



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Meeting of the Parliament (Hybrid)

Thursday 27 January 2022

Session 6



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Thursday 27 January 2022

CONTENTS

	Col.
GENERAL QUESTION TIME	1
Travel to Medical Appointments (Support).....	1
Physical Activity (Access During Lockdown).....	2
Stirling Council.....	4
Breast Cancer Oncology (NHS Tayside).....	4
National Care Service.....	6
NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.....	7
Endoscopy and Urology Diagnostic Recovery and Renewal Plan.....	8
FIRST MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME	9
Maternity Services (Moray).....	9
Social Care.....	14
Adult Disability Payment.....	17
Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production Programme (North Ayrshire Bid).....	17
Glasgow School of Art.....	18
OVO Energy.....	19
Gender Recognition.....	20
Cabinet (Meetings).....	21
Domestic Abuse Courts.....	22
Rail Travel.....	24
National Care Service (Private Sector Contracts).....	25
POINT OF ORDER	28
HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY	30
<i>Motion debated—[Jackson Carlaw].</i>	
Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con).....	30
Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP).....	34
Sharon Dowey (South Scotland) (Con).....	35
Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP).....	36
Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab).....	38
Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP).....	40
Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green).....	41
Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP).....	42
Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD).....	44
Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP).....	46
Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con).....	47
Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP).....	49
Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab).....	50
Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP).....	52
The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government (Shona Robison).....	53
PORTFOLIO QUESTION TIME	57
EDUCATION AND SKILLS	57
Outdoor Clothing (Support).....	57
Free School Meal Provision (East Kilbride).....	58
Access to Further Education (Covid-19).....	59
OVO Energy.....	61
Apprenticeships (Agriculture and Rural Sector).....	62
Teacher Recruitment.....	63
Revision Support (Access to Resources).....	65
Student Housing Strategy.....	66
BUDGET (SCOTLAND) BILL: STAGE 1	68
<i>Motion moved—[Kate Forbes].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Liz Smith].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Daniel Johnson].</i>	
The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy (Kate Forbes).....	68
Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con).....	72

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab).....	75
Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP).....	78
Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD).....	82
Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP).....	84
Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con).....	87
Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab).....	89
John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP).....	92
Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con).....	94
Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP).....	96
Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green).....	99
Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab).....	102
Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP).....	105
Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab).....	107
Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con).....	110
Kate Forbes.....	112
PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTION	116
<i>Motion moved—[George Adam].</i>	
DECISION TIME	117
ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES	124
<i>Motion debated—[Rona Mackay].</i>	
Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP).....	124
Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP).....	126
Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con).....	128
Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP).....	129
Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP).....	130
Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab).....	132
Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP).....	133
Karen Adam (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP).....	135
Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP).....	137
The Minister for Children and Young People (Clare Haughey).....	138

Scottish Parliament

Thursday 27 January 2022

[The Convener opened the meeting at 11:40]

General Question Time

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): Good morning. I remind members of the Covid-related measures that are in place. Face coverings should be worn when moving around the chamber and across the Holyrood campus.

The first item of business is general question time. In order to get in as many members as possible, I would be grateful for short and succinct questions and responses.

Travel to Medical Appointments (Support)

1. **Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP):** I refer members to my entry in the register of interests, which mentions my involvement with the Western Isles Cancer Care Initiative.

To ask the Scottish Government what financial support is offered to patients and authorised escorts who need to travel significant distances for medical appointments. (S6O-00684)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): Financial support for travel is available for patients and authorised escorts, in line with eligibility criteria and medical requirements. We continue to work with boards to build on the significant innovation that there has been throughout the pandemic to limit the need for travel where that is possible and clinically appropriate. For example, there has been increased use of digital and technological solutions such as the Near Me service.

Where travel is necessary, boards are expected to support patients to identify and access the available support, take account of individual circumstances and ensure that patient care is always at the centre of those decisions.

Dr Allan: The charity Western Isles Cancer Care Initiative recently recorded its fastest approval for financial assistance for a cancer patient, whose patient escort request—for a friend to accompany them—had been refused by the health board. For people who live on the mainland, it must be strange to imagine having to undergo something as worrying as cancer treatment without the support of a loved one, but, in the past few years, that has become an all-too-common scenario in the Western Isles since the handling of patient escort applications changed. Does the cabinet secretary agree that patients should not be disadvantaged with regard to the emotional

support that they can draw on just because they live on an island?

Humza Yousaf: I whole-heartedly agree with that point, and I think that Alasdair Allan articulates it very well. People on the mainland would not expect to go through that situation, worry and anxiety on their own, and he makes that point very well. I am sympathetic to his point in relation to not just cancer diagnosis but any diagnosis that could be life altering. Therefore, I will take the issue away and look at it in more detail. Obviously, there would be a financial impact, but he is absolutely right to put patient care and safety at the heart of the matter. I am sympathetic to that and I will keep the member updated.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I have previously written to the cabinet secretary about that matter and have not received a reply. A review of patient travel in the Highlands and Islands was due to take place, but it has been delayed since August last year because of the pandemic. When will the review take place? It is urgently required, because the criteria and reimbursement amounts date back to 1996 and do not account for inflation. Will the cabinet secretary also confirm that the review will be subject to an island impact assessment?

Humza Yousaf: I apologise if Ms Grant has not had a response to correspondence that has been sent recently. I will check that out as soon as we are out of the chamber.

With regard to her wider point, she is right that a review was due to be undertaken, but, unfortunately, the pandemic has meant that it has been delayed. We will look to bring forward the review as soon as possible. I am sure that she understands that our boards and health and social care civil service team are still under immense and intense pressure.

With regard to the latter point that she raised about any review undergoing an island impact assessment, I will ensure that that is the case.

Physical Activity (Access During Lockdown)

2. **Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to mitigate the effect that reduced access to physical activity during lockdown has had on the health of young people. (S6O-00685)

The Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport (Maree Todd): Our approach during the pandemic has been to permit as much sport and physical activity as possible and, in particular, to prioritise under-18 sport, as we recognise its importance to physical and mental health. When schools were closed during the pandemic, active schools staff were deployed flexibly into childcare hubs to deliver sport and

physical activity interventions. They also delivered online physical activity sessions for those who were learning from home.

The Scottish Government has committed to doubling the budget for sport and active living over the lifetime of this parliamentary session, which will make access to sport and physical activity more inclusive, reduce barriers to participation, and play an important role in supporting the long-term recovery from the pandemic.

Brian Whittle: For six to 17-year-olds, the recommended daily exercise requirement is 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity. Pre-lockdown, less than one quarter of children in that age group participated in that 60 minutes. Without question—I say this as a coach as well as an MSP—the percentage has seriously declined over the past two years, as access to activity has been significantly curtailed, especially in deprived areas.

That will not be resolved without direct targeted action and intervention from the Scottish Government. What will the Scottish Government do to tackle this ticking health time bomb?

Maree Todd: I thank the member for his continued interest in the area. We absolutely recognise the need to prioritise participation across all groups, but also to tackle inequalities. We are working with sportscotland and organisations and individuals across Scotland to break down the financial and other barriers that keep too many people from leading active lives.

We have ideas about how to increase participation by women and girls. We are looking at tackling the exclusion of people with disabilities. We are determined to increase the level of activity right across the board, but we are particularly focused on tackling inequalities in children and young people.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I preface my comment by saying that I am not promoting intergenerational wars, but older people—I declare an interest in that regard—not only have missed exercise but are often still understandably cautious about being out and about in public. They are losing confidence and becoming isolated. Will the minister also give that issue consideration? I am talking about exercise and not sport, to which I am a stranger.

Maree Todd: I acknowledge Christine Grahame's on-going interest in the area. The over-50s are a priority group for sportscotland's equality outcomes for 2021-25. We hope to achieve a number of changes in that area. We want people in that group to participate in sport, we want them to see and hear people participating in sport, and we want to use their long experience by having them involved in organising sporting communities.

In relation to activities, I highlight Paths for All, which has the most amazing programmes. One is called health walks, which is about exactly what Christine Grahame spoke of: increasing the confidence of people who might have got out of the habit of exercising or have health worries that make them fear exercising, and offering them a social opportunity. I heartily recommend to all my colleagues that they direct folk to have a look at Paths for All. It has fabulous opportunities for every age range to participate in.

Stirling Council

3. Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government when it last met Stirling Council and what was discussed. (S6O-00686)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government (Shona Robison): Ministers and officials have regular meetings with representatives of all Scottish local authorities, including Stirling Council, to discuss a wide range of issues, as part of our commitment to working in partnership with local government to improve outcomes for the people of Scotland.

Dean Lockhart: Community projects, high streets and tourist venues across the Stirling local government area have been severely impacted by the most recent and unnecessary restrictions that were imposed by the Scottish National Party. The vast majority of those organisations are still waiting for assistance that was promised by the Scottish Government. When will it be received, and why is there a delay?

Shona Robison: A great deal of assistance has been set out during the pandemic to support the types of organisations that Dean Lockhart has outlined. The Scottish Government has worked with partners to try to ensure that that money and support goes to local projects as quickly as possible. From my engagement with third sector organisations, I know that that support has been warmly welcomed and has enabled them to support people in our communities, particularly the most vulnerable.

Breast Cancer Oncology (NHS Tayside)

4. Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what its plans are for service continuity for breast cancer oncology services in NHS Tayside, in light of reports of further resignations within the service. (S6O-00687)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): On 20 January 2022, NHS Tayside announced that, due to a staffing gap that will arise at the end of January, a mutual aid agreement has been agreed between NHS

Tayside and three other health boards. The agreement outlines that some patients living in Tayside and receiving radiotherapy for breast cancer will be required to travel for their treatment to their nearest cancer centre in Edinburgh, Glasgow or Aberdeen. All other radiotherapy services in Dundee cancer centre will carry on locally. Meanwhile, recruitment for any vacant posts within the service is on-going.

Michael Marra: I can inform Parliament and the cabinet secretary that, over recent days, two further consultant oncologists have resigned. That will leave NHS Tayside with no breast cancer oncology specialists and serious shortfalls in oncology consultant cover in relation to other tumours.

Putting aside the incompetence of the Government and health quangos that got us here, I implore the cabinet secretary, on behalf of the women of Dundee and Tayside, at long last to treat the situation as the crisis that it is. Will he immediately intervene to guarantee the full recovery of breast cancer services in Dundee?

Humza Yousaf: I will not rise to the political attack. It is important to engage with the issue in a non-partisan way and to put the women and patients who are affected very much at the heart of the situation. Michael Marra asks me to intervene, but I can give an absolute assurance that I and other ministerial colleagues have been deeply involved in the issue. There is no question of NHS Tayside not taking action; it has been taking action.

I will give some examples. Last year, NHS Tayside undertook three rounds of recruitment, with one successful applicant. It has been in regular contact with all United Kingdom agencies—more than 120 in total—in relation to both contracted and non-contracted posts. Medical directors have been in contact with several of the larger cancer centres in England, which report similar challenges.

We will, of course, work closely with NHS Tayside. It is in a deeply regrettable situation. We will do everything that we can to ensure that NHS Tayside's breast cancer service is staffed in the best possible way. However, the shortage of medical oncologists, particularly for breast cancer, is not unique to NHS Tayside. It is felt acutely there, but the issue is wider than that. I am happy to meet members about the issue. It will take a collective effort by the Government and the health board to ensure that a full service resumes in NHS Tayside.

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): NHS Tayside's inability to recruit replacement breast cancer therapists and clinicians is putting a huge strain on individuals,

especially when they have early stage breast cancer. The cabinet secretary identified that people are going to cancer centres in Glasgow, Aberdeen and even Forth Valley, all of which also have staffing issues. What additional measures can be put in place to ensure that the disruption to those patients is kept to a minimum?

Humza Yousaf: Alexander Stewart is right in saying that the focus is on trying to ensure that the disruption is kept to a minimum. NHS Tayside has made it clear that, when there is a need for patients to travel and be accommodated, it will seek to make sure that those costs are covered.

We are working intensively with the board to support all further solutions. That includes international recruitment; regional roles that support several centres—involving, for example, NHS Lothian and NHS Tayside; a re-examination of locum capacity, including dealing with international locum agencies; role redesign, including research opportunities with Dundee medical school; and exploring an enhanced marketing campaign for NHS Tayside to attract more oncologists, and breast cancer oncologists in particular.

Although we are rightly and understandably focusing on NHS Tayside, the issue is felt not only by other health boards in Scotland but by other health boards and national health service trusts in England and other parts of the UK. We will do everything that we can to ensure that breast cancer services across Scotland are fully staffed.

National Care Service

5. **Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its plans for a national care service. (S6O-00688)

The Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care (Kevin Stewart): The consultation on the national care service received more than 1,300 responses. Analysis of the responses is currently under way and we expect to be able to publish a report on the findings as soon as possible. I am sure that members will appreciate that the ability to prepare easily accessible versions, both written and audible, will drive the final timetable.

