days at a time in 2018, after serving just nine years. Michelle's family has launched a campaign, saying that it is unbelievably painful to see her killer on the street, on the bus or in the shops. Michelle's mother told me how fearful she was when she was doing simple things such as going to the shops to do the family shopping because she was terrified that she would bump into that man. Even when he was in prison, she was terrified of bumping into that man's father, who also intimidated her. Michelle's father said that zero action has been taken by the Government. He said that, in the past two years, there have been no changes, and he added:

"I thought it was becoming law but it has disappeared."

It is time that we started taking action against that type of injustice.

I will talk briefly about social and economic systems. At the weekend, I was in London and my ex-business partner, who is raising capital there, said that he did not realise how hard it is for a business that is run by women to raise capital. He also said that pregnancy can be used in calculations of affordability for mortgages, causing applications to be rejected and a reduction in the amount that is offered for loan. Pregnancy is protected under the Equality Act 2010. In the example that I just gave, I was talking about Santander. In its terms and conditions, it states that it does not discriminate against pregnant women—yes, it does. Women also experience medical and health inequalities in treatment and research. Studies by the University of Chicago and the University of California suggest that women are being widely overmedicated and are suffering excess side effects because drug doses are currently based on studies that are overwhelmingly done on male subjects.

We must make sure that women and girls experience equality throughout all our socially created systems, whether those be medical systems, financial systems or the workplace. Not least, they should experience equality in the laws and systems of Governments. We have travelled far, but we have a long way to go. Men—especially men—need to be prepared to step forward and challenge the behaviour of those around them.

15:51

Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): I thank the Minister for Equalities and Older People, Christina McKelvie, who has brought the issue of pervasive violence against women and girls to the attention of the Scottish Parliament in response to the UN's 16 days of activism campaign. As the

motion for debate sets out, we must uproot the cultural acceptance of the various forms of misogyny that permeate Scottish society. Misogyny is hatred of, contempt for or prejudice against women. That is what it means in real life for many.

As deputy convener of the cross-party group on human trafficking, I have been privileged to work with organisations that are tackling one of the worst forms of exploitation of women and girls—commercial sexual exploitation. We often think that that is an issue that is far away from Scotland, but that is not the case. In 2020, the largest group of identified trafficking and modern slavery victims in the UK were British. The Salvation Army recorded an increase of 79 per cent in the number of domestically trafficked people in the UK, and 39 per cent of people who were supported were victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

Globally, 99 per cent of victims of sex trafficking are women and girls, so it is a highly gendered issue. We can anticipate that women and girls of any nationality who are trafficked and exploited in the UK are most likely victims of commercial sexual exploitation, whether in prostitution, stripping or live streamed abuse pornography.

UN House Scotland, which provides the secretariat of the cross-party group on human trafficking, highlighted in its recent "Connecting Women's Voices" podcast series how closely femicide is linked to sexual exploitation. Retired US attorney Linda Abraham and advocacy consultant for Soroptimist International spoke about violence against women. She told listeners:

"Since the inception of the UN we have been discussing this injustice, but here we are in 2022. In many cases issues have got worse, like domestic violence increasing during the pandemic. A lot of serial killers are targeting sex workers ... girls have to be included too: girls are some of the most vulnerable victims around."

That is something that we need to listen to today—girls are extremely vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse, especially those who are care experienced. In the Parliament, we took steps to incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in order to legally recognise anyone who is under the age of 18 as a child and afford them rights on that basis. However, more needs to be done.

Vice Magazine recently reported on the growing number of British children in poverty who are vulnerable to domestic sex trafficking. The magazine shared the harrowing story of Emily. Emily was coaxed by her friend's stepfather into moving packets of cocaine for him. He then trafficked her into commercial sexual exploitation. She was 11. When she was 14, she was gang raped by three men in an empty swimming complex. The 14-year-old Emily spiralled into

substance abuse, which she said made her even more reliant on a string of sex traffickers. That story shows the complexity of the power that traffickers can hold over their victims through prostitution.

Emily said, "I felt dead". She went on to say:

"this sounds weird, but it actually felt normal. You start to rationalise everything in your head. It becomes safe in a way ... And you get used to the chaos."

She said that, if she had to guess a number, she would estimate that more than 1,500 men had raped her as a teenager.

That story of abuse repeats itself again and again. The National Crime Agency estimates that the 1,115 officially confirmed sex-trafficked women in 2017 endured 3.3 million sexual assaults. That means that each of the women and girls was raped almost 3,000 times before managing to find support to exit prostitution and escape their traffickers.

Twenty years after Emily was first trafficked as an 11-year-old, she felt able to report her experience to the national referral mechanism. She is now free from prostitution. She is in her 30s, has a son and is now, incredibly and bravely, working as an advocate in the anti-slavery sector, speaking on behalf of those who are enduring today what she endured as a child.

Women and girls who are subject to abuse and coercion have little power to leave their situation, let alone lobby the Government. We can, however, listen to the survivors who are no longer under coercive-abusive control, such as those involved in the A Model for Scotland campaign.

We must also listen to organisations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the International Justice Mission, A21, Hope for Justice, Survivors of Human Trafficking in Scotland, UN House Scotland, CARE for Scotland and Unseen, which are combating narratives that legitimise sex trafficking, prosecuting abusers and delivering support for the women and children who are exploited in this £80 billion-a-year global industry.

In this Parliament, we have the power to ban some of the worst excesses of violence against women. Today, criminality falls on women in prostitution—those who are being systematically raped and are living in situations of horrific abuse. Those women, many of whom have been exploited since childhood, have no legal entitlements to help them exit prostitution. However, those who commit the exploitation—the pimps, who, legally, can call themselves sex workers—are, effectively, unchallenged and continue to profit from that cruelty. Moreover, men who purchase sex—who physically and personally commit the violence—have complete impunity.

That is an undeniably misogynist aspect of our legal system.

We must criminalise the men who participate in systematic violence against women and girls in Scotland by banning pornography, strip clubs and the purchase of sex.

15:57

Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow Bill Kidd's speech, in which he talked of the evils of commercial sexual exploitation.

I start by referring to the members' business debate that was sponsored by Pam Gosal on 23 November, in which we heard many powerful contributions. In that debate, I was again shocked and saddened by the statistic that one woman in three has experienced violence. As the UN has pointed out, that violence is probably the most pervasive of the human rights violations that occur around the world.

The figure of one in three struck me because 25 November was chosen as the international day for the elimination of violence against women as it is the anniversary of the deaths of the Mirabal sisters—Patria, Minerva and Maria Teresa—in the Dominican Republic. Those three sisters stood up against a dictatorship and violence that was being directed specifically at women. They paid the ultimate price through their murder, in 1960, at the hands of men. There was also the added horror of the fact that the dictator and his henchmen tried to cover up their murder by pretending that it had been a car accident.

I recall the powerful words of Minerva, who said:

"If they kill me, I'll reach my arms out from the tomb and I'll be stronger."

She was stronger. Women are stronger since that day, but because of the experiences that they have been forced to live through.

Indeed, as the minister laid out, women have already changed their behaviour, and it is now for men to do the same, because the experiences of violence that women suffer are almost always delivered by men. Women are living in an environment in which men fail to step in, and to call out and prevent such violence.

I welcome the motion, especially the sub-clause that recognises that

"the eradication of violence against women and girls cannot be achieved without men recognising the vital role they must play on a daily basis in tackling deep-rooted sexism and misogyny that is inherent in the perpetrating of such violence".

I welcome that because it is simply not enough to say to yourself as a man that you will not commit

violence against anyone, especially a woman or a girl, and be content with just that. Men, who make up 50.04 per cent of the world's population, must go further. They must positively act to ensure that the world is a safe place for women and girls, and they must recognise the vital role that men must play in challenging and eradicating violence against women and girls.

The prevalence of violence against women and girls has led to the idea that it is somehow inevitable or that it is impossible to end. That is plainly and simply wrong. Advances were made during the #MeToo era, and promises were made following high-profile cases such as those of Sarah Everard and Sabina Nessa, but the momentum must not be allowed to fizzle out. Talking the talk is one thing, but the Governments, both at the UK level and in Scotland, must continue to work towards equality and an end to gender-based violence in Scotland, the UK and around the world.

That responsibility to maintain the momentum also rests with our communities, and now I wish to talk specifically to the men. Men must take responsibility for violence against women, not just in Scotland, but around the world. It comes in many forms, including sexual harassment, domestic abuse, female genital mutilation, human trafficking, child brides, rape and femicide. Sex for rent is advertised online, and revenge pornography and stealthing are growing problems. Most recently, spiking in our clubs and bars has been highlighted.

The number of women murder victims is alarmingly high. Rape prosecutions and convictions are repeatedly low. Countless victims are abandoning their trials due to delays.

In 2021, 16 women were murdered in Scotland, which is a 60 per cent increase on the previous year. However, homicide statistics say that that crime is dropping, so why is that not reflected when the victim is a woman? The justice system needs to acknowledge the dangers that specific groups face.

Let me return to Minerva's powerful words:

"If they kill me, I'll reach my arms out from the tomb and I'll be stronger."

Yes—but only if men take responsibility to call out the behaviours of and actions by other men, in order to stop the violence and support women and girls. Wherever it happens—in the home, on the street, in the pub with their friends, in their local team's changing rooms, in the WhatsApp chat or at work—men must call it out and stop it.

There should never be a situation in which a woman or girl fears, let alone suffers, violence. It does not matter who she is, what her job is, how

she has chosen to dress, how she reacts to a situation or the way she looks—it should not happen. That is the responsibility of all of us, but it is on the men, who have not lived up to that responsibility in the past, and not just on these crucially important 16 days, but on every day of every week of every year.

Let us make Minerva's message from her tomb be true today and going forward, so that another life is not the price of that message—"I'll be stronger"—that men need to hear.

16:04

Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): The rallying cry of Iran's protest movement,

"women, life, freedom",

is simple, yet powerful.

Ignited by the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in September, just days after her arrest for letting too much hair show from under her headscarf, the uprising has been compounded by decades of anger and repression. Even the widespread execution of protesters has failed to diminish the resolve of those who are fighting for justice, and it is not just women who have found themselves on the front line.

Among the protesters this month, journalist Scott Peterson reported on a team of three middle-aged men who embark on night-time missions. One drives, another films and the third sprays anti-regime slogans and the names of those killed on the walls of militia, Government, and religious centres. Wishing to remain anonymous, they said,

"We are all like drops, but we will become rivers and then oceans once we are united."

Those men have witnessed the state-sanctioned oppression of women for years, and they understand that real change requires everyone to play their part.

In every corner of the world, to varying degrees, women and girls still find themselves at a shamefully high risk of experiencing gender-based violence. I thank the cabinet secretary and the minister for today's debate—which recognises the crucial role that men must play in its eradication—during this global 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.

The statistics that we have heard from the United Nations are chilling, and they merit repeating: more than one in three women will experience gender-based violence in their lifetime, and more than five are killed every hour by someone in their own family. From the beginning of this debate to the end of this debate, 10 women will have been killed.

As a Pakistani woman, I am not blinkered to issues in my own communities. I take this opportunity to highlight the important work of charities here in Scotland, including in Glasgow, such as Amina, the Muslim Women's Resource Centre. That award-winning organisation has been recognised by black and minority ethnic and Muslim communities for its pioneering and responsive approach to addressing the issues and needs of BME and Muslim women.

Amina's focus recently has been on raising awareness around honour-based abuse that is perpetrated against a woman who is perceived—usually by men—to have brought shame on her family. Last year, during the 16 days of activism, Amina held a vigil to commemorate the lives of BME and Muslim women who had lost their lives as a result of such abuse. I attended that vigil and stood alongside men, imams and women as I read out the names of the women who had lost their lives. Change is happening, but not fast enough, as we know.

Anita Gindha from Glasgow was killed in 2003, aged just 22. Anita had refused to follow through with a forced marriage, and fled to London to rebuild her life and marry the man she loved. Thinking that she had escaped, Anita was brutally killed two years later—she was strangled in front of her 18-month-old son while she was eight and a half months pregnant.

Stories like Anita's are horrific and uncomfortable to listen to, but we must use the momentum that has been built by those global campaigns to push for the required behavioural shift that will end systemic violence against women.

As we have acknowledged, it is the responsibility of men to address and control their behaviour, to be positive role models for younger generations, and to challenge systems and attitudes around masculinity that normalise gender inequality. Nevertheless, we have a collective role to play, and I join the minister and the cabinet secretary in applauding Police Scotland's "Don't be that guy" campaign, which brings those issues to the fore and has helped to stimulate important conversations.

I am also pleased that the Scottish Government remains committed to the continued evaluation and development of its equally safe strategy to eradicate violence against women, with £9.5 million being provided to 121 projects in just its first six months.

Early intervention and preventative measures are critical factors in the success of that strategy. As my colleagues have mentioned, the equally safe at school strategy is being developed by a number of organisations, including Rape Crisis

Scotland, and the University of Glasgow, which is in my constituency. That encourages secondary schools to take a holistic approach to preventing gender-based violence, with student voices at the forefront. I welcome that preventative approach, and that education on building and maintaining healthy relationships and on the meaning of consent.

It is also important that we MSPs continue to engage with our schools and local authorities to encourage leadership in that area and that we lead by example in the way that we conduct ourselves. We have around 70 men elected to this Parliament. I thank all the men who are currently in the chamber and those who were here previously.

In the words of the former secretary general of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon,

"Violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable and never tolerable."

If we want women and girls in Scotland to grow up with equal opportunities in a truly equal society, nobody can afford to sit on the sidelines, especially not men.

16:11

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): This debate is specifically about the role of men in challenging and eradicating violence against women and girls. I am sorry that some have chosen to weaponise it against already-marginalised groups in society.

The framing of this debate recognises that gender-based violence is primarily a problem of men being violent towards women, including trans women. The behaviour that must change is that of those men, not of the women and girls who endure the consequences.

It is not a problem about how women look, where they go, how they act or dress, or what they say, so why are we here? Why have I not gone home, and why have all the other women MSPs in the chamber not gone home and left the men to it? After all, they are good at challenging and eradicating, as a glance at colonial history shows us. Why not just let them fix it?

That is a tempting thought—that men have some sort of antimisogyny, antipatriarchy toolkit that they can whip out and that lets them say, "Hey presto! There you go ladies—you won't be having any more problems with that bit of the patriarchy." The problem, for all of us, is that they do not have one. The worse problem is that some of them think that they do.

There are three things—we might call them tools; we might call them weapons—that men are, within the patriarchy, encouraged to use in what is

presented as their fight against gender-based violence.

The first is violence against women. I do not just mean direct acts of individual physical force, because violence is not only those acts; it is the millennia of assumptions, messages and patterns of behaviour that are embedded in the way that we think, feel and act. They manifest in structural violence, economic and emotional abuse and coercive control. They justify a narrow and exclusionary perception of which women are worthy of protection and of pseudo feminisms that keep those gates locked. They also underlie the myth of binary determinism—that men and women are, in some ways that matter, essentially different and that the best that we can hope for is a heavily armed truce.

The second useless tool is violence against other men. The noble knight sees the damsel in distress, slays her vile attacker and takes her home to a high tower. That is because, according to that view, perpetrators are other, alien, monsters and fiends; they are the subjects of fear and the objects of revenge. Just as those knights wore the favours of women to enter the joust, the label “For the victims” is pinned on to policies that are punitive, regressive and tragically counterproductive. Meanwhile, the realities of violence—the ones that do not fit the fairy story—are more and more difficult to identify and address.

The third useless tool is violence against the earth and against the living beings—human and non-human—with whom we share it. A most perilous way to be a woman in the world today is as a protector of nature and of indigenous communities. It is no coincidence that every war is justified by invocation of women and children, and that, in every war, women and children are raped.

It is no accident that every wave of anti-migrant rhetoric speaks of a threat to women, and that the women who are most likely to be attacked include migrants and refugees. It is no accident that the longest-lasting effects of the fossil-fuelled so-called “civilisation”, which was to liberate us all, are the deeply gendered blows of climate injustice.

If we throw away those weapons—those familiar forms of violence—the task ahead perhaps feels like a more daunting one. However, those tools, as Audre Lorde told us, were never going to dismantle the master’s house. We have better ones, and they are not reserved for a single gender. Men do not have to choose between being perpetrators and being protectors, creeping behind us in the shadows or striding ahead with sword bared. You can walk beside us as allies.

There is so much to be done, and we have to do it together. We can recognise that vulnerability is

not a characteristic solely of being female, but of being human. We can recognise that gender-based violence is not a matter of misogyny alone, but is powered by multiple forms of oppression and prejudice, including racism, homophobia, transphobia and the unspoken assumptions of privilege. We can remember the origin of the word “intersectionality”—that the intersection is not a good place, a comfortable meadow to share our stories, but a noisy, polluted and perilous urban junction with juggernauts bearing down from every direction. The task is not to have a cosy chat; it is to stop that traffic, and neither men nor women can do that alone.

Together, we can take apart the myths and behaviours of patriarchy, learning not only from our parents and siblings but from our children—paying attention to the language that we use and the myths, histories and misconceptions that so often lie behind it. We can explore ethics of care, remembering that, although fighting fire with fire makes for a good song, a blanket does a better job of putting out the flames. We can model strategies of resistance rather than simple combat, recalling that, although this is an urgent task, it is also a long-term one, which is undertaken not only for women and girls today, but for the future generations whose wellbeing, or trauma, we have the capacity to affect.

Gender-based violence wounds us all, visibly or invisibly, as communities, families and individuals, and whatever our gender identity. However, we can act to make change, with care, determination, vision and solidarity—not because you are men, not because we are women, but because we are all human.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: James Dornan joins us remotely.

16:17

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): Presiding Officer, in four months, I will be 70. I tell you that simply to explain the context in which I see this debate. I have lived through the times when hitting your wife was “just one of those things—nobody’s business but theirs”. That was not in my house, to be fair. My dad was a gentle teetotaler, but it was all around us—“She walked intae a cupboard,” et cetera. Women had their roles, knew their place and knew not to question it.

The situation improved some in the 1960s, when more opportunities came about for women. However, equality was not near to being a thing and it was certainly not on the ground.

In the 1980s and 1990s, I managed football teams. On Saturdays, we would stay for a drink and occasionally join the younger guys who were heading out for more drink later on. I am no prude,

but I remember being shocked at how, for many of those young guys, girls were solely there for entertainment. The guys verbally abused them if they got a knockback, and literally almost forced themselves on them. I remember wondering whether that was what we were like when we were young. I truly hoped not then, and now I pray that that was never the case.

Turning to now, thankfully all that is behind us. Women feel free to dress as they wish, go where they wish and go with who they wish—I wish.

Things that you hoped to see consigned to the past are more prevalent now. The use and abuse of social media—[*Inaudible.*]—being peer pressured into acts, insecure young women being dazzled by new surroundings and new types of young men who they socialise with for the first time. We have to remember that monsters too often come with friendly faces.

One of the greatest con tricks of the male of the species has been persuading the female of the species that “it’s all your own fault”—but you know what? It is not. It is my fault. It is the fault of every guy who allows their mates to make fun of women. It is the fault of our media, which are designed by men for men, and which far too often see women strictly as a decoration or plaything. It is the fault of every father who did not explain to their sons that the young girls who they mock will one day hold the same place in the heart of other young men that their mum does for them. It is the fault of every man who believes that women really were put on this earth simply as decoration or their companion and plaything.

I support the motion. Violence against women and girls is utterly abhorrent, and the impact on those who are affected is devastating and destructive across our society. I have seen its impact through the work of the heroes in the Daisy Project and Waves (Women Against Violent Environments), which is a peer support group in Castlemilk. That is a wonderful group of women who have had to persevere through horrors that I cannot imagine and who have then found the strength to protect others.

I welcome initiatives such as the “Don’t be that guy” campaign, which has been mentioned and which Police Scotland launched last year. I echo the comments of Deputy Chief Constable Malcolm Graham when he said:

“It’s time that we men reflected on our own behaviours and attitudes—and those of our friends, family and colleagues—towards women”.

Women are not responsible for the sexual offences that are committed against them. Although I welcome that initiative and other similar ones, I am keen to know what steps the minister has taken to evaluate the impact.

The Scottish Government’s universal periodic review on respecting, protecting and fulfilling the human rights of everyone in Scotland, which was published this October, highlights the positive work of the Government’s equally safe strategy. That strategy has helped tens of thousands of people and will provide invaluable support for more than 100 projects in the period 2021 to 2023.