Given the breadth of the consultation, ministers across Government will want time to reflect on the analysis. As such, there is no plan for a concurrent Government response.

Jenni Minto: Can the minister confirm whether good food nation plans would be relevant to the formation of the national care service?

Kevin Stewart: We want Scotland to be a good food nation in which people from every walk of life take pride and pleasure in, and benefit from, the

food that they produce, buy, cook, serve and eat each day. We will consider how to take account of the good food nation principles in the national care service as we develop our proposals.

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

6. Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government when it last met NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. (S6O-00689)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): I met the chairs and chief executives of the national health service boards, including those from NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, this morning.

Rona Mackay: A registered blind constituent asked me what lateral flow test help is available for visually impaired people. Are the health board and the Scottish Government aware of the difficulties that people with that disability encounter? What help is available to them?

Humza Yousaf: I am aware of those issues, which many members have raised. Rona Mackay raises an important point.

The national testing programme was primarily delivered by the United Kingdom Health and Security Agency, and we are working with it to continually explore ways to enable more accessible testing. For people with access to a smart phone, the UK Covid-19 testing programme launched the Be My Eyes support service in early 2021 to improve accessibility for at-home polymerase chain reaction—PCR—testing.

In response to calls for the same support for at-home lateral flow tests, an expansion to the existing 119 phone service and the Be My Eyes service was launched today, 27 January, to assist asymptomatic visually impaired people, and anyone else who needs support, to conduct a rapid flow self-test independently. People who have severe sight loss might find it easier to get the test done by a friend or family member, but I understand that not everybody is in that position.

In addition, instructions on the LFT self-tests that are used in the national testing programme are available in large print and easy-read formats and can be accessed through the appropriate manufacturers' links.

I will ensure that our communication around that issue is on our NHS Inform website and I will work with third sector partners to ensure that information on the new extension to the Be My Eyes service is widely available.

Endoscopy and Urology Diagnostic Recovery and Renewal Plan

7. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the implementation of its endoscopy and urology diagnostic recovery and renewal plan. (S6O-00690)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): The endoscopy and urology diagnostic recovery and renewal plan was published on 30 November. Actions in the plan are on track, and we have committed to annual updates on progress against commitments in the national health service recovery plan. The first update will be later this year.

Kenneth Gibson: The plan contains a commitment to set up several diagnostic urology hubs and one-stop clinics across Scotland to reduce waiting times for cancer and routine diagnosis. One such hub was set up in NHS Highland in June last year. What arrangements have been made to ensure that people in Ayrshire have access to a diagnostic urology hub or a one-stop clinic in NHS Ayrshire and Arran, and when will such a unit open?

Humza Yousaf: Ayrshire and Arran has a urology hub. Cancer service performance is 96.9 per cent for the urology 62-day pathway and 100 per cent for the 31-day pathway.

As we further develop the neurology diagnostic hubs, we hope that their full benefits will be realised and waiting times for cancer patients will reduce. We intend to give annual updates on the matter, and I will be happy to provide information about the support and the actions that we are taking in their local health board areas if members want it.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes general question time. I apologise to Oliver Mundell—we have been unable to reach him in the time that is available.

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

Maternity Services (Moray)

1. Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands)

(Con): More than three and a half years ago, maternity services in Moray were downgraded after a similar downgrade for Caithness hospital. It means that hundreds of women will now have to travel long distances, often in labour, to give birth or receive treatment at Raigmore hospital in Inverness.

On 7 December, Humza Yousaf stood in the chamber to respond to the independent review on maternity services in Moray. He told me:

"I absolutely believe that there is capacity in place to deal with the additional women who may have to go to Raigmore".—[*Official Report*, 7 December 2021; c 39.]

That confidence is not shared by more than a dozen clinical experts, who have written to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care about the review report. They said that the findings were unworkable and unsafe. They wrote privately to the cabinet secretary and, when he did not respond to them, they went public.

What does the First Minister say to mums to be, and to their families, who are in fear during their pregnancy about how far away help and support will be? Given that her health secretary has not responded to the clinicians on the front line, will she address their concerns about the proposals?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Before I come to that extremely important question, I acknowledge that today is Holocaust memorial day, which is an opportunity to remember all those who were murdered in genocides in the Holocaust, of course, and more recently in Rwanda, Darfur and Bosnia. It is an opportunity for us to rededicate ourselves to resisting the hatred and prejudice that drives such atrocities. Whatever opinions or points of view might divide us, we should never forget that our bonds of common humanity are stronger and must always unite us.

I turn to the important question. On all those questions—I hope that this is a point that Douglas Ross will accept—the safety of pregnant women, mothers and babies is the paramount imperative of the Government and of clinicians who work on the front line.

Obviously, a review was commissioned on the issues of consultant-led maternity services at Dr Gray's hospital and the implications for Raigmore. The report is thorough and substantial. Before Christmas, the cabinet secretary met staff, the health boards and local people, and the Scottish

Government is considering very carefully all the recommendations. It is absolutely important that we get it right and that we recognise the understandable and important desire of women to give birth as close to home as possible. It is also really important that we do not lose sight of the issues of patient safety. I give an assurance to members and, more importantly, to local people that all the issues will be subject to the most serious and careful consideration.

Douglas Ross: I echo the words of the First Minister about Holocaust memorial day. Immediately after First Minister's question time, my colleague Jackson Carlaw will lead a members' business debate on the subject, and I am certain that every member will stay in the chamber for such an important debate.

The future of maternity services at Dr Gray's hospital has consequences for mothers all over the north-east and the Highlands. It has impacted my own family, but it has caused far greater problems for many others. Here is one example from the recent review of maternity services. These are the words of a mum, who says:

"I had been told that if I had a bleed before giving birth, the chances were slim that I would survive, and consequently neither would my baby. I spent months in constant fear that I would bleed. Then the worst happened, and I started bleeding at home. I was transferred, initially to Dr Gray's, then to Aberdeen in a blue-light ambulance. The bleeding did initially stop, and I was told my baby had a heartbeat; but, when the bleeding started again, on the way to Aberdeen, I was told the heartbeat had gone. I therefore thought that my baby was dead, and it was likely I was next."

That will happen to more and more women the longer the situation is allowed to go on.

Doctors and midwives are saying that the options on the table will not work. What will the First Minister and her Government do about it? Why are they not responding to the medical experts?

The First Minister: First, I acknowledge and understand the personal experience. Many of us, myself included, have personal experience of baby loss at different stages, so I absolutely understand the emotion, sensitivity and seriousness of these issues.

The Scottish Government commissioned a report, conducted by Ralph Roberts, as part of our commitment to reintroducing consultant-led maternity services at Dr Gray's in a safe and sustainable way. That is really important. The report that has been published is substantial and thorough, and it is important that all its recommendations are considered extremely carefully. The Government will again meet representatives from NHS Grampian and NHS Highland to look at practical next steps. Core to

that, of course, will be listening to clinicians at Raigmore in any further discussions. I think that the health secretary has already indicated this, but, if not, I will indicate now that he is prepared to meet clinicians—it is important that he meets clinicians at Raigmore.

The Keep MUM campaigning group also has views on the recent review and report, and they also have to be listened to.

I do not underplay at all the seriousness of this issue, nor do I deny or challenge in any way how important it is to all women to give birth as close to home as possible. That is not just desirable; there are many good clinical reasons, and reasons of support, for it.

The most important thing, which is acknowledged and which underpins the questions that are being asked here—there have been experiences, which drive some of this—is that maternity services are safe for women and their babies. That principle will drive all the decisions that are arrived at. Those decisions will, of course, be informed by all those who have opinions or clinical expertise to bring to bear.

Douglas Ross: The First Minister said that the health secretary will now respond, but the clinicians wrote directly to him. They kept that private because they wanted to put across their views and get his response. When the health secretary did not reply to those front-line experts, they went public in the local papers. They still did not get a response, so I am raising it at First Minister's question time. The issue should not have to come to the chamber here in Parliament to get a response.

This issue does not just affect mothers in Moray. During the past 15 years of this Government, the temporary or permanent closure of maternity units has reduced services in Inverclyde, Paisley, Skye, Caithness, Angus, Perth and Dumfries. It is unacceptable to force pregnant women into lengthy and distressing journeys.

We have heard from Cara Williamson, who was transferred from Aberdeen to Kirkcaldy because of a lack of beds. She was told that she would not be allowed to go with her newborn twins as they were transferred to the neonatal unit at Ninewells hospital in Dundee, and she would have to wait for a separate ambulance. All that Cara wanted was to get closer to home and to her family, but she was left alone, hundreds of miles away. Do families in every part of Scotland not deserve better than that?

The First Minister: Let me say two things in addition to what I have already said. First, on the letter from clinicians, I am more than willing to look into why a reply was not sent. However, I believe that the health secretary has said publicly that he

will meet Raigmore clinicians, and it is inconceivable that decisions would be reached on this issue without properly engaging the front-line clinicians who are responsible for implementing those decisions. I assure those clinicians and the populations that are affected that that will absolutely happen.

On the more substantive issue, I do not need to remind members that I was health secretary for a number of years, so I have grappled with many of these issues. The starting point is that everybody wants every woman to be able to give birth as close to home as possible. However, there are often safety and sustainability challenges associated with that and we have to consider those issues carefully. For example, in some of the smaller units in our country, sometimes the issue is that the small number of births means that it is not possible to have the specialisms to support the complexity of care that might be required. During these years, there have also been some recruitment challenges in some of these units that have added to these issues.

It would be completely wrong and irresponsible for a Government or clinicians on the front line not to have regard to those very serious issues as we try to strike the right balance between quality specialist care and care that is as close to home as possible. That is a balance that we have to grapple with in many aspects of national health service care, but it is particularly important when we are talking about the safety of pregnant mothers and their babies.

We are talking about really difficult issues. I absolutely understand the views of families and women who give birth, but it is so important that we get the decisions right. I absolutely acknowledge that, in getting those decisions right, the views of front-line clinicians are essential.

We have given commitments to continued investment in Raigmore as we take forward the options and any recommendations.

The health secretary will engage directly with clinicians, as is right and proper, and we will continue to treat all these matters with the utmost seriousness.

Douglas Ross: The First Minister mentioned the small number of babies who are born in some of our smaller hospitals. That is because the units in those hospitals have been downgraded. There has been an 80 per cent reduction in babies being born in Moray because of decisions that have been taken by the local health board and the Scottish Government.

The First Minister said that the health secretary will fully engage with clinicians in NHS Highland, but that should have happened by now. I am raising the issue today because they are at the

end of their tether in trying to get a response. They are worried about whether the health secretary is going to listen, given what he said on 7 December, when he told the chamber:

“I absolutely believe that there is capacity in place to deal with the additional women who may have to go to Raigmore”.—[*Official Report*, 7 December 2021; c 39.]

It does not sound as though he is open to listening to the clinicians when he has already made up his mind that the situation is fine.

Another woman we spoke to, Billie Cowie, described her experiences. Late in her pregnancy, over Christmas, she had to make the journey of more than 60 miles from her home to hospital in Aberdeen. Over the Christmas break, she was admitted to hospital repeatedly and, each time, she was forced to make the same journey. She described those journeys as “awful”. It is 2022. Nobody anywhere in Scotland should have to go through that, let alone repeatedly.

The First Minister was elected on a manifesto that promised to restore a consultant-led maternity unit at Dr Gray’s hospital in Elgin. Will she keep that promise? Will she make a commitment that there will be no further downgrades to maternity units anywhere in Scotland?

The First Minister: The manifesto commitment stands, but it is important in relation to all services that we deliver such commitments in a way that is safe and sustainable. That could scarcely be more important than it is in the context of the issue that we are talking about here.

I appreciate that, while I have talked about—indeed, Douglas Ross has done so, too—a number of different maternity units, the issues of distance are much more acute in the area that he represents than they will be in other parts of Scotland. I absolutely do not deny the experiences, the views or the wishes of the mothers quoted in the chamber today. I absolutely understand those.

However, likewise, I know that there are some women, some of whom I have spoken to, who choose to go to bigger centres. Jackie Baillie is in the chamber; in the past, I have had such discussions with her about the Vale of Leven and Inverclyde.

We are talking about difficult issues. We have to strike the right balance between local access and safety and specialism, particularly for cases that involve more complex care. We need to do that carefully, taking account of the views of clinicians.

I repeat the point that I made about investment in Raigmore, if that is necessary. That is an important part of our commitment.

We will continue to take forward these issues carefully and listen to mothers who have given birth, mothers who will give birth in the future and clinicians who deliver the services, so that we get to the best balance that ensures not only that there is local access and that the need for travelling long distances is avoided but that our maternity services are rooted in safety as the absolute guiding principle for pregnant women and their children.

Social Care

2. Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): On Holocaust memorial day, we remember the millions of Jews who lost their lives to prejudice and hate, and all victims of genocide. We cannot be complacent. There can be no hierarchy of prejudice; we cannot pick and choose. Hate against one is hate against all.

The pandemic has had a devastating impact. Nowhere has that devastation been felt more than in our social care sector. Less than 1 per cent of our population live in a care home, but they account for a third of all Covid deaths.

A report that has been published by Audit Scotland today makes it clear that

“The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the long-standing challenges facing the social care sector”.

It goes on to say that the service is in “near crisis” and that

“a lack of action now presents a serious risk to the delivery of care services for individuals.”

What urgent action is the Government taking now to address those challenges?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I welcome today’s Audit Scotland report. In many respects, it does not tell us anything of which we have not all been aware. There is an urgent need for reform of our social care services; we are taking that forward through the proposals for the national care service. Before I move on from that, it is important that I recognise that the findings of the Audit Scotland report that has been published today are largely in line with those of the independent review of adult social care that Derek Feeley led for us. That is why we are moving to establish a national care service by the end of this session of Parliament.

In the meantime, we are increasing investment in social care. We are increasing the pay of people who work in social care because recruitment and retention, and valuing the social care workforce, are important parts of what we need to do. That work will continue as we take forward the plans for the national care service over the next few years. Everyone across Parliament will have the opportunity to contribute to those plans.

Anas Sarwar: The report also states:

“Regardless of what happens with reform, some things cannot wait.”

We had a staffing crisis even before the pandemic. Services are now reporting that they do not have the staff that they need: 60 per cent of housing support services, 59 per cent of care at home services and 55 per cent of care homes for older people do not have the staff that they need.

Audit Scotland’s stark report makes it clear that

“a lack of action now presents serious risks”.

According to Audit Scotland, social care staff are “under immense pressure” and

“are not adequately valued, engaged or rewarded for their vitally important role”.

Does the First Minister accept that we urgently need a credible workforce plan, and that a 48p pay increase simply will not cut it? Will she back our plan for an immediate increase in pay to £12 an hour, rising to £15, for care workers?

The First Minister: We are taking action now, as we progress the plans for the national care service. We have a commitment to increase public investment in social care by 25 per cent over this session of Parliament and we have started on that journey.

We have also taken steps to increase the pay of people in the adult social care workforce. In referring to 48p, Anas Sarwar misrepresents the scale of the amount. That is an increase of 48p per hour. That represents an increase of 12.9 per cent from March 2021 and is the first step towards substantially increasing pay in the adult social care workforce. We have already delivered an increase of 12.9 per cent. Does that go far enough? No. We have said that we want to go further. It is interesting that that is more than the increase in the part of the United Kingdom where Labour is currently in office and where just the real living wage is paid.

We recognise the need for immediate action, and we are taking action immediately. We are also working with partners to attract more people into the sector. In November last year, we launched a national marketing campaign to attract and recruit more people into the sector. I hope that Anas Sarwar will acknowledge that there are real pressures on recruitment across health and social care—and across the wider economy—because of the impact of Brexit and the ending of free movement. That is a significant challenge. We will continue to make the investment that attracts people into the sector and will invest more in that sector as we take forward the longer-term reform of creating a national care service.

Anas Sarwar: The Scottish National Party has been in Government for 15 years. No one else is to blame. The social care sector that was neglected before the pandemic has been failed during the pandemic. The workforce has been ignored, overstretched and undervalued. People who are in need of care at home have been neglected and are struggling to cope. Unpaid carers—of whom a disproportionate number are women—carry the burden of this Government’s failures.

We have been calling for a national care service for more than a decade, but it cannot now be used as a Government slogan to delay action until 2026. Carers and those who need care cannot wait another four years.

There are things that the First Minister can do right now. Will she take the burden off family carers by restarting respite services, pause commissioning to allow focus on delivery of social care, end non-residential care charges now and, finally, reward our front-line heroes with the pay increase that they deserve?

The First Minister: Those who listened to my first answer to Anas Sarwar will not have heard me blaming anybody. They will have heard me talk about the things that this Government is doing, building on the action that the Government has taken in years gone by.

However, I cannot allow this moment to pass without reminding Anas Sarwar that, while we have been in office in national Government for 15 years, for much of that time in Glasgow City Council, for example, Labour was in administration and was denying female workers the equal pay to which they were entitled. It took an SNP administration in that council to deliver equal pay to women workers across Glasgow. Forgive me, Presiding Officer, if I am not prepared to take lectures on that matter from the leader of the Scottish Labour Party.

We will, of course, continue to increase the pay of adult social care workers. We have already taken the step that I have described. Just this month, we have, for example, announced additional investment to help unpaid carers with respite, and we will take forward the plans to deliver the national care service. That is a reform that, I hope, future generations will look back on as having as much significance as the establishment of the national health service has had for this generation.

We will get on with doing the hard work of supporting people who work in adult social care and who do such a sterling job on behalf of us all. I take the opportunity today to thank them for what they do.

The Presiding Officer: We will have some constituency and general supplementary questions.

Adult Disability Payment

Elena Whitham (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP): I am delighted that the Social Justice and Social Security Committee this morning voted unanimously for regulations to allow the roll-out of the new adult disability payment this year. That is a significant step in building a more compassionate and dignified social security system in Scotland. Will the First Minister outline the improvements that the new benefit will deliver for people across Scotland?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I am absolutely delighted that the adult disability payment regulations were passed unanimously this morning. Starting in March and being phased in ahead of national roll-out in August, the payment is the 12th benefit that we will deliver, and is the most complex to date. It is a major milestone for our social security system that will mean that there is a very different approach from the current adversarial Department for Work and Pensions process. It will put an end to the anxiety that is caused by undignified physical and mental assessments and an end to private sector involvement. It will also end the stressful cycle of unnecessary reassessments.

Starting from a position of trust, the adult disability payment will provide disabled people with a compassionate system that is designed around what they have told us is important and which will, crucially, be rooted in our values of dignity, fairness and respect.

Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production Programme (North Ayrshire Bid)

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): North Ayrshire is one of the five areas that have been shortlisted for a new prototype nuclear fusion power facility through the United Kingdom spherical tokamak for energy production—STEP—programme. The programme has the potential to generate a huge chunk of zero-carbon energy, which is much needed, without the dangerous waste that is so often cited in Parliament. More important is that it has the potential to generate up to 3,500 much-needed jobs for the local area.

Given that it ticks the boxes of so many of the First Minister's economic, energy and climate ambitions, will she support North Ayrshire's bid? If so, what will the Scottish Government do to support it?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We will continue to discuss with North Ayrshire Council and other councils their ambitions across a wide

range of areas, including that one. The technology is very early-stage technology. My concerns about nuclear power, which are not just about the waste that is generated from current nuclear technology, but are about real doubts about value for money, are well known.

We will discuss with councils any ambitions that they have, but in the meantime we will continue to invest in renewable energy, in which Scotland has vast potential to support our transition to net zero.

Glasgow School of Art

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): The report on the first Glasgow School of Art fire in 2014 noted that the legacy ventilation system was a major contributor to the rapid spread of the fire. The report that was released this week on the 2018 fire notes that

"The construction, layout, and high fire loading allowed the fire to spread unchecked ... in all directions",

leading to

"50% of the building being well alight within thirty-eight minutes

of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service arrival. The art school management has claimed that its approach to the protection of the building was gold standard, but we find that the fire alarm did not work.

Does the First Minister agree that lessons appear not to have been learned from the original fire, and that we owe it to the arts community and to the residents of Garnethill, who have been devastated by two fires and locked out of their homes for four months afterwards, that there should be third-party independent oversight of the management of the rebuild to ensure that confidence is restored?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): First, I take the opportunity to thank the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service for its work on an incredibly challenging and complex investigation. Unfortunately—and I think that we all feel frustration at this, although it is not the fault of the Fire and Rescue Service—due to the extensive damage that was sustained at the site and the destruction in the fire of physical evidence, the Fire and Rescue Service was unable to determine its likely origin and cause.

Nevertheless, it is important—I agree with Pauline McNeill—that, wherever possible, all lessons are learned, because of the importance of the art school and the Mackintosh building to Glasgow, to Scotland and to the arts and culture community. We will continue to consider how the Scottish Government can support that lessons-learned exercise and to support the art school as it takes forward plans for the future.

Of course, all higher education institutions must comply with the terms that are set out by the Scottish Funding Council and with the principles of good governance that are set out in the Scottish code for good higher education governance. We expect the highest standards of propriety from organisations that receive public funding.

I will give further consideration to Pauline McNeill's suggestions and will come back to her in due course.

OVO Energy

Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP): As the First Minister will be aware, OVO Energy, which has a major presence in my constituency, has announced that it intends to lose 1,700 jobs, including up to 700 in Perth. She may also be aware that, last week, the Deputy First Minister, the Perth and North Perthshire MP, Pete Wishart, and I met the chief executive officer, Adrian Letts; unfortunately, the owner of the company, Stephen Fitzpatrick, refused my invitation to attend. The conclusion of that meeting left us all very concerned that compulsory redundancies will be forced on the workforce, which could result in vital skills being lost to the economy. Is there anything that the Scottish Government can do to impress on the company how damaging those losses will be to my constituents and to the wider economy?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I thank Jim Fairlie for his question and for his efforts on behalf of his constituents. I know that he is joined in those efforts by Pete Wishart and the Deputy First Minister. Obviously, we are very concerned about the proposed job losses at OVO Energy. This is an anxious time for the staff who work there, for their families and, given the importance of the company to the local area, for the wider community.

Last Wednesday, the Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise spoke with the CEO of OVO retail, exploring and interrogating the rationale behind the decision. OVO advised that the voluntary redundancy programme had not been open for long and that it was speaking to staff and to the Unite union. The business minister will continue to press OVO on all relevant points and has asked that it remain in contact with Scottish Enterprise to explore ways of mitigating the impact on jobs.

We will do everything that we can to seek a reversal of those decisions, if that is possible, or their mitigation. We will also do everything that we can, through the partnership action for continuing employment initiative, to support those who might be affected by redundancy. However, I appeal to the company—indeed, I say that it is an expectation of the company—that it engages with

local representatives and the Scottish Government and makes sure that its decisions are fully transparent to its workers and to the wider community.

Gender Recognition

Meghan Gallacher (Central Scotland) (Con): The Equality and Human Rights Commission wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Local Government and Housing about the reform of the Gender Recognition Act 2004. It outlined the need to improve healthcare services for transgender people and the potential consequences of self-identification, such as

“those relating to the collection ... of data, participation and drug testing in ... sport, measures to address barriers facing women, and practices within the criminal justice system”.

Does the First Minister acknowledge the concerns that have been raised by the EHRC? Which part of society does she believe will bear the brunt of those consequences, and how does she propose to mitigate those impacts if her Government maintains its current plans?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I note the letter that was received yesterday from the Equality and Human Rights Commission. I also note that it represents a significant change in the position of that organisation. It responded to both the Government's previous consultations. In its response to the 2017 consultation, it said:

“the Gender Recognition Act 2004 is far removed from reflecting ... best practice ... and has a significant negative impact on the lived experience of trans people.”

In the 2019 consultation on the draft bill, it said:

“The Commission considers that a simplified system for obtaining legal recognition of gender ... would better support trans people to live their lives free from discrimination, and supports the aims of the draft Bill.”

Obviously, it is for the commission to say why its position has changed, but it is important for me to narrate that that is a change in position.

I am slightly concerned about some of what I consider does not accurately characterise the impact of the bill. The bill will seek to simplify an existing process; it will not confer any new rights on trans people, nor will it change any of the existing protections in the Equality Act 2010. It will not change the current position on data collection or the ability of sports organisations to take decisions, for example.

We will continue to engage with a range of organisations, but let me stress again: this is a bill that is designed to simplify an existing process, to reduce the distress, trauma, anxiety and, often, stigmatisation that trans people suffer in our society. The Government will set out its plans for the timetabling of that legislation in due course.

The Presiding Officer: I call Maggie Chapman.

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): Apologies, Presiding Officer. I want to come in on a later question. I have unpressed my button.

Cabinet (Meetings)

3. Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): On Holocaust memorial day, I say on behalf of the Scottish Liberal Democrats that, although the actions and the murderous regime of the Nazis are passing out of living memory, they haunt us still. We have a duty to remember and to pass on that knowledge to future generations, and to work together to ensure that atrocity and genocide can never again happen in this world.