Talking of that strategy brings me to the one individual case that, as well as breaking my heart, made me see more clearly than at any other time the damage that we men are capable of inflicting through our selfish actions. We all know of the case of Emily Drouet—I will not go over it again—and the incredible courage and determination that her mother, Fiona, has shown to try to ensure that no other young woman is ever bereft of a safe place to go when she is scared, lost or unsure. For that wonderful family to create something that is so durable and important from the tragedy of the loss of their beautiful Emily is an eternal monument to their strength and courage.

This is a good time to give the Scottish Government a well-deserved pat on the back because, ever since I introduced Fiona Drouet to Shirley-Anne Somerville, who was the appropriate minister at the time, the commitment to make something good happen has never wavered. In the current minister, Christina McKelvie, we have another passionate fighter for the cause of women and those who need our support, and I am so pleased to see her leading the debate today.

A lot of positive work is being done, although much of it is focused on being reactive rather than proactive, and rightly so. However, if we are to eradicate violence against women and children, it is important not only to recognise the role that men play but to develop and implement policy that changes perceptions and promotes the wider cultural shift that the motion speaks to. Education is central to that.

Some of equally safe’s work is focused on prevention and awareness raising through targeted sessions in schools, youth groups, universities and colleges. That is encouraging. However, a report on equally safe has highlighted a reluctance to allow visits into schools to deliver awareness-raising sessions. That is extremely worrying.

We need to develop policy that mainstreams such initiatives so that they are sewn into the fabric of our learning from an early age. The Government has an opportunity to make that happen because, as the minister will be aware, a new equally safe delivery plan is set to be drafted in the new year. I hope that the Government takes the opportunity to take on board those comments and explores how we can mainstream tackling the issue in our education system from an early age

so that, hopefully, we prevent it from becoming an issue in the first place.

A lot of good work is going on, and it is making a difference and will continue to do so. However, it is now time for the only people who can truly change things for the better to stand up. We men must accept that, for far too long, we have been the problem; now it is time for us to become a major part of the solution.

16:24

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): The Government motion is very worthy, and I agree with every word of it. On Monday, I visited Border Women's Aid, which I commend for supporting hundreds of victims of domestic abuse across the Scottish Borders. I hope that it will continue to receive funding beyond 2024 so that it can continue to provide its essential services. I also hope that the debate encourages more men to prevent abuse and violence against women and girls. Many members have mentioned that issue, especially our male colleagues across the chamber.

Today, I will focus my remarks on Pam Gosal's amendment because, although the Government's words are commendable, it is action that is more important, and the actions that the Government has taken so far in relation to the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill are, in my opinion, not good enough.

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): Will the member take an intervention?

Rachael Hamilton: Already? Yes, of course.

Keith Brown: The member has talked about the Government's words. The motion that is before us was agreed with all parties so that we could speak as one.

Rachael Hamilton: I do not quite understand what the cabinet secretary means. I will keep going, because I did not hear what he said. I am sorry about that.

The Government has drafted a bill that is potentially damaging to women's safety. It has had ample opportunity to change the bill, and it has received warning after warning about the possible consequences of the bill for women, yet it has not fixed the bill.

That is the reason why Pam Gosal's amendment notes the words of the UN special rapporteur on violence against women and girls, Reem Alsalem. The amendment is necessary because the Government is not taking those words seriously enough. The Government is not

even pausing the bill to consider Ms Alsalem's words.

I wrote to the First Minister about the matter on Monday. I asked that she suspend the bill until we can hear from the UN expert. Ms Alsalem has offered to provide "expertise" to the First Minister personally. She has said that it would be "more than reasonable" to pause the bill, because active court cases might have implications for the legislation. She is right, and the Government must listen. It is vital that we make good laws, with proper and full consideration of all the consequences. Rushing to pass legislation is rarely a good idea but, in this case, with fundamental rights at stake, it would be completely misguided to push through the new laws in haste.

I struggle to see why the Government seems unwilling to listen to that particular expert. The Government typically puts a lot of faith in evidence from the UN, so we are only asking for consistency. It would be grossly unfair to women and girls with sincere and valid concerns about the bill if the Government were to cherry pick the opinions that it relied on while ignoring a UN adviser who has expertise in this very area.

Christina McKelvie: The member makes an important point about what people such as the UN special rapporteur have said about the bill, but I suggest that today's debate is not about that. However, she puts great stock in listening to people, so will she listen to women's organisations such as Engender, JustRight Scotland and the Scottish Women's Rights Centre, the chief executive of Scottish Women's Aid, the director of Amnesty International and the chief executive of Rape Crisis Scotland, who have all written to Ms Alsalem to tell her about the safeguards that are currently in place in the bill to protect women?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): I can give you the time back, Ms Hamilton.

Rachael Hamilton: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

That has, of course, just been tweeted, but committee members were told to keep that in confidence until 10 December. Evidence from organisations such as Rape Crisis Scotland has already been considered by the committee, but the evidence from the UN special rapporteur on violence against women and girls has not been considered. By the Scottish Government's own admission—

Maggie Chapman: Will the member take an intervention?

Rachael Hamilton: No, I will not just now—I am responding to Christina McKelvie's intervention.

By the Scottish Government's own admission, the bill will lead to an expansion in the number of people who can apply for a gender recognition certificate; the proposed self-identification system will make it easier for people to apply for one. Therefore, the argument of the organisations that Christina McKelvie mentioned is flawed, because the legislation has not yet been enacted. They are talking about the past 15 years. How do we know that predatory men will not exploit anything that they can to attack women? As I said, I struggle to see why the Government is taking stock of what one UN adviser says but not taking stock of what is said by another. The First Minister should suspend the passage of the bill for a short time to ensure that all the evidence is fully considered.

Rona Mackay: Will the member take an intervention?

Rachael Hamilton: Will I get my time back, Presiding Officer?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I can give you most of the time back.

Rachael Hamilton: Okay. I will take the intervention.

Rona Mackay: I thank the member for taking the intervention. I struggle to see how what you are talking about fits with the topic of this debate on the 16 days of activism? That is a global initiative, but you have chosen to narrow it down to this issue and to politicise it.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Speak through the chair, please, Ms Mackay.

Rachael Hamilton: I am speaking to the amendment from my colleague Pam Gosal.

Yesterday, the First Minister actually said:

"most men who commit violence against women don't feel the need to change gender to do that."

My argument is that we should focus on those who do, because they are men who are abusing a system to attack women. The debate is absolutely about that, because even the First Minister agrees now, and is admitting, that her reform risks allowing predatory men to gain access to women's and girls' safe spaces.

As I said, the First Minister should suspend the passage of the bill. I await a response to see what the Government will say, but it seems so far that the answer will be no. As it appears that the passage of the bill will not be suspended, I will use my speech to bring the words of Ms Alsalem to the chamber, so that they are at least considered for a short time, if briefly, by the Parliament. She said:

"the ongoing efforts to reform existing legislation by the Scottish Government do not sufficiently take into consideration the specific needs of women and girls in all

their diversity, particularly those at risk of male violence and those who have experienced male violence".

Ms Alsalem adds that she shares the concerns

"that such proposals would potentially open the door for violent males who identify as men to abuse the process of acquiring a gender certificate and the rights that are associated with it. This presents potential risks to the safety of women in all their diversity (including women born female, transwomen, and gender non-conforming women)."

Ms Alsalem also considers the lack of clarity in the Government proposal. She says:

"the Scottish Government does not spell out how the Government will ensure a level of scrutiny for the applications made to acquire a gender recognition certificate under the new proposal. It is not unreasonable to expect the Government to spell out what level of scrutiny will continue in the procedure, or detail important aspects of it—

Karen Adam: Will the member take an intervention?

Rachael Hamilton: I will just finish the quote, thank you.

To continue,

"including the specific steps the procedure entails and the conditions for refusing such applications in the law itself or at least in the explanatory notes of the concerned legislation. Other governments that have adopted a self-identification procedure for the legal recognition of a gender identity have done so."

Those words should cause the Government to at least pause and reconsider the sweeping legislation that it has to pass.

I cannot take Karen Adam's intervention—I am very sorry. Would you like me to wind up, Presiding Officer?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You can begin winding up, Ms Hamilton.

Rachael Hamilton: In closing, I appeal to the Government to go beyond the comforting phrases that it has used today. It must finally listen to women who are concerned about the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill, and the Parliament must hear evidence from experts at the UN about its potential consequences.

16:32

Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab): I am pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to this vitally important debate as we mark the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. I intend to focus my comments on the role that men must play in challenging and eradicating violence against women and girls.

I am proud that, today, my colleague Pauline McNeill launched our party's consultation paper on ending violence against women and girls. I commend that work, and the work of people in our

party such as Pauline McNeill over many years on these issues, to ensure that we can tackle such pernicious and serious issues. Indeed, this week, I heard these issues labelled by the Queen Consort, no less, as a “pandemic” of “heinous crimes” that exists not only in our country but around the world. I think that we would all recognise that, in her contribution to the 16 days of activism, she highlights something that we really need to focus on tackling.

Over the years, women have shown bravery, courage and strength in calling out the horrific abuses of power and acts of sexual exploitation and violence that have been carried out by men who believed that their income and status would protect them from being challenged, called out or held accountable for their behaviour. We should take a moment to thank those brave women and to remember all those who have been killed as a result of violence against women and girls, the names of whom we have heard from colleagues on all sides of the chamber today.

I make it clear that the primary burden of challenging dangerous, toxic and violent behaviour by men should be on men. Men have to take responsibility to change their behaviour. We must be part of the solution, because misogynistic attitudes remain deep-rooted in the foundations of our society. Those attitudes reveal themselves in small, subtle actions, or they present in a more overt and aggressive manner, through derogatory comments on women’s appearance and sexist humour, including sickening rape jokes. We know that, in this day and age, that exists online in a way that it never did in generations past. Pauline McNeill’s contribution in that regard, and the amendment that Scottish Labour has lodged, are crucial in enabling us to begin to deal with what happens in those online spaces.

In recent years, there have been particularly disturbing increases in the number of incidents of women having their drinks spiked in our bars and clubs.

Men must challenge their male relatives and male friends and must call out behaviour towards women that is problematic when they see or hear it—for example, when they hear an inappropriate joke about a woman’s appearance.

The role that men play in this space is vitally important, which is why I support White Ribbon Scotland and the fantastic work that it does in getting men to challenge violence against women and, we hope, to begin the process of eradication of violence against women. I first encountered White Ribbon when I was a local councillor, and I pay tribute to local authorities across Scotland, which play a vital role in the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. As other members have said, they play a particularly important role in

encouraging our schools, colleges and universities to educate people—especially young men—on the role that they must play.

A variety of activity is taking place across our local authorities in the 16 days. For example, my colleague in Inverclyde, Councillor Francesca Brennan, is running a Reclaim the Streets glow up walk in Greenock on 6 December. She is encouraging younger women and girls, in particular, to take part in that and to stand up against the violence that is too often experienced on our streets.

We need to focus on shifting attitudes and changing cultures. Peer-to-peer action is crucial in shifting the dial and dismantling toxic masculinity. Men must challenge one another to be the best version of themselves by calling out and challenging damaging, dangerous and corrosive attitudes against women.

I want to touch on the specific issue that exists in sport because of the public platform and adulation that accompany success for many men in the sporting arena. Athletes, footballers and ice hockey players can be heralded as idols and viewed by their younger supporters as role models whom they look up to and would seek to emulate. That raises the crucial issue of how sexual misconduct is addressed in sport. It is clearly an important barrier that impedes the participation in sport of many women and girls.

I am glad that the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee is keen to look at that area and, in particular, at the barriers that exist in sport, and I hope that we will be able to take a more focused look at how allegations of sexual misconduct are handled.

This year, there have been high-profile cases involving professional sports clubs in Scotland. In football, Raith Rovers and, in ice hockey, the Glasgow Clan have rightly faced significant criticism for signing men who have been guilty of rape and sexual assault. That led to a backlash against those signings, which forced the clubs to reverse their decisions. In the case of Raith Rovers, club directors and staff resigned and, ultimately, the women’s team cut its ties with Raith Rovers and was established as McDermid Ladies, in homage to the wonderful Val McDermid, who did so much to lead that campaign and to call out the club for its handling of the situation.

We will never achieve a systemic rebalancing of sports participation if we are not all willing to work to challenge the toxic attitudes and atmospheres that persist in our stadiums and clubs across the country. Government and sports regulators need to play a more proactive role in ensuring that sport is a safe environment for women and girls. There are many options that we could explore, such as

manager training and education sessions that are focused on identifying misconduct and signposting people to appropriate means to report such misconduct.

I reiterate that the responsibility for tackling violence against women and girls lies with men. It is for men to take responsibility for their own actions and to be better. I urge all men to speak up, to challenge other men to do the same and to be the best version of themselves and a strong ally in tackling violence against women and girls.

16:38

Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP): Violence against women and girls, including domestic abuse, is one of the most devastating and fundamental violations of human rights. The annual 16 days of activism against gender-based violence campaign was started more than 30 years ago. We have made a lot of progress since then, but there is still much more to do.

Men have a vital role to play in challenging and eradicating such behaviour because, as the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women acknowledges, it is a product of entrenched inequalities that is and has been, historically, used to force women into subordinate positions.

We should all be doing everything that we can to build a Scotland where women and girls live free of violence and abuse. Whether it is misogyny and sexism, sexual harassment and assault, domestic violence or female genital mutilation, violence against women and girls is deep-rooted and pervasive. A recent UN study found that 97 per cent of women aged between 18 and 24 in the UK have been sexually harassed, while other research has shown that 60 per cent of young women are scared to walk or use public transport.

For too long, the emphasis has been on victim blaming and telling women what they should and should not be doing if they want to avoid being verbally abused or physically attacked. Instead, we must tackle the predominant root cause: the unacceptable behaviour of violent and abusive men.

Police Scotland's "Don't be that guy" campaign was really good at focusing the attention on men's behaviour and stimulating conversations, with the aim of reducing rape, serious sexual assault and sexual harassment. Toxic masculinity, outdated gender stereotypes and male sexual entitlement were challenged by the campaign. If we are to tackle and eradicate gender-based violence, it is clear that we need behavioural, societal, cultural and systematic change.

I welcome the minister's work on equally safe, Scotland's strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls, which sets out a vision of prevention, improving support services and strengthening the justice response for victims and perpetrators. In recent years, there have been several reforms to the justice system, including the introduction of the world-leading Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018, which made psychological abuse and controlling behaviour a crime, and the expanded powers that were given to police, prosecutors and the courts to tackle such crimes.

Official statistics for 2021-22, which were released yesterday, show that there has been a 1 per cent decrease in the number of domestic abuse incidents recorded by the police, compared to the previous year. However, abusers manipulate and control their victims, so it can be difficult for victims to recognise what is happening and then to seek help, and the most recent Scottish crime and justice survey estimates that only 1 in 5 domestic abuse cases is reported to the police.

I say to anyone who is experiencing violence, including coercive and controlling behaviours: please seek help, advice or support.

On tackling the cultural and social issues, it is only by prioritising prevention that we can end violence against women and girls. Equally safe at school recognises the important role of educational settings in preventing gender-based violence before it occurs, through teaching children and young people about healthy relationships and consent.

I particularly welcome the mentors in violence prevention peer education programme that is being delivered in schools across Scotland. It gives young people the skills to recognise and challenge gender-based violence and sexist language and assumptions. By empowering younger generations with that knowledge, we will be taking great strides towards the goal of eradicating violence against women and girls.

Economic inequality, including the gender pay gap, is a long-standing issue and yet another symptom of the historical discrimination and sexism targeted at women. It can often be helpful to coercive partners who can make women feel dependent financially. We see that continued through the universal credit system, whereby households receive one payment. As Scottish Women's Aid has set out, that

"weakens women's access to an independent income and facilitates abusers' ability to gain financial control".

More needs to be done to tackle issues in the workplace if we are serious about eradicating violence against women and girls. It is important that employers take their responsibilities seriously,

including by implementing equal pay for men and women, ensuring that women have wraparound support in cases of gender-based harassment or abuse and ensuring that there is education for male employees, inspired by equally safe.

We all have a collective duty to unite and do everything that we can to tackle gender-based violence, because it is one of the most devastating and fundamental violations of human rights. Perpetrators must be held to account, and women and children need to have access to suitable front-line services that deal with violence and domestic abuse.

I hope that we can build on the progress that has been made to date, as we work to eradicate violence against women and girls. Let us create a strong and flourishing Scotland, where all individuals are equally safe and respected.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the closing speeches. I call Pam Duncan-Glancy.

16:45

Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab): Like my colleague Paul O'Kane, I will spend my time focusing on the problem: men, and structural and systemic inequality.

For too long, violence against women and girls has been viewed as a women's issue, with some men offering their support. Today's debate has shown why men must step up—and it has shown that we all agree on that.

We are taught, from an early age, ways to protect ourselves from violent men. We are taught to beware of strangers and always to watch our drink in a pub. We text one another when we get home safely—and there is real fear that we might not get home safely. We change our behaviour, our body language and the ways in which we talk and dress, to protect ourselves.

We do all that from a young age, because it starts at a young age, as Pauline McNeill, Martin Whitfield and Collette Stevenson said when they talked about schools.

As with many harms, we must act early, robustly and comprehensively to end the problem. The burden of violence has lain heavily on women's shoulders for far too long. That is simply unfair and unacceptable. Men must take responsibility and do better.

The Government and this Parliament must also take responsibility for effecting change in men's attitudes and behaviours. Scotland's equally safe strategy recognises that the root cause of violence against women and girls is inequality and highlights many primary prevention measures as

being key to tackling the issue, but it is painfully clear that we are not there yet.

A report from the UK Government equalities office revealed that men's use of pornography, especially violent pornography, results in men viewing women as sex objects, an acceptance of sexual aggression towards women and an increased likelihood of men committing verbal and physical acts of sexual aggression.

The Scottish Government must take steps to challenge the harms of violent pornography, for example through more education—starting at school—on consent and healthy relationships, about which we heard in the debate, and by tackling online and cybercrime, as the Labour amendment that I am proud to support highlights.

According to the Scottish social attitudes survey in 2014, only 58 per cent of people in Scotland believe that a woman who wears revealing clothing on a night out is “not at all” to blame if she is raped, and nearly two in five Scots believe that rape

“results from men being unable to control their need for sex”.

Last week, I visited the Glasgow and Clyde Rape Crisis Centre and met fantastic women who run the projects there as well as the incredible support to report team, which supports women who report gender-based violence as they go through the criminal justice system. We discussed the potential biases that women face as they go through the legal process, such as the rape myths that members of the jury might believe. We heard a bit about such myths today. What the survivor was wearing when the rape took place, her relationship with the accused and the emotion she shows in court can all influence juries, as my colleague Martin Whitfield explained perfectly when he talked about the role of men.

Last year, Lady Dorrian's review report recommended a series of reforms of the system in the context of violence against women, including a specialist court with trauma-informed practices and a pilot programme that is equivalent to the programme in England and Wales that communicates to juries information about common rape myths. We must consider the recommendations seriously, and we should look at ways of incorporating training about the matter across the criminal justice system.

Measures must go further. There must be preventative action to target gender inequality. Primary prevention strategies are crucial to ending violence against women and girls, as my colleague Kaukab Stewart said.

If measures are to be effective, they must be implemented across all policies and systems—

Rona Mackay and other members spoke eloquently about the structural inequality that is in place. Of course, such an approach is a core objective of equally safe, but it is not being adopted consistently in all policy making. Despite domestic abuse being the most common reason for women's homelessness—it accounts for 26 per cent of homelessness applications and the proportion is rising—work from Crisis Scotland reveals that women who experience domestic abuse are frequently let down by services and that opportunities for early intervention are overlooked. The Government's 2018 "Ending homelessness and rough sleeping: action plan" did not include a gendered analysis.

Last year, the Parliament unanimously passed the Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act 2021, which gives police and courts the power to remove an abuser from the home and gives social landlords greater control when it comes to transferring tenancies. However, 18 months on, we have not implemented the legislation and some women are still forced to present as homeless to escape abuse.

Christina McKelvie: I thank Pam Duncan-Glancy for bringing up that act. I hope that she is happy to hear that we now have an implementation group in place and are working towards implementing that piece of the act.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: I am pleased to hear that; thank you.

A key driving force behind continued gender inequality is poverty, and I was pleased to hear the minister refer to its importance in her opening remarks. Financial insecurity is a major risk factor for women experiencing gender-based violence, and research by organisations such as Engender shows that women are at heightened risk of destitution.

We need primary prevention approaches in social security. The single household payment—universal credit—has been mentioned; it reduces women's access to an independent income, which makes it hard for women to leave violent abusers. The Scottish Government has previously committed to providing individual payments of universal credit, but that has not yet been delivered. A failure to make good on that commitment will leave women at risk.