To ask the First Minister when the Cabinet will next meet. (S6F-00713)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Tuesday.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: Anas Sarwar has already pointed to the Audit Scotland report that was published today that shows the crisis in our care sector: care needs not being met, poor pay and conditions, and a staffing workforce that has been hollowed out and cannot wait for action. There is a frightening symmetry between that report and a report that was published yesterday by the Royal College of Nursing, which says that six out of 10 in that profession are considering leaving it, because they, too, feel that they cannot provide adequate care to the people in their charge.

The issue is really serious. Retention is almost as important as recruitment, because we need to stop people leaving, and that is why we have called for burn-out measures. We also need to listen to staff, whose expertise is not being heard—they do not feel that they are listened to.

I offer a suggestion and ask the First Minister whether she will instruct a national health service and care staff assembly, modelled on the citizens assemblies that we both support, so that we can close that important gap.

The First Minister: I will consider any proposals made in the chamber, but we are getting on now with the job of supporting the NHS and social care workforce. Obviously, Alex Cole-Hamilton will have heard my responses to Anas Sarwar about not only our long-term reform plans but the action that we are taking now to invest in adult social care, to increase the pay of those who work in it and to support them in a wider sense.

I turn to the Royal College of Nursing's report. Of course, this has been a torrid time for nurses and others working at the front line of our national health service, but, right now, nursing and midwifery staffing is at a record high in NHS

Scotland. It is up by almost 7,500 since this Government took office. That is staff in post—none of that number is vacant. We have also announced staff expansion in the last year alone to create nearly 5,000 extra nursing and midwifery posts, more than half of which are already filled. We are taking action now to increase the number of those working in the national health service and to support those who are already working in it, backed, of course, by record funding.

I will, of course, consider a proposition for further discussion about how we do that in the longer term, but what is more important is the action that we are taking now, and that is what we will continue to focus on.

Domestic Abuse Courts

4. Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to the findings of a recent report by the virtual trials national project board, which states that specialist online courts should be set up to deal with domestic abuse cases. (S6F-00715)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We welcome Sheriff Principal Pyle's report and support the recommendation, which could deliver significant benefits for victims by reducing the traumatising impact of the court environment. I recognise the potential for the proposal to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and court delays, which is to be welcomed for that category of vulnerable victims in particular.

Although the court programme is a matter for the Lord President, I hope to see such courts utilised more widely as an element of the courts recovery programme. We will be happy to consider the possibility of future primary legislation to support the proposal in due course, subject to consultation and further discussions with victim support organisations.

Gillian Martin: Victims of domestic abuse have, for many years, said that giving evidence in front of the person who abused them has been highly retraumatising, as the First Minister has just said, so I am pleased to hear that the report has been viewed positively by the Scottish Government.

The report suggested having dedicated virtual domestic abuse trial courts in each sheriffdom. Given that there are about 33,000 summary trials outstanding, those dedicated courts would, as has been said, ease pressure on the court system. However, they would require additional sheriffs, sheriff clerks, prosecutors and defence agents, all of whom would have to be trauma informed.

What has been done to ensure the development of trauma-informed practice and procedures for everyone working in justice, regardless of the type

of case? Should the virtual model work for domestic abuse cases, might there be the flexibility for it to be extended to other types of cases in which victims have suffered extreme trauma or, indeed, in which geography or victim mobility is an issue?

The First Minister: Those are all really important points. On the specific issue of trauma-informed practice, the work of the victims task force is informed by the voices and experiences of victims and survivors. We recognise the impact of trauma on those giving evidence in court and have committed to developing a trauma-informed and trauma-responsive workforce in the justice system.

Our programme for government commits to a new framework specific to justice, to give staff the knowledge and skills to understand and adopt a trauma-informed approach. That work has been taken forward by NHS Education Scotland, with direct input from victims.

Current legislation allows the virtual trial model to be used in any category of case. Although, as I said a moment ago, the court programme is a matter for the Lord President, the model has the potential to benefit a range of victims and witnesses in the justice system.

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): It is clear that emergency legislation and the virtual trials project board give us real opportunities for changing things and doing things differently in the future. One issue that has been raised is how child contact proceedings can be used by perpetrators as a form of control and on-going abuse. Does the First Minister agree that online courts could play a role in securing justice and safety for vulnerable women and children, and that they could prevent perpetrators from abusing child contact proceedings?

The First Minister: Yes. In principle, I acknowledge that reality and agree that the model could offer at least a partial solution. That is another reason why it is important to treat the matter very seriously.

In relation to children in the criminal justice system, we are developing the barnahus model, which is really important in trauma-informed practice.

I agree with Maggie Chapman on the more general point. None of us wanted to live through a global pandemic, but, as we come out of it, we should open our minds to doing things differently from how we did them going into it. I think that we would all reflect that some of the things that we have had to do by necessity because of the pandemic are perhaps better ways of doing things. That is one area in which that may absolutely be the case.

Rail Travel

5. Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): To ask the First Minister what steps the Scottish Government is taking to encourage rail travel in Scotland. (S6F-00733)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We have continued to invest in Scotland's railway and to support operators throughout the pandemic. We have allocated a record £4.85 billion to maintain and enhance the railway in the current control period, and we have supported our rail franchises with about £1 billion, including more than £450 million of additional funding via the emergency measures agreement. We are committed to ensuring that rail fares are affordable. ScotRail fares are still, on average, 20 per cent cheaper than fares in the rest of the United Kingdom.

I know that Stephen Kerr will particularly welcome the fact that work is well under way to provide passenger services in the public sector, under Scottish Government control, from April. Like me, he will be very much looking forward to that transition.

Stephen Kerr: Indeed. In a few days' time, Nicola Sturgeon and her Government will become fully responsible for the operation and performance of ScotRail. For someone who travels from Falkirk to Edinburgh and back every day of the working week, it costs just £72.50, but for someone travelling from Falkirk to Glasgow and back every day of the working week, it costs £85.50. Those fares are outrageous.

The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport workers has called out the Scottish Government for a 38 per cent increase in fares since 2012. What is the First Minister's plan to reduce fares and get more people out of their cars and on to trains?

The First Minister: I am not sure that Stephen Kerr's fondness for the RMT will be reciprocated, but that is a matter entirely for the union. *[Laughter.]*

It is a serious issue. We will continue to make investments in our railway to improve passenger services, because it is really important for the country's connectivity that we have good-quality railway services. Bringing the railway into public ownership will help with that. ScotRail will be under Scottish Government control from later this year. I had not noticed that, before now, the Scottish Government had escaped responsibility or accountability for those matters, but perhaps we will have more ability to shape things in the future.

Affordable fares are part of a high-quality railway. We need the investment in our railway. Less of the investment in the railways in Scotland comes from passengers through fares than is the

case in other parts of the UK—more of it comes from Government subsidy. Of course, we want fares to be as affordable as possible. However, I return to the point that I made earlier: rail fares in Scotland are, on average, 20 per cent cheaper than they are in the rest of the UK, where—if memory serves me correctly—Stephen Kerr's party is in Government.

Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): Does the First Minister share my view that, if the Scottish Conservatives sincerely want to support Scotland's railway network, passengers and employees, they should lobby their colleagues in the UK Government for full devolution of responsibility for Scotland's railway to the Scottish Parliament?

The First Minister: We have seen in recent weeks that the Tories at UK level do not pay that much attention to what their Scottish Tory colleagues say.

We have long called for those powers to be devolved. There is a serious reason for that. If the whole rail system in Scotland, including Network Rail, is fully accountable to the Scottish Government and the Parliament, we will be better able to provide the railway services that people in Scotland want and expect. Anyone with a genuine interest in those matters and in ensuring the future prosperity of our railway should get behind us and demand the full devolution of those powers to the Scottish Parliament.

National Care Service (Private Sector Contracts)

6. **Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister how much has been spent on private sector contracts in the preparation of the proposed national care service. (S6F-00720)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I refer Jackie Baillie to the public contracts Scotland website, where the details that she has asked for are published.

It is entirely appropriate for the Government to procure specialist services to support the development of our national care service proposals. We must ensure robust review of the evidence and future principles for outcome-focused person-centred design to ensure success. All contracts awarded by the Scottish Government are subject to robust contract management and adhere to the principles of transparency. Any outputs procured in relation to the national care service will be published to ensure that they are publicly available.

Jackie Baillie: I welcome the First Minister's support for Labour's proposals for a national care service, which she rejected 10 years ago—I always welcome late converts. How disappointing

that, so far, £700,000 has been outsourced to big, private sector consultancy firms to develop the national care service. KPMG alone was awarded a contract of £500,000 to develop the business case. Now I discover that the private sector is lining up to benefit from a multimillion pound contract for information technology and data services for the national care service.

Why is that happening at a time when KPMG is not bidding for UK Government contracts because it has been suspended pending investigation? Why is the First Minister using private sector consultancies when there is a wealth of expertise in the social care sector that understands what needs to be done? Finally, how can the First Minister find millions of pounds for private sector contracts, but hardworking social care workers have to settle for a measly 48p pay rise?

The First Minister: Where it makes sense to use external expertise to free up civil servants to focus on policy development and implementation, we will do that. Other Governments do that, too.

Let me give one example of the kind of contracts that Jackie Baillie is talking about: a contract to analyse the consultation responses. It is routine for analysis of consultation responses to be undertaken independently. That work is often put out to an open and fair procurement process, and that independence is normally considered to be a good thing. I can only imagine the howls of "Bias!" that we would hear from Jackie Baillie had we decided to analyse the consultation responses internally instead of having that done independently.

Jackie Baillie talked about changes of heart. I want to come on to that point briefly. She now seems to think that Government should always do such work itself. However, as a minister, she did not have that view. When Communities Scotland was being set up, the Labour social justice minister at the time told the Parliament that external consultants' costs were part of the tens of thousands of pounds spent to establish it. The minister responsible back then was, in case members have not guessed it by now, one Jackie Baillie.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): The First Minister is making the same mistake with the formation of the national care service that her predecessor, Alex Salmond, made with the formation of the national police service. Does she not realise that wasting millions of pounds of taxpayers' money on a national care service—a big bang reorganisation—is disrespectful to the workers who deserve a decent pay rise now? She should be investing in the care service rather than creating a national care service monolith that will not help people right now.

The First Minister: As I listened to Willie Rennie, I could only conclude that, if the Parliament had existed and he had been in it back in the days of the establishment of the national health service, he would have opposed that, because he would no doubt have used the same arguments then.

The opportunity to create a national care service to mirror the national health service is one that we should seize and grasp with both hands. It is vital that we get it right, and all members of the Scottish Parliament will have the opportunity to contribute to that.

Willie Rennie should listen to more people around the country about the care service that they want to see in the future—he should reflect on that. In the meantime, we will get on with increasing investment in social care and increasing the pay of those who do such a fantastic job working in it.

Point of Order

12:47

Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. [*Interruption.*] I can hear groans already, because members know what is coming.

I wish to raise a point of order under section 7.6 of the “Code of Conduct for Members of the Scottish Parliament” regarding the deliberate mischaracterisation of my position by Emma Harper MSP in the chamber on Tuesday 25 January. [*Interruption.*] There are moans because that is true.

Emma Harper accused me of upholding an assertion that was made in a newspaper article, spreading misinformation, disrespecting the convener of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee and causing targeted abuse of members.

Emma Harper spoke for three minutes and 27 seconds; I will be much briefer, as the truth is often quick and simple.

Having provided the journalist with a statement of fact regarding the Scottish National Party’s record on managing Scotland’s health service in response to a question on consideration of future healthcare pathways, I did not have sight of the article ahead of publication, so I cannot be accused of upholding its editorial position. I have no control over the article that was written after I had given comment. [*Interruption.*] I am glad that the Government has control over what is written in the press.

If Emma Harper actually read the words attributed to me, such as that the SNP’s “lack of forward planning” has

“resulted in key personnel shortages across the NHS, including A&E staff and GPs”,

she would conclude that that is fact, not spreading misinformation. Nowhere in the article did I disrespect the convener, and the convener has never spoken to me directly on the matter. I state that I do respect the convener.

Finally, as a member of Indian descent who was born in England and now proudly lives in Scotland, I am well aware of abuse. To accuse me of causing the targeted abuse of another member is outrageous.

There seems to be targeted misrepresenting from those on the Government benches that seeks to undermine me. Emma Harper misrepresented me just weeks after her leader did. I seek your help in securing an apology from her, Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): I thank Dr Gulhane for advance notice of his contribution. As I said on Tuesday, in terms of the code of conduct, these are matters for the committee in the first instance. With regard to the contribution of another member, Dr Gulhane's point is not a point of order. However, as he might be aware, a mechanism exists by which inaccurate contributions can be amended.