The working group on improving housing outcomes for women and children recommended in 2020 that the Government introduce a dedicated fund to support women who are leaving abusive partners, but two years later it is not yet in place. Women who experience gender-based violence cannot afford to wait much longer for that.

I spoke earlier about how the burden of men's violence is placed on women and the ways in

which we change our behaviour to protect ourselves. A prime example of that is avoiding walking home alone or carrying keys in our hands to protect ourselves from a potential attack, and we have heard about that in the debate today. Radio Clyde's "Light the Way" campaign calls on Glasgow City Council to light parks at night, so that we might not have to do that, and to ensure safety for all. The campaign has been under way for a year, but Glasgow's parks are still not lit, and it is unlikely that lights will be added for another two years at least. The Scottish Government needs to tell the SNP council in Glasgow to get a grip of the issue and take action soon.

We will vote for the Government motion and the Tory amendment, and let me take a moment to say why. We will support the Government motion, because, as Martin Whitfield pointed out, men have much work to do, and we will support the Tory amendment, because we note that the UN rapporteur has written to the Government. We also note the letter, which I can confirm was published on Amnesty International's website this afternoon, from women's organisations including Engender, JustRight Scotland, the Scottish Women's Rights Centre, Scottish Women's Aid, Amnesty International Scotland and Rape Crisis Scotland.

The fight for equality and human rights for all—including women and trans people—is interconnected and interdependent on dismantling structural inequality and discrimination for everyone. That should be our focus, because we cannot and should not pick our equalities.

In conclusion, the behaviours and attitudes of men must change, but so, too, must the entire patriarchal system. We in Parliament must all be laser focused in all that we do on bold, preventative, urgent and long-lasting measures that cut across all policy areas in order to eradicate gender inequality once and for all.

16:52

Russell Findlay (West Scotland) (Con): I begin by agreeing with the Scottish Government motion and with Pam Gosal's amendment, which I am glad to hear Labour supports. Reem Alsalem is not merely, to quote the First Minister,

"the person from the UN"—[*Official Report*, 24 November 2022; c 20.]—

she is the special rapporteur on violence against women and girls, and when she calls on the SNP Government to listen, Nicola Sturgeon should do so.

Women across Scotland have been frustrated and sometimes furious at the SNP Government's refusal to hear their concerns, as Rachael Hamilton pointed out. Given that today's debate is more about what unites us than what divides us, I

see no reason why colleagues would not support Pam Gosal's important amendment.

Brian Whittle's contribution was typically thoughtful; although Scotland's business world has changed radically, some strangely old-fashioned views linger. Pauline McNeill made some very important points about the dangerous rise in cybercrime, and Beatrice Wishart spoke of the everyday casual leering and sexual comments that are directed at women.

We can all agree with this year's 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. As Rona Mackay, Martin Whitfield and Paul O'Kane said, men bear responsibility for their personal and collective behaviour.

Christine McKelvie, Kaukab Stewart and others cite Police Scotland's "That guy" campaign. No one here could disagree with its sentiment, but some might question Scottish policing's record of misogyny, sexism and gender-based violence. Take inspector Adam Carruthers, who used his status to commit sex attacks and rape a crime victim in her own home. Investigations by some of his colleagues came to nothing—nothing to see here, apparently.

When he was finally brought to justice, it emerged that he had targeted dozens of women during his 20-year career.

Sergeant Kevin Storey was jailed in 2014 for rapes and sexual assaults. His reign of terror somehow also spanned two decades—nothing to see here. Inspector Keith Farquharson was convicted of breach of the peace when he sent a sleazy message to a young female colleague. He was demoted to constable, but was then quietly reinstated to high rank—again, nothing to see here. Farquharson is now serving a life sentence for the murder of his wife.

It can be tempting to trot out the one bad apple cliché, but bad apples too often get away with their crimes because they are protected; they are protected by a system that always seems to prioritise protecting the organisation, no matter the price. Some also say that those obscene cases could never happen today, but they can and they do.

Last week, I joined a group of women in a meeting with the justice secretary, for which I am grateful to him. The women were former police officers Karen Harper, Gemma MacRae and another who cannot be named. Karen served proudly for 22 years until being bullied out of her job. It is scandalous that she is still trapped in process purgatory after seven costly and damaging years. Gemma was bullied by the boys' club and sexually assaulted by a colleague. It is scandalous that when she reported what was happening it was covered up. We were also joined

by Annie Hirdman, who suffered years of violence at the hands of her police officer partner. It is scandalous that the justice system treated him with kid gloves and her with disrespect. Those women each had painful and lurid stories to tell, not just about the boys' club culture, but about something much more toxic and insidious: the nothing to see here culture that permeates policing. That culture protects wrongdoers and targets those who bravely speak out—such as those women—and it pressures many good cops to stay silent for fear of repercussions.

Those women do not disagree with the "That guy" message; their problem is with what they see as a gulf between Police Scotland's public relations rhetoric and the reality of its management culture.

The women handed Keith Brown a letter questioning whether the national force is able to change. It said:

"These are the same people who long presided over and defended the broken, costly and damaging system"

and that

"That Guy' feels like a form of gaslighting—the phenomenon whereby abusers cause victims to doubt what happened to them."

Christina McKelvie: In the spirit of the "That guy" campaign, will Russell Findlay join me in condemning Jacob Rees-Mogg's pronouncements that rape victims should not have access to abortion services? In doing that, will he also condemn and call on the UK Government to abolish the two-child cap and the rape clause, because if he does not, he does the noble cause of standing up for rape victims a disservice and perpetuates the systemic violence that Brian Whittle raised in his contribution.

Russell Findlay: I thank the minister for her intervention, and I am happy to condemn any form of male violence or attitudes that are contrary to what we are talking about.

So, what can be done? Those women, and many good cops—and it is important to state clearly that the vast majority of cops are good—believe that police regulation is not fit for purpose, but the Government does not need to take their word for it, because Lady Elish Angiolini's watershed report into Scottish policing complaints handling, investigation and misconduct said so, too. She made 111 recommendations. We do not know exactly how many have been implemented because successive justice secretaries have refused my party's request for an online action tracker, but it appears that most have not.

The Angiolini report is now two years old, and many will welcome the Scottish Government's publication of its public consultation on the report

today, but much more importantly, people want to know what happens next. The women who met with the justice secretary are talking to each other. Many more women, men, police officers and members of the public are standing right behind them. Some have suffered long-term and life-changing medical problems, and others have had their careers and faith in policing needlessly destroyed. Some have been required to sign non-disclosure agreements—gagging orders that protect wrongdoers and keep the public in the dark. Some have attempted suicide, and several officers have taken their own lives after being consumed by the complaints process, yet nobody wants to talk about this.

I want to put on record my admiration for those whistleblowers' bravery, dignity and determination.

These women, and those fighting for women's rights against fashionable orthodoxy, truly are the suffragettes of the 21st century. They are not going away; they will not be silenced; and they are not interested in warm words.

When Gemma MacRae graduated from police college, her mother gifted her a pocket watch. It was inscribed, "patience and perseverance pays off". Little could she have known the meaning that that would come to have.

17:00

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): Even if we do not manage to achieve what we sought, which was a singular focus on the behaviour of men and the need for men to change, and to tap into the consensus of motions elsewhere on the issue of violence against women and girls, it has nevertheless, generally, been a good debate.

During last year's debate on violence against women and girls, I spoke about a different pandemic affecting our society—a shadow pandemic of men's violence. It was an analogy that I think Paul O'Kane also used. Much like Covid-19, it is extremely stubborn. It is a very difficult culture to address, with wide-ranging societal impacts. As Martin Whitfield said, though, in a very powerful speech, this is about men and the need for men to change. Unlike with Covid-19, the cause of violence against women and girls is clear: it is men who predominantly carry out such violence, and it is negative male attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate it. For that reason, men must take the lead in eradicating it from our lives. Men have to acknowledge the role that we play, as the minister, Christina McKelvie, mentioned, and we must have the courage to speak up when we see negative attitudes and behaviours that ultimately lead to violence against, and the abuse of, women.

Many members have mentioned Police Scotland's "That guy" campaign as being one that we should pay close attention to. As to how we analyse and review the effectiveness of that campaign, it is still in its early months, but I think that it would repay working out how effective it has been in changing culture. We have to do everything in our power to contribute to and accelerate the societal and attitudinal shift that is required to make women and girls safer.

Before closing the debate, I will mention what were, for me, some of the highlights, as I cannot mention every member. Beatrice Wishart mentioned some horrendous examples from her experience. Rona Mackay talked, in particular, about the situation that migrant women can find themselves in, which is appalling.

Brian Whittle said a lot of things that I did not agree with, but he also mentioned the structural and economic inequalities that exist and the impacts that they can have in terms of misogyny and the fact that those inequalities derive from misogynistic attitudes in the first place.

Bill Kidd talked about sex trafficking and the commercial exploitation of sex. Martin Whitfield made a very powerful speech. I say that because it was very explicitly directed at men, which was the intention of the debate. It is why I am standing here today: to make sure that that message gets across. Women have been saying this for generations—somebody, perhaps Maggie Chapman, talked about millenia—but it is really up to men, and that is why we tried to focus on men in this debate. That will also be the focus of how the Government votes later on.

Kaukab Stewart mentioned—as did Pam Gosal—the particular issues that there may be in black and minority ethnic communities in terms of domestic violence and violence against women.

I thought that Maggie Chapman gave a very good speech, which I will come back to shortly, and I think that James Dornan gave an excellent speech. It was good to see him back in the chamber, albeit on the screen rather than in person.

I would concede, obviously, that the role that the justice system can and does play is vital in this regard. The progress that we have made, in my view, should not be underestimated. We are prioritising domestic abuse cases at court. If we look at the cases that have gone through the courts, notwithstanding the pressures of Covid and the backlogs, the vast preponderance of them are domestic abuse or sex crime-based cases. Also, as has been mentioned, the groundbreaking legislation on domestic abuse reflects a better understanding, which will in time, I am sure, lead to increased confidence in reporting.

I think that Pam Gosal and another member mentioned the domestic abuse figures that came out. I think that everyone would acknowledge that it is quite difficult to work out whether there is an increased confidence in reporting. Somebody mentioned, quite rightly, that four fifths of domestic abuse cases are not reported and do not feature in those figures, and that remains the challenge. However, some of the legislation that has come through the Parliament, especially in relation to coercive control, represents real advances in Scotland.

Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): It is interesting that football has not been mentioned at any point in the debate, because it has a direct impact on how much domestic violence there is, especially during the world cup, which is on at the moment. What can the Government do to help football teams and clubs to support domestic violence education and prevention going forward?

Keith Brown: Football was mentioned—I think by Martin Whitfield—but Jackie Dunbar has made a very good point. We have to work with football clubs. Some tremendous strides have been made in trying to deal with homophobia and sectarianism, but domestic violence is an issue that has not featured as much as it should have. I am happy to discuss with the member what more could possibly be done.

A direct alternative to custody and a whole-family approach that is designed to challenge and change men's behaviour are features of the Caledonian system. We have to do more work to collect data more widely for it. However, it is also imperative that we do more to ensure that women do not come into contact with that system in the first place. When women do need recourse to the system, it is important that we respond effectively, competently and with compassion and understanding.

We know that there is more that we can do, which is why the Minister for Community Safety will push on with the work that her predecessor started in her position as chair of the Women's Justice Leadership Panel. That panel brings together expert women from all aspects of the justice system to discuss the experience and unique needs of women and what they mean for criminal justice processes. The findings of the panel will be published in 2023.

In our programme for government, we announced that we will legislate to progress the ambitions and priorities that have been set out in the vision for justice. Crucially, that involves delivering person-centred, trauma-informed practices. I know that those things can trip off the tongue quite easily, but they are extremely important. We have some big-ticket items that we are looking at in relation to changes in the criminal

justice system, which are perhaps the most profound changes that we have considered in some years. However, if we can achieve a trauma-informed, person-centred justice system, that will be the biggest possible change that we could make, not least in relation to the subject of violence against women and girls.

Russell Findlay rightly commended the women whom he met last week. I also commend the women representing the organisation Speak Out Survivors, whom I met yesterday and who are trying to effect changes in the system. Their patience was mentioned—they have been doing that for many years. I admire their tenacity and I am happy to listen to them and speak to them again.

The criminal justice reform bill will abolish the not proven verdict in criminal trials in Scotland and will take forward accompanying reforms. It will also make legislative changes, building on the recommendations of Lady Dorrian's review on improving the management of sexual offence cases, including, among a range of proposals, statutory anonymity for complainers of sexual crimes.

Earlier this year, Baroness Kennedy published her report on misogyny in the criminal law, which made four specific criminal recommendations to reform criminal law in order to better address misogynistic harassment. Those recommendations were: a statutory sentencing aggravation of misogyny; an offence of stirring up hatred against women and girls; an offence of public misogynistic harassment; and an offence of threatening or invoking rape, sexual assault or disfigurement of women and girls. As stated in the Government's legislative programme for 2022-23, the First Minister confirmed that we will consult on draft legislative provisions to give effect to the reforms that were proposed by Baroness Kennedy. That is part of what Pauline McNeill called for when she asked for a radical strategy. That will not just be radical; it will be a world first if we can get the reforms that we are seeking to enact passed into law. Those are reforms that society needs, and we are determined to deliver them.

I listened to the contributions in the debate, and there is some consensus that we must strive and work together to end violence against women and girls, and that men must take responsibility for their actions and demonstrate a commitment to change. There is no overnight fix. The point is that it is really a combination of millennia of discrimination, which tells us that it will be a difficult issue to resolve. However, we have to be resolute and challenge violence against women and girls, as well as the underlying inequalities, wherever they are found.

For men in the chamber and those who are listening elsewhere, the message is that we have a responsibility to change and to help others to change. For my part, I am happy to take an intervention from, and only from—sorry to be discriminatory—any man in the chamber who has never heard misogynistic or sexist comments in an all-male environment or from any man who has heard such comments and has challenged them every time. I happen to be standing, but I would not be standing to make an intervention, because I have not done those things. Neither have most men, which is perhaps why no intervention has been made. That underlines the nature of the task that we face.

If we are serious about our vision of a society that is safer and more equal for women and girls, we have to do more. A Scotland where women and men enjoy greater equality is a better Scotland for us all. Maggie Chapman mentioned that women are not looking for some knight with a sword to be a protector of women by wreaking vengeance on men who have behaved badly. What she asked for, rightly, is for men and women to walk together on this journey.

I invite Parliament to restate our collective ambitions in this area, and I invite all the men to make sure that they are not that guy.

Business Motions

17:10

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-07018, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 6 December 2022

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Debate: COP27 Outcomes

followed by Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee Debate: Proxy Voting

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 7 December 2022

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
Constitution, External Affairs and Culture;
Justice and Veterans

followed by Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)

5.10 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 8 December 2022

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions:
Education and Skills

followed by Ministerial Statement: Scottish Attainment Challenge – Local Authority

Stretch Aims for Recovery and Accelerating Progress in 2022-23

followed by Scottish Government Debate: International Human Rights Day

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 13 December 2022

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 14 December 2022

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
Covid Recovery and Parliamentary
Business;
Finance and the Economy

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 15 December 2022

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions:
Net Zero, Energy and Transport

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 5 December 2022, in rule 13.7.3, after the word "except" the words "to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or" are inserted.—[George Adam]

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motion

S6M-07019, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on a stage 2 timetable.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 be completed by 16 December 2022.—[George Adam]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:11

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S6M-07020, on designation of a lead committee.

That the Parliament agrees that the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Trusts and Succession (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.—[*George Adam*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The question on the motion will be put at decision time.

Decision Time

17:11

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): There are four questions to be put as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that amendment S6M-07002.2, in the name of Pam Gosal, which seeks to amend motion S6M-07002, in the name Christina McKelvie, on recognising the vital role men must play in challenging and eradicating violence against women and girls, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There will be a division. There will be a brief suspension to allow members to access the digital voting system.

17:12

Meeting suspended.

17:14

On resuming—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Members should cast their votes now.

The vote is closed.

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My app would not connect. I would have voted no.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. We will make sure that your vote is recorded.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)

McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 48, Against 66, Abstentions 0.

Motion disagreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-07002.1, in the name of Pauline McNeill, which seeks to amend motion S6M-07002, in the name of Christina McKelvie, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)

McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 O’Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)

Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 50, Against 68, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-07002, in the name of Christina McKelvie, on recognising the vital role that men must play in challenging and eradicating violence against women and girls, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises that violence against women and girls is abhorrent and has both a devastating impact on those affected and a destructive impact on the wellbeing of society; acknowledges that the global theme of 2022’s 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence is “UNITE! Activism to end violence against women and girls”; recognises that the eradication of violence against women and girls cannot be achieved without men recognising the vital role they must play on a daily basis in tackling deep-rooted sexism and misogyny that is inherent in the perpetrating of such violence; welcomes Police Scotland’s Don’t be that Guy campaign as a positive contribution in promoting a wider cultural shift to encourage men to take responsibility for stopping violence and discrimination against women and girls across all settings, and challenging the idea that it is the responsibility of women and girls to protect themselves from male violence, and is united in wanting a strong and flourishing Scotland, where all individuals are equally safe and respected.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S6M-07020, in the name of George Adam, on designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Trusts and Succession (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time. There will be a brief pause before we move on to members’ business.

Stroke (Recovery)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-06461, in the name of Gillian Mackay, on the Stroke Association's report "Keeping Stroke Recoveries in Mind", which was launched on world stroke day. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament welcomes the publication of the Stroke Association's report, *Keeping Stroke Recoveries in Mind*, on World Stroke Day, 29 October, which focusses on patient experiences of the hidden effects of strokes; notes the key message in the report that emotional and psychological wellbeing for someone after a stroke is just as important as their physical recovery; further notes that the report outlines the results of the charity's lived experience of stroke survey showing that almost all, 95%, of stroke survivors report experiencing psychological or an emotional impact as a result of their stroke, yet only 25% report having received enough support, and provides recommendations on a new approach for stroke services in Scotland as devised by the Scottish Stroke Psychology Forum and included in the *Progressive Stroke Pathway*, endorsed by the National Advisory Committee for Stroke earlier this year; understands that this new approach is a holistic model involving all stroke clinical and social care staff, and one which treats strokes as having an emotional and psychological impact from the point of diagnosis; further understands that there are around 15,000 people in Central Scotland who are living with the effects of their stroke; notes the calls for all 14 geographical NHS boards to appropriately resource and deliver the model for psychological care as part of a progressive stroke pathway and thus involve all those working in stroke care to improve the recovery experience for all stroke survivors, and warmly commends those people with lived experience of stroke who shared their experience to inform and shape this report.

17:21

Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green): I am really pleased to have brought this debate to Parliament, as it is on such an important topic to me.

As many members know, almost two years ago, my mum died a week after having a stroke. My grandpa had a stroke that left him with aphasia, and my gran had a stroke and transient ischaemic attacks. I thought that, as a family, we knew stroke well, but I am always in awe of how every stroke survivor I have met shares their story and their honesty about how it has affected their lives and the lives of their families. The mechanism with which they have come to their condition is the same, but no two strokes have the same aftermath. I thank the Stroke Association and everyone who has shared their story with me for their hard work and commitment. Some of those people are joining us in the gallery this evening.

Stroke is the leading cause of disability in Scotland. Around 10,000 people have a stroke every year, and around 128,000 people across the country are currently living with the effects of their stroke. In my Central Scotland region, there are around 15,000 stroke survivors. Everyone who survives a stroke has the risk of experiencing a physical disability, cognitive problems or emotional and psychological effects—or, more often than not, a combination of all three. Two out of every three stroke patients leave hospital with a physical disability and/or problems with speech, communication and thinking and, of course, their emotions and mental health.

Stroke survivors often say that people will tell them, "Ah, you don't look like you've had a stroke." That is a result of a lack of awareness of the hidden effects of stroke. Those are not all physical; the psychological effects can often be as or more debilitating to the individual.

Last month, the Stroke Association published a report, "Keeping Stroke Recoveries in Mind", that looked specifically at the hidden effects of stroke, focusing on the psychological and emotional impact on a person after their stroke. The findings mirror those of a similar report that was published 10 years ago. The main message was that psychological and emotional recovery is not viewed on equal terms as physical recovery post-stroke. The Stroke Association spoke to more than 100 stroke survivors; 87 per cent of them want equal access to physical and psychological care in their rehabilitation. However, only 25 per cent report receiving enough psychological and mental health support. Ten years has passed, and the research continues to tell us the same thing, but everyone's experiences are not improving.