Holocaust Memorial Day

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The next item of business is the well-trailed members' business debate on motion S6M-02600, in the name of Jackson Carlaw, on Holocaust memorial day, to be marked on 27 January 2022. The debate will be concluded without any questions being put. Members who wish to contribute should press their request-to-speak button or type R in the chat function now or as soon as possible.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament reflects on the horrors of the Holocaust; believes that it is important to impart the lessons of this despicable event to each generation so that everyone is instilled with an ethos of tolerance and respect for all, irrespective of background; recognises that the Holocaust was the systematic attempt to murder all Jewish people living in Europe from 1941 to 1945; acknowledges that the Holocaust resulted in 6 million Jewish men, women and children being murdered in concentration and extermination camps and in ghettos and mass shootings; notes that Holocaust Memorial Day will take place on 27 January 2022 and that its theme will be "One Day"; understands that this theme, which can be interpreted in many different ways, has been chosen with the general aim that for the One Day of 27 January, people will come together to learn about and reflect on the horrors of the Holocaust and other genocides that took place in the years following 1945, in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur; further understands that underpinning the theme is the hope that, by educating others about past genocides, it will be possible to look forward to a future One Day where there is no genocide; agrees that the Holocaust is an incredibly dark chapter in human history and that the Memorial Day held on 27 January is an important opportunity to reinforce the necessity of striving to ensure that One Day, genocides will become a thing of the past.

12:51

Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con): Holocaust memorial day was first commemorated in 2005, so it is younger than this Parliament. Since I joined the Parliament in 2007, it has been a privilege, in some years, to have proposed motions, in others, to have participated in the debate and, more often, to have just listened with appreciation to the contributions from all parts of the chamber.

My life began in a community full of Jewish neighbours and friends, and I know now that many of them had first-hand experience of the horrors of the industrialised Nazi-perpetrated Holocaust. For decades, they kept their memories to themselves, often even from their immediate family.

Just as I remember that moment when Harry Patch—the last survivor of the conflict on the western front in the great war—died in 2009, it is clear that we are close to a moment when the diminishing number of survivors of the Holocaust will be with us no longer.

I am profoundly appreciative of the fact that I grew up in a community that was so rich in Jewish heritage. However, the surviving elected parliamentary constituency representatives of my Eastwood community—Kirsten Oswald, Paul Masterton and, in particular, Jim Murphy and my predecessor, Ken Macintosh, and I—are, in all likelihood, the last who will come to know and learn from those who were there or who survived the Holocaust.

In the past 18 months, Eastwood has lost two of its most formidable yet charismatic members of our community: Judith Rosenberg, Scotland's last survivor of Auschwitz, and Ingrid Wuga, a beneficiary, with her husband Henry, of the Kindertransport just a few weeks before the outbreak of war in 1939.

Ingrid and Henry Wuga settled in Glasgow and, tirelessly, until her death in her 90s, Ingrid actively supported the work of Holocaust education and awareness in schools and communities. In her last five years alone, while in her 90s, she spoke to some 5,000 adults and children through the Holocaust Educational Trust's outreach programme. For her work, she was awarded the British empire medal and is survived by Henry, who is still a familiar presence where he lives at Eastwood Toll. Indeed, I am delighted that, at the rather splendid age of 97, he was able to participate in Scotland's national commemoration last night and grant an interview to "Good Morning Scotland" this morning.

Holocaust memorial day is commemorated on the anniversary of the date of the liberation of the Auschwitz extermination camp on this day in 1945 by Soviet forces advancing from the east. Judith Rosenberg died at the age of 98, just a few days before this day in January last year, and I last met her shortly before the restrictions that were brought about by the current pandemic. She was as bright as ever.

What distinguished her testimony was that her recollections were of her experience at Auschwitz not as an infant or even a child, but as a young adult woman of 22. She could remember events with extraordinary clarity. Her story might be familiar, but nothing could be more affecting than to hear at first hand about the torturous cattle-truck train journey, during which her father helped pile the corpses of those who had perished in the atrocious cramped conditions in a corner of the carriage; the lack of food and water; and having to hack through the floor of the carriage to establish drainage for waste—something that was not achieved by many.

Most of all, it was affecting to hear the final message from her father as the train pulled to a halt at Auschwitz—somewhere that I know members of this Parliament have stood:

"If the Germans ever offer you options, always choose the hard option, because there will be an ulterior motive."

Although she was not to see her father again, it was his advice that saved Judith and her mother and sister. They took it, and chose the option of walking the final 3km to Auschwitz, while all those who opted for transport were immediately murdered in the gas chambers.

She survived, but the privations and torments of her subsequent time there were appalling. Four months after her arrival, in September 1944, she was finally sent for her first shower in a building with a notice that read "Gaskammer". You can imagine her terror. However, for her at least, it was just a shower. Sent to a munitions factory, she borrowed from her pre-war experience of the family watchmaking business, which was to earn her extra provisions and also save her sister and mother.

Because of her facility for languages, she was employed as an interpreter after liberation by the Americans. In April 1945, she met and fell for a young army officer, Lieutenant Harold Rosenberg, who she said never left her side for the next 60 years, having lobbied personally and successfully for permission from Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery to marry. They settled in Giffnock in Eastwood. Presiding Officer, that was Judith Rosenberg, Scotland's last survivor of Auschwitz.

I have dwelled on Judith and Ingrid's stories because this was a Holocaust that was visited on people—on individuals who are in our community now who lost parents, grandparents and countless relatives and friends. We should never lose sight of the personal in any commemoration or remembrance of the Holocaust.

Auschwitz might have been liberated on this day in 1945, but it was this week in 1942, almost 80 years ago, that the infamous Wannsee conference took place and its notorious protocol was agreed. It was there, under the cold direction of Reinhard Heydrich and scribed by Adolf Eichmann, that the world's first Holocaust was signed off—an audit of Europe's 11 million Jews, a systematic plan to murder them all as Nazi conquest prevailed, and a decision to do so without delay, because, as it read in the minute, "useless mouths" should not be fed.

The one surviving copy of the protocol, which was called in evidence at Nuremberg, is municipally bland, even if its meaning is anything but. This, then, was the final destination of Nazi antisemitism and the relentless prejudice and persecution that had been systematically prosecuted and entrenched since Hitler came to power in 1932. Hundreds of thousands had by then already been murdered, but now and within weeks extermination was to progress on an

unprecedented scale and with an unprecedented fervour, claiming the lives of 6 million Jews and millions more besides—Hitler’s so-called “final solution”.

The theme of this year’s Holocaust memorial day is “one day” in history. Of course, any day can be held in the memory quite differently depending on where one happens to be, and that was true of every single day during world war two. The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust offers chilling examples.

On 19 April 1943, the Jewish inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto fought back against the Nazis.

In Bosnia, 12 July 1995 was the last day that large numbers of women saw their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers. On that date, despite Srebrenica having been designated by the United Nations as a safe area, Bosnian Serb soldiers entered it and started to separate Bosniak men from women and children. Subsequently, 8,000 Bosniak men and boys were murdered in and around Srebrenica.

On 17 April 1975, the Khmer Rouge moved into the Cambodian capital. The entry of the Khmer Rouge resulted in a five-year campaign of terror during which 2 million people were murdered by Pol Pot.

During 100 days in 1994, around 1 million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were murdered in Rwanda.

Antisemitism and racial, sexual and genetic prejudice were not the unique preserve of Nazi Germany. In a previous debate, I noted that, in 1946, the year after world war two, more Jews were murdered across Europe than in the 13 years before the war combined. Many were killed where they stood when they finally made it back to homes that were now occupied by others. Nazi Germany fell; antisemitism existed before it and has prevailed since, and it has done so across our continent as much as anywhere else.

Of the other atrocities just mentioned, those in 1975, 1994 and 1995 were all, shamefully, in my lifetime. How hollow, then, is the mantra “never again”. Holocaust memorial day serves as a commemoration of those lost not only in the Holocaust but in the multiple genocides in the near 80 years since. Importantly, it must remind us of an enduring and permanent duty not just to pay lip service on days such as this but to confront, challenge, educate and defeat the forces harbouring and perpetuating genocidal schemes and all that underpins and facilitates them.

Like many, I have wept at the horror and barbarism of the Holocaust and of the genocides in my lifetime. Have we failed? Sometimes, it overwhelmingly feels that we have. What must our response be? There can be no other choice; we

must rededicate ourselves to meeting the challenge, every year, every decade and every generation. In so doing, we honour the people who were lost. I know that, as a Parliament and a country, we will do that together.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Carlaw. We move to the open debate.

13:00

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): It is, as ever, a great privilege to speak in the debate on Holocaust memorial day. I congratulate Jackson Carlaw on securing the debate and commend him for his thought-provoking speech. This annual members’ business debate is vitally important, so that we can remember the 6 million Jews who were murdered by the Nazis and others and reflect on the genocides that we have witnessed since that time in our lifetime—a point that was well made by Jackson Carlaw.

In reflecting on what I hoped to say this year, on the 77th anniversary to the day of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, I kept coming back to the life of one young Jewish girl whose story has resonated across the world. That, of course, is the life of Anne Frank, whose diary entitled “The Diary of a Young Girl” is known so well to us all. I read it for the first time as a young girl myself.

Anne was just 13 years old when she and her family went into hiding from the Nazis, in July 1942 in Amsterdam. Her diary reflects the hopes and thoughts of every young girl of her time and of every time. Miep Gies, who had worked for Anne’s father and who helped the Frank family to hide and stay hidden—at great risk to her own life, it must be noted—wrote a book about those times entitled “Anne Frank Remembered”. I commend that book as being well worth a read.

In her observations, Miep Gies recalled that Anne’s tiny bedroom wall in the hidden annexe was covered with pictures. There were photos of the big movie stars of the day such as Ray Milland, Greta Garbo, Norma Shearer and Ginger Rogers, cut-outs of cuddly little babies, a photo of a big pink rose and a photo of chimpanzees having a tea party. There was humour and compassion, glamour and beauty, and the natural world—the many interests of a young girl, even one who was in hiding for her life. As someone who has been a young girl, I can well imagine the montage that Anne had created and what it meant to her.

Miep Gies made near daily life-saving visits to the Frank family, bringing them food, supplies, books and basic humanity. She observed that, in the summer of 1943, when Anne had turned 14 years old, she

“was spontaneous and still childish sometimes, but she had gradually acquired a new coyness and new maturity.”

Miep Gies went on to add, in her recollections of that time, that Anne had arrived as a girl but would leave as a woman. As we know, Anne was never to reach womanhood. The Frank family were caught by the Nazis on 4 August 1944 after being in hiding for 25 months. Anne, along with her older sister Margot, died in Bergen-Belsen, in early spring 1945, just a few months short of what would have been her 16th birthday.

However, Anne’s diary lives on, as it speaks to every young Jewish girl of the Holocaust. It speaks to those who, like Anne, did not reach womanhood, as well as those who reached it but were unutterably altered. It speaks to the young Jewish girls whose entire families were murdered by the clinical and calculated killing machine that was Nazi Germany and to those who therefore had no mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, uncles, aunts, brothers or sisters.

It speaks to the young Jewish girls who had to try to make a life, following liberation, against the backdrop of the barbarism and obscenity that had been visited upon them and to those who had lost their hopes, dreams and aspirations, and their very belief in humanity. For every young Jewish girl, I bear witness.

13:05

Sharon Dowey (South Scotland) (Con): It is a privilege to speak in today’s Holocaust memorial day debate and to join members in remembering all those who lost their lives in the Holocaust and in genocide since. Although we remember the victims of Nazi persecution—mainly the Jews—it is worth noting that Roma and Sinti people, gay people, political opponents, religious leaders, Jehovah’s Witnesses and countless others found themselves in concentration camps, suffering not just at the hands of the Nazis but at those of their collaborators.

One would have hoped to have seen some change with the arrival of the new millennium, but the list stretches on until today. For people in Myanmar or Kurdistan, genocide is not some distant memory but a reality with which they must live and that we must confront rather than commemorate.

Other members will discuss those stories in more depth and with more poignancy than I can in four minutes. Instead, I want to shine a light on some of the small but significant roles that the people of Ayrshire played during the Holocaust.

Let us take the story of Lore Zimmerman. Aged eight, Lore was one of thousands of child refugees who came to Scotland and the UK through the Kindertransport scheme. Having fled from

Germany to Prague because she had communist parents, Lore then came to Britain and found herself at Rozelle house in Ayr, under the care of Colonel Claud Hamilton and his wife Veronica. There is also the story of Susanne Schaeffer, a 12-year-old Jewish girl from Berlin, who also came to stay at Rozelle, and that of Martha Rosenzweig—also 12 years old—for whom the Hamiltons found a home in Minishant.

Meanwhile, the Fultons of Carrick lodge took in five refugees, five months before the war had even started, including an eight-year-old and a young man who had been in a concentration camp. In a 1939 edition of the *Ayrshire Post*, Mrs Fulton wrote that more refugees were expected in the near future, before making an appeal for clothes and accommodation, which is echoed in the arrival of Afghan refugees today.

Then, there is Ingrid Wuga, who was born in Dortmund and whom, I know, the First Minister met before she sadly passed away. Having escaped Hitler’s Germany at age 15 through the Kindertransport programme, Ingrid came to Ayrshire and found a job sewing uniforms. Ingrid and her husband dedicated themselves to telling the tale of the Holocaust, with more than 5,000 people having heard her testimony. Quite rightly, in 2019 she was awarded the British empire medal for services to Holocaust education.

Although those stories are touching and remind us that humanity can shine through in even the darkest of times, the Holocaust will, unfortunately, cease to be a living memory as time goes by. Many survivors, such as Ingrid Wuga, directed education efforts worldwide through speaking about the horrors through which they had lived, but that experience is slipping away. As we all know too well, history is all too often doomed to repeat itself.

At 8 pm tonight, I will join others across the UK in lighting a candle in my window in remembrance of all those who have lost their lives to genocide. Those small acts are what keeps the Holocaust alive in the public memory, so I encourage everybody here to do the same.

13:08

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): On this Holocaust memorial day, I thank Jackson Carlaw for bringing the debate to the chamber and for his excellent, moving and thought-provoking speech. I know that the subject is particularly close to the Jewish community in Scotland, many of whom reside in Jackson’s constituency. My thoughts are with those who were murdered and who suffered from the impact of the Holocaust.

This year's theme—"one day"—will mean different things to different people. We can hope that, one day, there will be no more persecution or genocide. However, the fact that oppression of minorities has existed for millennia and has impacted all corners of the globe does not bode well for that.

One day can also change a life and set in motion a chain of events that symbolise horrendous times and can make the face of one person the face of 6 million people. One such day was the warm and sunny 4 August 1944, when the lives of the Frank and Van Pels families and that of Fritz Pfeffer changed drastically, as did those of their selfless helpers. After two years of hiding in an Amsterdam annexe with no way of going outside, having to be quiet and living together with zero respite, and with no room for children to be young, stretch their legs or breathe fresh air, they were discovered. Of the eight members of two families, only Otto Frank survived. As Annabelle Ewing told us—again, so movingly—in her excellent speech, his daughters Anne and Margot, who were just teenagers, died of typhus and hunger in Bergen-Belsen just a few months later.

The outcome of a six-year investigation by an international cold-case team that was led by a retired Federal Bureau of Investigation agent concluded that a notary and member of a Jewish council pointed the Nazis towards a secret attic. I will not name him, because I am not convinced that conclusive evidence has been produced. Concerns have been expressed by expert Dutch historians and the Anne Frank Foundation, which said:

"There is much to be said for following this trail, but the argument underlying the new betrayal theory is based on a number of assumptions, and no conclusive evidence has been found. More research is needed."

It has still not been proved that there was a betrayal, and it is possible that the discovery was collateral to a raid on the offices in the front house, where minor business illegalities took place. Furthermore, the alleged traitor and his family had gone into hiding in 1943, where they remained for most of the war. With so many factors remaining unexplained, how can we so easily accuse someone of sending people to their deaths? We should be particularly careful about adopting a narrative that says that Jews, under the threat of their own families being murdered, are to blame for Holocaust deaths.

I have spoken in many previous debates of the horrific crimes that were inflicted on Jewish people, so I will not do so today.

What befell the few who survived? What happened when they returned to what they once called home? A young Jewish woman called Blanka Rothschild made her way home to Lodz in

Poland from Sachsenhausen concentration camp near Berlin, where she had been a slave labourer. After she had undertaken a long, dangerous and arduous journey, the caretaker of the building in which she had once lived tried to prevent her from going upstairs to her family home. When she went upstairs, the people who had moved into her apartment would not let her in and threatened her. Wandering, Blanka was taken to a chaotic, spartan and overcrowded displaced persons camp, where suicide and despair were all too common. Knowing no one and feeling lost, traumatised and bewildered, she eventually ended up in the United States.

There are countless stories like that. In post-war Europe, surviving Jews were driven away from their pre-war communities by the thousand, and were murdered by the hundred. Forty-seven Jews were murdered in a particularly vicious pogrom in the Polish city of Kielce, where only 200 of the city's 30,000 pre-war Jewish population had survived.

Persecution continues today against the Rohingya in Myanmar, under the watchful eye of the formerly virtuous Aung San Suu Kyi. China has been killing, torturing and re-educating Uyghur Muslims for years, yet the world merrily gears up for the Beijing winter Olympics. Genocides in Rwanda and Srebrenica took place only in the 1990s.

Not only today but every day, let us remember the millions who were murdered in the Holocaust and all other genocides; those who suffered in concentration camps, ghettos and the killing fields; those who endured months or years of existence in secret hideouts; the heroic individuals who risked all to help; and those who found refuge elsewhere. Let us encourage others to speak out and challenge discrimination and persecution. Then, perhaps, one day, it will stop.

13:13

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): I thank Jackson Carlaw for securing today's members' business debate and for his powerful speech. Gathering to commemorate Holocaust memorial day is an act of remembrance, respect and committing to not forgetting the horrors that Jewish people suffered, the fear that they experienced in their lives and the 6 million Jews who died as a result of the Nazi policy of extermination, and to reflecting on the 11 million other people who died under the Nazi regime. As colleagues have powerfully noted, today commemorates the date on which Auschwitz concentration camp was liberated by the Red Army.

I want to use my speech to reflect on the fantastic event that I attended yesterday, which

was held by the Edinburgh Interfaith Association. It was a moving event that focused on this year's theme—"one day". It was a call for us to unite in solidarity against intolerance, harassment and the intimidation that people still experience today because of their faith. The speeches that we heard captured the need to remember, now and in the future.

In my studies at university, the Holocaust was modern history. We still had a raft of family members who were alive during the second world war. From my childhood, I remember my father's Jewish friend and colleague, who had come with his wife to make a new life in Scotland. However, to young people today, the Holocaust is history—they do not have such family connections—so the memories that survivors share with us today are especially precious, and we must share those experiences.

I call on members to check out and share the video that the Edinburgh Interfaith Association broadcast yesterday. It provides a platform for the voices of survivors including Henry Wuga, so that they can say in a way that is powerful as well as emotional, how their lives were changed forever on just one day. It is also a challenge to us and to society to reflect on how we come together.

As colleagues from across the chamber have highlighted, in recent years we have seen genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Darfur and Bosnia. The challenge to us, as MSPs from different parties, is to come together on the issue, and to build a more inclusive society.

People are still being attacked because of their religious beliefs and ethnic backgrounds. As Professor Joe Goldblatt noted in *The Scotsman* this week, antisemitism has been on the rise in the last decade and, shockingly, there was a 49 per cent increase in antisemitism in the first six months of last year.

I left yesterday's interfaith event uplifted. I was also moved by the art of school pupils from Preston Street and Longstone primary schools, whose art was inspiring.

We have a responsibility not just to keep memories alive, and not just to communicate them to young people, but to think about how we can redouble our work to celebrate the world that we live in and to create a more diverse world. As Emma, who is a young Jewish student, put it brilliantly yesterday, we need to recognise the importance of biodiversity, not just for our planet but for humanity, to celebrate our cultural and ethnic diversity. Holocaust memorial day is a reminder that we have responsibility to support interfaith dialogue, to live in harmony and to support peacekeeping across the world in order to keep humanity safe.

13:16

Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP): I thank Jackson Carlaw for this important debate.

It is crucial that we all reflect on the Holocaust—an absolutely tragic part of human history—and the years preceding it, which saw a vicious spiral of othering, discrimination and Nazi persecution of Jewish people and many others, with families being forced to flee or to live in fear for their lives, children being separated from their parents and communities being destroyed.

We must never forget that 6 million Jewish people were murdered in Europe in that barbaric period. We must also remember the personal stories of those whose lives were taken too soon, and of those who survived. I commend the work of the Holocaust Educational Trust, which is vital in that regard.

I welcome the recent United Nations resolution to further tackle antisemitism and Holocaust denial, but it is painful that such prejudices and hate towards entire groups of people, including Jews, are still here. Just as the defeat of the Nazis was not the end of antisemitism, the Holocaust was not the end of genocide. Sadly, as Jackson Carlaw pointed out, since 1945 the world has witnessed genocide in Rwanda, Darfur, Bosnia and Cambodia.

This year's Holocaust memorial day theme, "one day", gives us lots to think about. Clearly, we hope that, one day, there will be no more genocide. As politicians, it is right that we talk about and reflect on the horrors of genocide, but it is also necessary for us all of us to champion equality and tolerance, to support organisations such as the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and to spread the messages from today's debate in our communities.

In one of his books, Elie Wiesel mentioned a peer in Auschwitz who talked about the need for hope that one day

"We shall all see the day of liberation".

Thankfully, many people did see that day.

On that theme, I want to talk about Lanarkshire's own Ian Forsyth, who sadly passed away last month. Ian was one of the first soldiers to arrive at and liberate the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in 1945. After having witnessed the worst of man's behaviour towards fellow human beings, that day never left Ian. For the rest of his life, he dedicated himself to Holocaust education.

A couple of years ago, I visited Calderglen high school in East Kilbride and I heard Ian speak. I was very humbled by his speech. I hope that his story helps our young people to keep alive the

memories of the millions of people who suffered in that dark period of time.

I hope that today—Holocaust memorial day—everyone will reflect on the atrocity of genocide. Through education, we need to ensure that we build the ethos of tolerance and respect for all. We need to remember the words of Ian Forsyth, who urged us to

“stand together against oppression wherever we see it”.

We need to act to ensure that, one day, genocide will be a thing of the past.

13:20

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): I thank Jackson Carlaw for his motion, for securing the debate and for his very passionate speech.

The Holocaust does not sit in isolation. It emerged from a broader culture of racism that was based on conspiracy theories. Although the actions of the Nazi regime stand out, they are part of a history of oppression of minorities in Europe that stretches back centuries. Antisemitism was widespread in early 20th century Europe. The tsarist forgery of “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion” crystallised a number of accusations against the Jews of Europe. Many of the antisemitic tropes that we see today, including the spurious claim about control of finance and the media, feature in those protocols.

At a time when the circulation of myths and untruths in the media is especially problematic, we must learn from that situation. Just as mass literacy allowed credulous people to be taken in by forgeries, so mass communication allows for fake news to spread.

Antisemitism was common at the highest levels of society, from Henry Ford to the British royal family. The actions of the Nazis were horrific, but they were based on a set of beliefs that circulated, and was accepted, widely.

One antisemitic conspiracy that we must confront is the replacement theory that is expounded by associates of former US President Donald Trump and others. As recently as 2017, neo-Nazis marched in Charlottesville, Virginia, chanting,

“Jews will not replace us.”

Given the determination of many to import US trends wholesale, we must ensure that we reject that pernicious idea.

It is dangerous to isolate the actions of the Nazis from those of wider society. As Primo Levi pointed out:

“Monsters exist, but they are too few in number to be truly dangerous. More dangerous are the common men, the functionaries ready to believe and to act without asking questions.”

Violence sprang from a well of prejudice and was not limited to the years 1941 to 1945. It sits in a long history of attacks on Jews, which stretches from the massacre of Jews at Clifford’s tower in York in 1190, through the persecution of the Jews of Iberia in the 15th and 16th centuries, to the tsarist pogroms of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Each of those rounds of persecution was the result of threats to the established order. Lashing out at minorities is a common tactic, and we must not forget that it is not just Jews who have been treated in that way. The Holocaust was an act of power that attacked Roma and Sinti people and LGBTQI people. In a week in which the United Kingdom has been criticised for its growing culture of hostility towards LGBTQI people, we need to take that seriously.

We, in this Parliament, need to consider our actions very carefully. We have seen an enormous rise in anti-trans hate crime, and we have seen Roma communities and Scottish Traveller communities being used for the cheapest of political point scoring. We are at risk of contributing to exactly the atmosphere of hate against minorities from which the Holocaust sprang. Hate does not always come in jackboots; sometimes, it arrives wearing a nice suit, muttering about “justified concerns” and creating an environment in which prejudice can slip into violence.

It is a task for all of us to prevent the atmosphere of hate that leads to violence, so we have a duty to tackle prejudice right now, not just when hate turns violent. Then, one day, we will have created a better world.

13:24

Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): I express my sincere thanks to Jackson Carlaw for lodging the motion, and I am honoured to speak in the debate. I also want to acknowledge the educators up and down the country and across the world who are teaching our next generations about Holocaust memorial day.