The Scottish stroke psychology forum has supported the Stroke Association with that, and it has provided a tiered model that allows everyone involved in stroke care to be trained and supported to deliver psychological care for stroke patients. We all know about the tight financial constraints on the health budget, so that tiered approach to delivering psychological care will help to alleviate future pressures. By ensuring that people get the emotional and psychological help that they need at the beginning, the long-term health and social care costs will be reduced as they start to rebuild their lives earlier.

There is a strong evidence base to support that. A lot of research that has looked at the economic benefit of providing early intervention has been carried out. All of that has found a strong financial saving in the long term. That is a solution to current problems that stroke patients face and also for the overall health and social care budget.

I was also grateful to hear from Paula, from Glasgow, on that topic at one of our cross-party

group meetings. She spoke openly and honestly about the psychological and emotional impact that she faced after her stroke, which she had a year ago. She explained how, overnight, everything changed for her and she went from being a wife, working full time and enjoying many outdoor activities to not being able to do everything that she used to get such enjoyment from. She started to lose control of her emotions and her stroke added a heightened sense of anxiety like nothing she had experienced before. After some time, she spoke to her consultant, who informed her that people are often affected in that way after a stroke, but that there are inadequate resources to cope with the number of people who need support.

With support from her family and empathy from health and social care staff, Paula has made a good recovery. Unfortunately, that is not the story for everyone. We all have a role to play in changing the narrative from stroke being a condition that affects people only physically to one that affects the whole person.

I encourage all members to speak to stroke survivors and their families in their constituencies and regions about the mental impact that stroke has had on them, as it will absolutely open their eyes to the way in which people's worlds have changed. Grief is a way of describing the feeling that several stroke survivors have described to me. It is not confined only to people who have lost someone to stroke; it extends to those who have lost what their previous life was through any condition, from paralysis to aphasia. The survivors and their families often have to pick up the emotional pieces, muddle through and try to make the best of it. I hope that, through this debate and other work, we can put a focus on the mental health support that many survivors need.

I am keen to support the Scottish Government to drive forward improvements in this area, and I was pleased by the publication, earlier this year, of "A Progressive Stroke Pathway". Although that document is vast and wide ranging, it includes a focus on psychological care for stroke survivors, which is encouraging. However, we must act now to ensure that that translates to changes for patients. Through early intervention, we can give people the chance to rebuild their lives and save health and social care services a significant amount of money over the long term.

I hope that the cabinet secretary will be able to update us on when the revised stroke improvement plan will be published, and that the Government will give appropriate resource to the plan. I hope that the cabinet secretary will also ensure that stroke care across the 14 health boards is consistent, so that everyone receives the same level of care.

I repeat my thanks to the Stroke Association and all those stroke survivors who have given their time and their effort to the cross-party group, and I look forward to hearing everyone's contributions.

17:28

Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP): I thank Gillian Mackay for bringing the debate to the chamber. I know that the subject is very emotive for her—we talked about that yesterday—and I pay tribute to the work that she has done in this area. My thoughts are with you, Gillian. I also thank Katie MacGregor from the Stroke Association for her briefing for tonight's debate, which is comprehensive, extensive and as informative as ever.

I, too, am a member of the cross-party group on stroke. My dad died from vascular dementia about four years ago, after a series of TIAs. When he lost his ability to speak about three years ago, that impacted on his mental health and on my mental health and that of the rest of the family.

There are 2,000 stroke survivors in East Lothian—that is about one in 50 adults; 12,500 people have been diagnosed with high blood pressure—that is one in eight adults; and around 1,800 people have atrial fibrillation, which is a heart condition that causes an irregular heartbeat and raises the risk of having a serious stroke.

As Gillian Mackay mentioned, in March 2022, the Scottish Government published "A Progressive Stroke Pathway", which was produced by the national advisory committee for stroke. That document sets out a vision of what stroke care in Scotland should be. Early next year, the Scottish Government is due to publish a revised stroke improvement plan, which will be based on recommendations that are made in the progressive pathway report.

"A Progressive Stroke Pathway" states:

"Psychological care should be available to all patients in line with local delivery plans."

I will touch on that later.

The Stroke Association report "Keeping Stroke Recoveries in Mind" found that stroke survivors are still not receiving the psychological support that they need. The report calls for the model that has been developed by the Scottish stroke psychology forum to be included in the upcoming stroke improvement plan and given appropriate financial and workforce resource.

The report found that 87 per cent of stroke survivors want equal access to physical and psychological care in their rehabilitation but that, at the moment, only 25 per cent think that they are receiving enough mental health support. Ninety-four per cent of people said that they experienced

a mild impact on their psychological and emotional wellbeing after their stroke; 75 per cent of respondents reported that they did not get enough support in hospital; and 68 per cent of people did not feel that they got enough support once home from hospital.

Why is it so important to give greater emphasis to emotional care? Stroke is the biggest single cause of adult disability in Scotland. Two out of every three stroke patients leave hospital with a physical disability, and people need support to come to terms with this huge change in their life. People carry the impacts of their stroke with them for the rest of their lives. Even for people with mild disability or those who make a complete physical recovery after a stroke, fatigue and psychological issues can hugely affect their quality of life.

Emotional impact has been included in the two previous stroke improvement plans but, as I said, issues persist. In the 2022 Scottish stroke care audit, the category relating to psychological support was the lowest performing of all the stroke improvement priority categories. The Stroke Association 2019 report “Lived Experience of Stroke”, which remains the largest-ever UK-wide survey, found that nine out of 10 stroke survivors reported experiencing at least one cognitive effect, which was the same figure as for those who reported experiencing at least one physical effect.

Three quarters of stroke survivors experienced a change in their mental health—they might develop depression, anxiety or suicidal thoughts. By 2035 the incidence of stroke in Scotland is expected to double compared with 2015 figures. When a physical illness such as stroke is accompanied by mental illness, that worsens outcomes such as life expectancy.

I again thank Gillian Mackay for bringing the debate to the Parliament. I also thank the Stroke Association for all the work that it is doing and for its briefing. The key point is that we all need to work with health boards to ensure that we keep stroke recoveries in mind. I know that the delivery of the service varies in different parts of the country. I have been trying to speak to my local health board on the issue and I am struggling to raise issues in that regard. We need to ensure that stroke survivors receive the psychological support that they need, as Gillian Mackay has highlighted.

17:32

Roz McCall (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I thank Gillian Mackay for bringing the debate to the chamber.

Having a stroke is a life-changing event. The condition affects around 10,000 people every year in Scotland, and more than 128,000 people in the country are living with the long-term

consequences of their stroke. The Stroke Association report says:

“You can’t always see the damage a stroke causes. It’s hidden inside. But we know it’s one of the biggest issues for people and their families. Emotional and psychological wellbeing for someone after a stroke is just as important as their physical recovery.”

The sense of loss and grieving for the life that has been so abruptly altered is the first and most difficult challenge that a stroke victim will need to overcome. In the simplest of terms, a stroke victim will need to mourn the person they were before they can become the person they will be. I speak from experience. In February 2021, when we were in lockdown again, my husband collapsed from a haemorrhagic stroke and went through surgery to reduce the bleed on his brain. He had no idea of what was happening and no concept of the situation. He was in intensive care in Edinburgh and I was 50 miles away at home when depression took hold. He would not eat; he would not engage in any way; he did not want to know.

Usually, I would have been able to visit and support him and simply hold his hand but, because of the extraordinary circumstances brought on by the pandemic, a psychologist’s input was requested and the doctors feared that he would not recover, even though the operation was a success. Over the course of many difficult phone calls, I had to try to describe him—his likes, his dislikes, his goals and his dreams—and even though I had no idea whether he would be able to experience those things again, I had to make sense of what little talk they had managed to pick up from him. His journey back to health was won in those conversations and that psychological intervention.

As members will be aware, not all strokes have the same outcomes, and my husband’s experience is an example of that. Most people think that a stroke is a condition that affects someone’s physical health and, of course, those consequences are extremely serious. As a result, however, it is assumed that the care ends when the physical symptoms end, and that assumption contributes to people not receiving the psychological care that they desperately need.

The Stroke Association consulted more than 100 stroke survivors, and the results were staggering. In fact, I will repeat Paul McLennan’s comments on this point. The association reported that 94 per cent of people said that they experienced an impact on their psychological and emotional wellbeing after a stroke, while 39 per cent reported severe impact on their mental and physical health. Three quarters of respondents said that they did not get enough emotional support in hospital, and 68 per cent felt that they did not get enough support when they went home.

The battle to truly survive a stroke is won or lost on the basis of what the victims believe they can achieve, but that is not being catered for, and we must do better. I have concerns that immediate stroke care is moving in the wrong direction nationally. Members will be aware of the set of standards for national stroke care, which is often referred to as the stroke bundle and includes access to a brain scan within 12 hours as well as access to aspirin as a blood thinner within a day of arriving at hospital. Meeting those targets for care gives someone the best chance of recovery; NHS Fife and NHS Forth Valley in my region are meeting those standards, but Scotland as a whole is not.

Moreover, clinicians are raising concerns about funding reductions to the thrombectomy surgery programme. A thrombectomy saves lives, reduces damage to the brain and increases the chances of a fuller recovery, and it also saves £47,000 per person in on-going treatment. That seems to me like a win-win, and I urge the cabinet secretary to consider that issue again.

I believe that the bedside psychological assessment and one-to-one care that my husband was able to receive saved his life—just as much, in fact, as the surgery did two weeks earlier—and those who provided that care will have my unending support and thanks.

I strongly support the motion.

17:36

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I congratulate Gillian Mackay on securing this members' business debate on the Stroke Association's report, "Keeping Stroke Recoveries in Mind".

As we know—and as we have heard from personal testimony—having a stroke is a life-changing event. Within a matter of minutes, a stroke impacts not just on a person's physical health but on their sense of self, too. It often comes with a loss of independence and agency, and it can be a very difficult thing to adjust to, for both survivors and their families.

That is why this report is so important. Most of the focus is usually on physical recovery from a stroke, but that is just one aspect of recovery. Research undertaken by Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland found that people living with stroke conditions are at a significant risk of poor mental health, and the Stroke Association's report points out that 95 per cent of stroke survivors report a change in their mental health as a result of their stroke.