It can be difficult to know where to begin or what words to use when attempting to contemplate such an atrocity. Indeed, that feeling was expressed by Holocaust survivor Sonia Weitz in 1995, 50 years after the liberation of Auschwitz, in a poem that she read aloud to a group of middle-school students in the United States. She proffered the following lines:

“Come, take this giant leap with me

Into the other world, the other place,
Where language fails and imagery defies”.

To educate ourselves and confront the most painful and depraved aspects of our history is to take that giant leap.

In our struggle to comprehend the incomprehensible, survivor testimony has always been one of the strongest tools that we have. As such, I would like to thank the Scottish Jewish Heritage Centre in Garnethill, in my constituency, for sharing two stories with me and for keeping these memories alive through an extensive collection of refugee testimonies, documents and information about how the Nazi regime impacted the lives of people in Scotland. Jackson Carlaw was quite right to emphasise the personal in commemorating this day, and, on my visit to the heritage centre, I was struck by two particular examples in the archives.

Dorrieth Marianne Oppenheim was Jewish. She was just seven years old in July 1939 when she left Kassel in Germany and came to Scotland via Kindertransport just weeks before the outbreak of the second world war. Her grandfather had received an iron cross for his services in the Red Cross in the first world war, as did her father, Hans Oppenheim, who was an officer in the dragoons. However, that could not save them from the Nazis.

Dorrieth’s parents were unable to follow their daughter to Scotland and later perished in Auschwitz. A young Christian couple from Edinburgh, Fred and Sophie Gallimore, took in the young girl. Dorrieth lived and worked in Scotland, later marrying Andrew Sim in 1952, and raised her family in Ayrshire. When she passed away in 2012, her family gifted thousands of documents, letters, photographs, papers, books and artefacts to the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre.

The other story that struck me is that of Hilda Goldwag, who was a talented young Jewish artist living in Vienna with her widowed mother. She escaped to safety in Scotland in April 1939, thanks to the Scottish Domestic Bureau for Refugee Women, a Jewish and Quaker initiative that secured her a UK domestic visa. Hilda was exempted from internment as a refugee from Nazi oppression and was permitted to work while living in Glasgow, raising funds for the war effort. Later, she worked as a textile and graphic designer and was a prolific painter. She lost her family in the Holocaust and remained in Glasgow for the rest of her life.

For those people, and for the estimated thousands and thousands of Jewish refugees who came to Scotland before, during and after the second world war, this country was their salvation. We represented safety, acceptance and a light in the darkest of times. Without Scotland, the fates of

many of those individuals hardly bears thinking about.

As the debate has demonstrated, it is rarely an unproductive or fruitless endeavour for a nation to consider its role in history. Countries must take ownership of the individual parts that they have played and reflect on the lessons learned, however painful. In this chapter, Scotland chose compassion for those who had been denied their most basic human rights, and we must take this opportunity on Holocaust memorial day to consider those in need of compassion today.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before I call the next speaker, I am conscious that a considerable number of members wish to speak in the debate, so I am minded to accept a motion without notice under rule 8.14.3 to extend the debate by up to half an hour.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by 30 minutes.—[*Jackson Carlaw*]

Motion agreed to.

13:29

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): It is a solemn privilege for me to rise for my party to mark Holocaust memorial day, and I am grateful to Jackson Carlaw for bringing the motion to Parliament and for his typically excellent—and moving—speech at the top of the debate.

When we remember the Holocaust, we are reflecting on one of the most horrific and barbaric acts in human history: the mechanised slaughter of 17 million people, more than a third of them Jewish, of entire communities, of huge segments of entire races, and, indeed, of anyone the Nazis found to be in any way deviant or defective, as they saw it in their world view. They were rounded up, shipped to camps such as Auschwitz and Belsen and murdered.

Today is also an important opportunity to remember the victims of other genocides around the world in our own time, and we have heard something of them today. Uyghur Muslims living in China are facing persecution as we speak. All of them are tyrannised, oppressed and tormented simply because of who they are.

As Maggie Chapman reminds us through the words of Primo Levi, monsters are real. They may wear business suits or military uniforms, but they have walked among us. We see the evidence of their works in the bleaker chapters of human history, and today we mark the darkest chapter of them all. Monsters are real, and the horrors of the Holocaust are a grim and obscene reminder of what can happen when we fail to recognise them and when we turn a blind eye to them. Horrific acts

of this kind are often enabled by the passivity of those who have the power and the agency to act but choose not to. Elie Wiesel, a survivor of Auschwitz, warns us against that. He tells us:

“We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.”

The haunting memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe, which stands in the heart of Berlin, symbolises the particular horror that can occur when those in power become corrupted and domination trumps any sense of service to one's fellow human being. There is no limit to how bleak things can become.

We must remember that the Nazi regime was made possible only with the blind capitulation of thousands of otherwise normal people. The Nazis were successful at mass murder because they desensitised and normalised it. They inured every level of government and military to atrocity with endless layers of bureaucracy that reduced millions of precious lives to simple lines in a ledger book. That was described as the “banality of evil” by Hannah Arendt in her book about the trial of Adolf Eichmann.

In these times of relative harmony and liberty, it is vital that we do not become complacent to the danger of something like the Holocaust ever happening again. Indeed, if somebody living in Bremen or Cologne in 1930 had been warned of what would unfold in the coming years, they might well have said, “Something like that could never happen, and certainly not here.” We must not become complacent. We must remember.

I often tell the story of an incident in 2019 when I spent some time in hospital and the man in the bed opposite volunteered his belief that the Holocaust was a hoax. In the argument that followed on the ward, he revealed that the basis for his position was rooted in videos that he had seen on YouTube. Just this week, a school board in the United States voted unanimously to ban a Pulitzer prize-winning graphic novel—an allegorical tale—about the Holocaust.

Challenging antisemitism and Holocaust denial falls to each of us. We have seen the grim evidence of its revival in the rise of casual antisemitism in UK politics and in the mass shootings and hostage taking in US synagogues. It is not going away, and we must do everything that we can to stamp it out.

The fact that we are here, living among many of the communities and minority groups that the Holocaust and the Nazi regime sought to extinguish, and the fact that we stand united in this chamber in our remembrance of them and those awful events, and in our opposition to the twisted ideologies that they were born out of, is evidence

that the Nazis failed, that that sort of darkness will always fail, and that the human spirit will triumph over evil. Let us ensure with every fibre of our beings that that remains so.

13:34

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I congratulate Jackson Carlaw on his powerful speech. Holocaust memorial day provides us with an important opportunity to reflect on and remember the tragedy of the Holocaust and the atrocities that were committed.

It is extremely important that young people have the opportunity to visit the sites of the concentration camps and experience what for me was only reflected in school history books. I recognise the work of the Holocaust Educational Trust and its continued commitment to supporting our young people's education. I also want to mention the work of vision schools Scotland, which was started by the University of the West of Scotland. I became involved in that after being invited to join by Jackson Carlaw in 2019. I was due to visit Auschwitz with young people from the programme in 2020, but the visit was cancelled due to the pandemic. As many young people, particularly in Scotland and across the western world, have no lived experience of far right extremism or of the hatred and intolerance that come with it, I agree that education is key in ensuring that such atrocities are not repeated.

I will share an experience that gave me a physical connection to the Holocaust, which I have mentioned in the chamber before. It is worth repeating, as it demonstrates the impact of the Holocaust on survivors. I was a recent arrival in Los Angeles, California, in the 1990s. I was in the operating room at Cedar-Sinai medical centre, about to assist a surgeon with the removal of a gall bladder from a 76-year-old patient. The woman, who was of German origin, had been resident in LA for 50 years. She was very frightened of her surgery and being put under anaesthesia. I reassured her that we would look after her and keep her safe. I held her hand and when I saw her outstretched forearm on the surgical arm board, on her arm was a tattoo of a pale grey set of numbers—162753. I was overwhelmed with a quick flood of emotions—shock, anger and compassion all at once—so much so that I am not even sure that I remember the correct numbers. I definitely remember how they made me feel, and they still make me feel the same way.

What is burned in my memory is that pale grey tattoo, the significance of those numbers and the rush of emotions. I was 26 years old when I looked after that lady, and I thought about how, when she was 26, she was there—she was a survivor. The

numbers that had been forced on to her delicate skin had made a permanent lifelong mark, but, more important, they were proof that she had survived the horrors and nightmares of Auschwitz.

That inhumane imprint on that woman has been part of my memory for 25 years. The visits that ensure that weans are involved in learning about the Holocaust and my memories of that survivor have contributed to my continuing to care about other victims of oppression across the planet.

I will conclude with a mention of the Jane Haining project. It is a new group that is creating a national essay-writing competition so that we can continue to remember Jane Haining. She was the daughter of a farmer in Dunscore, near Dumfries, and an amazing and brave woman who died in Auschwitz after refusing to abandon the Jewish children who were in her care in Budapest as a missionary. Jane Haining is the only Scot to be honoured as “righteous among the nations”, which is the term that is used by the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial centre in Jerusalem for non-Jews who risked their lives to protect Jews from extermination.

I end with the words of Jane Haining, who said:

“If these children need me in the days of sunshine, how much more do they need me in the days of darkness?”

13:38

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): The mention of Yad Vashem brings back memories of a visit that my wife and I made to Jerusalem and all the emotions that go with that. I thank my colleague Jackson Carlaw for securing the debate, for giving an excellent speech and for all his work over many years as a champion for the Scottish Jewish community.

I refer members to my entry in the register of members’ interests. I am a member of the board of trustees of the Freedom Declared Foundation, which is a charity that aims to promote freedom of religion and belief in the United Kingdom. Like other members who are present in the chamber, I am a member of a religious minority that has had a long history of persecution and misrepresentation. It is perhaps because of that religious heritage that I feel acutely aware of the dangers of marginalising and othering people because of their faith, resulting in my personal sense of mission to call out religious persecution in all its guises.

The Holocaust remains one of the most horrific examples of religious persecution that the world has ever seen, and it is right that we have a specific day in the calendar to remember it.

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): Does Stephen Kerr agree that one of the positive ways

in which we can remember the Holocaust is by all members and political parties endorsing the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism? Until all parties in Scotland do that, there will always be a black mark against us.

Stephen Kerr: I find it regrettable and almost beyond belief that the First Minister has invited into her Government two ministers who have refused to sign up to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism. Given the fact that she stayed for the first part of the debate, I hope that she might reflect on that as a result of the debate.

When I reflect on the horrors of the Holocaust, I am always brought back to the words of the renowned BBC journalist Richard Dimbleby reporting what he experienced on entering the concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen as it was liberated by British soldiers. That report was so graphic and distressing that the BBC contemplated not broadcasting it as he had sent it. Dimbleby said:

“In the shade of some trees lay a great collection of bodies. I walked round them trying to count. There were perhaps a hundred and fifty flung down on each other—all naked, all so thin that their yellow skins glistened like stretched rubber on their bones.

“Some of the poor starved creatures whose bodies were there looked so utterly unreal and inhuman that I could have imagined that they had never lived at all.”

That is just a glimpse into the horror that Richard Dimbleby witnessed and on which he reported. If any member has not listened to him make that report in his own words and voice, I urge them to do so on the BBC website as part of their commemoration today.

A question that I often ask myself and others have posed in the debate is this: what lessons has humanity learned from that destruction? If we had truly learned, would the genocides of Darfur, Bosnia or Rwanda have taken place? If we had truly learned, would we have the current situation in China?

Last December, the Uyghur Tribunal in London concluded that the People’s Republic of China had committed genocide, crimes against humanity and torture against the Uyghurs and other minorities. The tribunal found evidence of enforced abortions, the removal of women’s wombs against their will, the killing of babies immediately after birth and mass sterilisation enforced through the insertion of intrauterine devices that were removable by surgical means only. To honour the memory of the Holocaust, we must stand up for the Uyghurs and other minorities in China and elsewhere.

Although it is right to call out religious persecution overseas, we also have a

responsibility to ensure that every member of the Scottish population feels welcome in Scotland, regardless of their faith or belief. It is too easy for insults to become intolerance, for misunderstanding to become misrepresentation and for principle to become prejudice. We must be on our guard.

My hope is that Scotland, alongside the rest of our United Kingdom, will be a world leader in stopping the spread of ideologies that promote hatred and division. It is unacceptable to marginalise people because of their faith or belief, race, ethnicity, sex or sexuality. One day, may we as a human race recognise in each other a brother and a sister and treat each other as such.

13:43

Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP): I thank Jackson Carlaw for lodging the motion and for his moving speech. I am humbled to speak in the debate for the first time.

Seventy-seven years ago today, Soviet soldiers marched into Birkenau. The liberation of thousands of Jewish people left to die by the SS was not part of their plans. They found 88,000 pairs of glasses, hundreds of prosthetic limbs, 44,000 pairs of shoes and 6,350kg of human hair. They also found 648 corpses and more than 7,000 starving camp survivors.

In 2019, I visited Auschwitz-Birkenau, and I saw the extensive grounds—the scale of which is incredible—the original camp blocks, the guard towers and the hundreds of thousands of personal possessions that were brought by deportees. The deportees had no idea that they had been brought there to be immediately killed in the gas chambers or forced into slave labour by the Nazis.

My experience of Auschwitz-Birkenau has stayed with me since. One memory of that day is watching around 20 teenagers standing around the star of David flag, in tears, praying. I can picture them right now—it will stay with me.

In East Lothian, Whittingehame Farm school was a shelter for Jewish children who were seeking refuge in Britain as part of the Kindertransport mission. From 1939 to 1941, the school was home to 160 children whose parents were killed in the Holocaust.

This year's Holocaust memorial day theme—"one day"—calls on us to use one day to remember the past and create a world that will, one day, be free from fascism, genocide and the politics of hate. For those who suffered for day, weeks, months or years, focusing on just one day is a starting point—a snapshot in time that helps to bring a small piece of the full picture to life.

"One day" is a way for us to learn about what happened during the Holocaust and the genocides that followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. It is one day to hear the testimonies, life histories and names of the millions of men, women and children who were murdered during the Holocaust and the genocides since because of who they were.

As the horrors of the Nazi Holocaust begin to slowly fade from living memory, it is important that we actively remember the events that transpired, honour the survivors and educate ourselves about those who lost their lives and suffered.

Today, I am thinking about those victims and survivors—families and communities whose stories have been all but lost. I am reflecting on the hate that caused the Holocaust and other genocides, and I am taking a moment to commemorate Holocaust memorial day and remember those who lost their lives to oppression and hate.

As George Santayana famously said,

"He who does not learn from history is doomed to repeat it."

Today is a day for commemoration and action to build a better future for us all. We all have a moral obligation to tackle, challenge, debate, discuss, expose and teach about attitudes and behaviours that allowed the Holocaust and other genocides to happen. We can never forget the inhumanity of the Holocaust as we work to protect human rights in today's world.

May we never allow such human atrocities to happen ever again. My thoughts are with everyone whose life has been impacted by those horrors.

13:47

Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab): It is an honour to speak in the debate as we mark Holocaust memorial day 2022.

I pay warm tribute to Jackson Carlaw for securing the debate. I have known Jackson for many years as we have both sought to serve the interests of the people of East Renfrewshire—our home. We have often sparred on various policy matters, but, on the vital importance of Holocaust remembrance, we have stood four-square behind our Jewish friends and neighbours in particular, for whom this remembrance is so deeply personal and important.

I am sure that Jackson Carlaw will join me in commending the on-going efforts of East Renfrewshire Council, the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council, interfaith groups and wider civic society in East Renfrewshire for their on-going commitment to remembering the Holocaust and seeking to build bridges of respect

and understanding among the many diverse communities that we are proud to serve.

I also take the opportunity to acknowledge the excellent work of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the Holocaust Educational Trust, which are among the custodians of remembrance of the Holocaust in the UK. In particular, I mention another East Renfrewshire name—Kirsty Robson. Kirsty first became involved with Holocaust education while at school. She participated in the lessons from Auschwitz programme, which takes groups of young people to the sites of the camps, as we have heard from other members today. Kirsty took the opportunity to share her experiences with fellow pupils at Barrhead high school and beyond. She now works to support both the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the Holocaust Educational Trust, and her passion and determination really are an inspiration.

Kirsty has also brought together survivors from Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur to share their stories, and she continues to work on modern genocide prevention education, including the investigation into what is currently happening with the Uyghurs in China and other human rights abuses around the world.

Although we say “never again”, we know that, all too often, it does happen again. With each passing generation, and as we lose more and more survivors of the horrors of the Holocaust, it falls to us all to pick up the flame of remembrance and education, call out antisemitism, racism, homophobia, transphobia and disablist views and actions when we see them, and speak truth to power when we see discrimination, hatred and the othering of people.

The theme of this year’s Holocaust memorial day is “one day”. We are asked to reflect on one day, on the magnitude of what happened, and learn from it.

Today, I will reflect on one day that opened my eyes to the real experiences of the Holocaust. When I was a fairly new councillor in East Renfrewshire, I had the great honour of helping to host a civic afternoon tea for Judith Rosenberg, Scotland’s last Auschwitz survivor, of whom Jackson Carlaw spoke so powerfully. I remember that, as Judith told her story, we could have heard a pin drop. She spoke of the day that her life changed in 1944, when, at 22 years old, she was deported by the Nazis from her middle-class life in the town of Győr in Hungary to Auschwitz, along with her timber-merchant father and her mother and sister. On the platform at Auschwitz, the men were sent to the left and the women to the right; it was the last time that she would see her father.

For those members in the chamber who, like me, have visited Auschwitz-Birkenau, I am sure

that the memory of standing at that particular spot is forever etched in their memories. To go back to the theme of “one day”, I remember, on the day that I visited Auschwitz-Birkenau, the overpowering, deafening silence on the long walk from the site of the gas chambers, along the railway tracks to the infamous watchtower. The memorial reads:

“For ever let this place be a cry of despair and a warning to humanity”—

a warning that, all too often, we fail to heed.

For all that Judith Rosenberg endured, I never sensed any bitterness from her. She said:

“after the war I felt that though Hitler was bad to me, not all Germans were bad ... When I was a child, my father taught me, that all people are equal, that it doesn’t matter who or what race they are, they are just people ... I think we should all remember that. If we do, then I am not pessimistic.”

Those words are some of the most powerful that I have ever had the privilege to hear. As we have heard, Judith passed away this time last year, almost to the day.

In remembering the 6 million Jews who were murdered during the Holocaust, alongside the millions of other people who were killed in the Nazi persecution of other groups and in the genocides that followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur, let us remember Judith Rosenberg’s words and turn all our efforts towards, one day, truly being able to say “never again”.

13:52

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): I congratulate Jackson Carlaw on bringing this important members’ business debate to the chamber, and I thank him for his powerful contribution. He is correct to note that members on all sides of the chamber are unified in our determination to help to educate future generations.

The Holocaust memorial day debate is an annual debate, and that is absolutely right. We should never forget the atrocities of the Holocaust, nor allow them to be forgotten. The Holocaust is an example of how brutal regimes can have a long-lasting effect on societies in perpetuity.

In speaking in previous members’ business debates on the Holocaust, I have highlighted my experience of visiting Auschwitz a number of years ago. Nothing can prepare you for the experience of going to Auschwitz and the effect that it will have on you. I, and others, at least had the chance to leave that day, whereas 960,000 Jews were murdered by the Nazis there, and 6 million Jews were murdered during the Holocaust. Even

attempting to comprehend the sheer scale of those atrocities is impossible.

We owe it to present and future generations to do all that we can to educate people and to work with the various organisations that work in our schools, with our young people, to ensure that they know of that particular part of history. Such activity must continue to happen long after every one of us is no longer walking the earth. In my opinion, the day that society decides to stop telling that history is the day that the world gives up. Two days ago, it was reported that a Dutch tourist was fined after giving a Nazi salute at Auschwitz. First, the action was abhorrent, and secondly, it shows that there is still a job to be done to educate people about the Holocaust. There is no justification for any such action to take place anywhere.

When I walked into Auschwitz, I became numb. The silence was deafening, and the eeriness was startling. I have never felt anything like it, and I do not want to feel it again. As we walked about Auschwitz, we saw the various rooms where torture took place, the shower rooms where people were gassed, the crematorium where bodies were burned and the wall where people were shot, but one of the most striking parts was the room full of the shoes of victims who perished at the hands of the Nazis.

I have had the privilege of hearing in this Parliament the testimonies of survivors of the Nazi regime. The theme of this Holocaust memorial day debate is “one day”, which is only fitting and provides a sense of hope. After all, without hope, there is nothing. We hope one day to live in a world where there is respect for others instead of what we see all too often is still the case, but the Holocaust and the numerous examples of genocide that MSPs have raised today show how much we still need to do. We need to rededicate ourselves to doing all that we can in that regard. I would like to think that, one day, respect for religious and ethnic backgrounds and the eradication of intolerance will become a reality.

13:55

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government (Shona Robison): I thank Jackson Carlaw for lodging his motion and for highlighting the significance of Holocaust memorial day in what was an incredibly powerful speech. I have to say that all the speeches that I have heard have been very moving and powerful, but I think that Mr Carlaw’s was particularly so. His tribute to the life of the late Judith Rosenberg, Scotland’s last Auschwitz survivor, was very fitting and important, and I thank him for it.

With regard to Jackson Carlaw’s reference to the end of living history and how significant and important that is, perhaps I can begin with a personal reflection. My late mum was in a school in Manchester—this would have been at the start of the war—when a number of children arrived on the Kindertransport. None of the children in her school had any idea why these other children were arriving, and there was a real lack of awareness of the absolute horror that was unfolding hundreds of miles away. In the course of getting to know those children, though, my mum’s own awareness was raised of the horror of what was going on, the prejudice, the racism and the antisemitism. It had a profound effect on her life and her views of politics and fairness, and it gave her a real interest in the international community and in things that were going on that should not have been happening. I guess that she passed a bit of that on to me, and I have tried to do the same with my daughter by telling her about some of those powerful lived experiences.

However, as the last of those lives—and that lived experience—unfortunately leave our earth, we have to find ways of capturing that testimony and ensuring that the next generation and the generation after hear that first-hand testimony about what happened. We must continue to remember all those from minority communities who were persecuted and murdered by the Nazi regime and their collaborators. There were, as we have heard, the millions of people from the Jewish community, but there were also disabled people, gay people, Roma and Sinti people and, indeed, anyone else deemed to be different as a result of the othering of people.

While we honour the memories of those who lost their lives, it is also important that we amplify the voices of those who survived the Holocaust. We are fortunate that some of them are still alive today. I was privileged to contribute to the official Scottish national Holocaust memorial ceremony last night, and I remember, in particular, the testimony of Henry Wuga, who remembers the destruction of synagogues and the homes of his Jewish friends and family, with many being taken away to concentration camps, and of Eric Eugene Murangwa, who was protected from being killed during the genocide in Rwanda by his fellow football players. Such testimony is heart wrenching but also inspiring. Henry and Eric, and others like them who have borne witness to the depths of evil, embody extraordinary resilience. They ensure that the horrors of genocide are never erased from our collective memories and remind us of that vital refrain, “Never again”.

It is natural for us to want to consign these painful memories to the past, but a key component of preventing further acts of genocide is sharing the truth of this dark period with each new

generation. Our children and our children's children have to understand where hatred and intolerance can lead when left unchallenged. As time passes, we must do all that we can to ensure that the memory of the Holocaust does not fade, and moments in our Parliament such as this are important.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for those words. Lessons absolutely should be learned. Therefore, will the Scottish Government unequivocally condemn those in Scottish society who are calling for boycotts of, and sanctions against, people of Israeli descent? That is fuelling much of the antisemitism, particularly in Scottish universities and educational institutions, in which we are seeing a clear rise in the number of antisemitic attacks. Will the Scottish Government be absolutely clear that all members of its Government condemn all language that is fuelling that very unfortunate and unwanted rise?

Shona Robison: Language is important. It is really important to distinguish between the Israeli people and the actions of a Government. It is legitimate to criticise the actions of Governments across the world but not to apply that criticism to a people, because that is wrong. Language matters. I hope that that helps to answer Jamie Greene's point.

Professor Joe Goldblatt recently reminded us that

"Holocaust Memorial Day is critically important for current as well as future generations because, through their enlightenment, there remains the hope that future holocausts and genocides will be less likely to occur."

That is why the Scottish Government continues to support the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust to promote and support the memorial day in Scotland. The Government also continues to support the Holocaust Educational Trust's lessons from Auschwitz project, which has been delivered as a bespoke online educational programme throughout the pandemic.

We have heard from members across the chamber about some of the ways in which the theme of "one day" can be interpreted. Sadly, the one day of liberation of Auschwitz that many were waiting for did not bring an end to the suffering that the world witnessed during that period. As time has passed, hatred and intolerance have continued to blight the lives of many people across the world, with more lives lost to those pernicious forces in places such as Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. Sadly, millions of people across the world today are forced to flee horrendous violence and the threat of being killed, yearning for one day free from such unimaginable strife.

Days such as today remind us that our work is not yet done. Indeed, Scotland has a long history of welcoming people from all nationalities and faiths, including those seeking refuge and asylum from war and terror elsewhere. That includes Henry Wuga, who fled to Glasgow from Nuremberg on the Kindertransport, leaving his family behind. Henry will never forget his newly adopted home, where he settled with his wife, Ingrid, and had a family of his own.

Focusing on "one day" allows us to recognise and reflect on all the individual journeys, challenges and feelings