I did not realise this, but apparently there are 1,800 stroke survivors in Dumbarton, and many of

them have told me that they do not feel adequately supported in dealing with their mental health. The report that we are discussing helpfully outlines the important role that NHS Scotland can play in ensuring that the mental and psychological needs of stroke survivors will be met.

Feeding good psychological care into clinical practice is not beyond us. There can be a holistic, needs-based approach to stroke care, but that is currently missing in the service. It can be achieved by educating and training staff and ensuring that they are supported in their roles to enable them to take on the relevant additional tasks.

The 2022 report on the Scottish stroke improvement programme, which was published earlier this year, showed that too many stroke patients did not get the care that they needed over the past year. I appreciate that there was a pandemic, but the challenges pre-date Covid. I think that we can all agree that healthcare staff have been incredible, working around the clock to look after patients; however, they are exhausted, and the system is failing them, too. We all acknowledge that improvements in stroke care can and should be delivered, but they cannot happen without ensuring decent pay and safe staffing levels. Healthcare staff are already at breaking point, and it is important that, when we ask more of them, we support them properly—and that that goes beyond warm words. We actually need to act.

It is also important to note that there is significant variation between health boards in performance against stroke care standards. We should be able to have the same standards—but better standards—wherever we are in Scotland, and it is vital that, when seeking to address psychological stroke care, we do not replicate that same trend of variation.

Stroke care, if it is to be effective, should extend beyond a stay in hospital, given that 68 per cent of people say that they did not feel that they got enough support once they were at home and away from hospital. At the last election, the First Minister pledged to support the roll-out across the country of Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland's hospital to home service; indeed, that is something that we would all support. The service already offers support to 38,000 people who are living at home with chest, heart and stroke conditions, and I hope that the Scottish Government will do more to honour that commitment, as the service is not yet provided across all 14 health boards.

Finally, I hope that those issues will be addressed by the Government to allow health boards to appropriately resource and deliver the progressive stroke pathway that we all agree is desperately needed.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms Baillie.

I now call Alexander Burnett, who will be the last speaker before I ask the minister to respond. You have around four minutes, Mr Burnett.

17:40

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con): Thank you, Deputy Presiding Officer. I thank Gillian Mackay for securing this important debate. It is important because—as we heard—the Stroke Association estimates that 128,000 people in Scotland are living with the effects of a stroke. The number in my Aberdeenshire West constituency alone is 1,400.

Stroke is a leading cause of death and long-term disability in Scotland, and for many survivors there will be lifelong emotional and psychological effects. A key call of the Stroke Association's 2013 report, "Feeling overwhelmed: The emotional impact of stroke", was for improved emotional support, but shockingly, almost a decade later, its recent report has highlighted the fact that nothing has changed.

A constituent of mine, Eric, who lives in Aboyne, has been an avid campaigner since he suffered a stroke in 2004. He has written a book, "Man, Dog, Stroke" and he helps to run an exercise class for stroke survivors in Deeside. Eric knows all too well that people who have the potential for more physical and psychological recovery are not receiving support and are having to go private to get better quality of life.

Psychological support has been overlooked: only a quarter of stroke survivors are receiving enough mental health support. The results are just as appalling as they were almost a decade ago.

That care should start as soon as someone is diagnosed with a stroke, and the Stroke Association's key recommendation is to improve psychological care and implement the national service model of psychological care in stroke services.

However, unfortunately there just is not the appropriate workforce to ensure that that will happen. There are fewer than eight full-time equivalent psychologists in stroke services in Scotland, and "A Progressive Stroke Pathway" highlights the fact that important work is needed. However, in order for each health board to introduce an effective plan, the Scottish Government needs a stroke-specific workforce.

I also note that there is a range of other delays in access to treatments for stroke survivors. Thrombolysis door-to-needle times are variable across Scotland, and treatment times have not been improving, despite that being an urgent time-

sensitive treatment at the onset of stroke. Progress on thrombectomy services is also proceeding too slowly, even though it has the potential to reduce the likelihood of disability for hundreds of survivors each year. It has been available for suitable stroke patients elsewhere in the UK for some time.

The pandemic led to a lot of changes in the health and social care system, which will undoubtedly have had an effect on the treatment of stroke survivors. People might have delayed seeking help or have had to wait for increasingly longer times for treatment, which will have worsened their condition. We also know that delayed discharge from hospital is increasing and that there is a lack of social care available to provide the necessary support to survivors.

However, as we have heard today and in so many other health debates, issues with psychological care for stroke survivors were an issue long before the pandemic. No health board in Scotland has a staffing level that meets clinical guidelines, and psychological care is a postcode lottery. That is completely unacceptable. Therefore, I urge the Scottish Government to ensure that stroke survivors get the cognitive, emotional and psychological help that they need.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Burnett. I call Humza Yousaf to respond to the debate. You have around seven minutes, cabinet secretary.

17:44

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): Thank you, Deputy Presiding Officer. First, I thank Gillian Mackay for securing this important members' business debate, and I thank the Stroke Association for providing a briefing to elected members across the chamber.

We have members' business debates in the Parliament for a number of reasons, as members are acutely aware. Sometimes, the debate is to highlight an excellent project. Sometimes, the debate is to rightly praise an individual in a member's constituency or region. Sometimes—as is the case for this evening's debate—it is to put the spotlight on an issue that does not get enough national airing.

I think that Gillian Mackay has done that tonight. As she and others—including Roz McCall, who made an excellent contribution—said, when people think about stroke, they often think about the physical impacts of a stroke. As Roz McCall rightly said, the physical impacts and impairments that a stroke might cause are not inconsequential, but less is said about the psychological impacts, so I am very grateful, first and foremost, to Gillian

Mackay for shining a spotlight on the issue through her motion, and to all the members who have contributed to the debate.

Gillian Mackay spoke about her experience of stroke with her family. She has done that on a number of occasions in the chamber—each time very powerfully. I am also grateful to Roz McCall for sharing her experience in relation to her husband. I wish him all the very best on his recovery journey. My goodness! How difficult that must have been for Roz McCall and her family. It would have been difficult at any time, let alone with the legal restrictions that were in place at the time. She owes us nothing, but her sharing of that story with the Parliament was very powerful and insightful.

I will focus a large part of my remarks on the issue of psychological support and will try to address some of the issues that have been raised by fellow elected members. Addressing the mental health and cognitive impacts of stroke is absolutely a priority for the Government. We are in the midst of developing a new mental health and wellbeing strategy. We should not and will not ignore the long-term mental health impacts of conditions such as stroke. We are absolutely committed to ensuring that patients who have suffered strokes receive the best possible care to enable them to live longer, healthier and more independent lives. Key to that is ensuring that we meet their mental health and cognitive needs as much as we meet their physical needs.

We will liaise as best we can—I certainly try to do this—with people who have been impacted by stroke, whether they have lived experience of suffering a stroke or are a member of the family of someone who has suffered a stroke. We will do that through the national stroke voices group. From listening to the experiences of people who have been affected by stroke and from the findings that the Stroke Association has presented, it is clear that more can be done to address the psychological consequences of stroke.

As several members have mentioned, the Stroke Association's report references "A Progressive Stroke Pathway", which was developed by the national advisory committee for stroke, and the recommendations that it makes regarding psychological care. In response to that, the annual reviews of NHS boards' stroke services will now include a requirement for boards to demonstrate their provision of psychological support for people who have been affected by stroke, in line with the national model of psychological care for stroke. That will ensure that the psychological impacts of stroke are at the front of the minds of our NHS chairs and chief executives when those reviews take place.

Boards will be asked to implement a documented programme for promoting awareness, screening and treatment of the psychological consequences of stroke. Psychological care should be available to all patients who require it, and there should be documented evidence of a clear referral pathway for accessing psychological services. I take the point that a number of members made about their belief that that is not done in a consistent manner. That is why we have set that requirement in relation to the annual reviews. We want to achieve consistency right across the board.

We are also asking boards to ensure that anyone who has suffered a stroke is offered a formal review six months after their stroke event. Support needs to be provided immediately, and we need to make sure that that is followed up.

We know that the psychological consequences of stroke do not always manifest themselves immediately. We have heard that from people who have suffered a stroke and from family members. We hope that that approach will ensure that individuals are able to receive the psychological care that they need when they need it. The provision of psychological care and six-month reviews will be reported in all future Scottish stroke improvement programme annual reports.

I want to turn to a couple of issues that have been raised that I have not covered. Gillian Mackay asked about the stroke improvement plan and when it will be published. I will be happy to update members on that; we are in the midst of that discussion. Obviously, we are under considerable financial constraints, but we want to ensure that there is, when we publish that plan, the consequential funding that will be required for it. I will ensure that we update Gillian Mackay and any other member who has a particular interest.

Roz McCall, Alexander Burnett and other members made an important point about the funding of life-saving thrombectomy services. The point was well made, and I do not disagree with it, but I say to Roz McCall and Alexander Burnett that we are under extreme financial constraints. I will not stray into the reasons for and the politics around that, but really difficult decisions have to be made to deal with high inflation costs and the high pay deals that we have to offer, given the high inflation costs that our workers currently face, which is having an impact on service delivery. However, it should be acknowledged that there is an increase from the previous financial year of almost 20 per cent in forecast thrombectomy expenditure for the current financial year. We will continue to invest in thrombectomy services, because we know—I know as health secretary—their value.

I absolutely accept that delivery of the stroke care bundle is crucial to provision of high-quality stroke care. That is very much emphasised in “A Progressive Stroke Pathway”. Monitoring of performance against the stroke bundle standards through the Scottish stroke care audit allows us to identify where gaps exist. Members will not hear from me denial that there are gaps. There are challenges in delivery of high-quality stroke care and in where we need to implement quality improvements.

I am aware that I am straying slightly over time, Deputy Presiding Officer, but I want to emphasise a final point about the Scottish stroke care audit, which has been raised by a number of colleagues including Paul McLennan and Jackie Baillie. Jackie Baillie was right to point out that it is clear that there are things that we need to improve on. There has been improvement in some areas—for example, in brain imaging and aspirin initiation—but there are many other areas in which we have seen standards slip. That has been largely down to the pressures of the pandemic, but Jackie Baillie was right to mention that there were challenges pre-pandemic, too. She and everybody else in the chamber have my assurance that the psychological support that is needed for people who suffer a stroke is at the forefront of our minds.

I thank Gillian Mackay once again for bringing this important issue to the chamber.

Meeting closed at 17:53.

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

Information on non-endorsed print suppliers
is available here:

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



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba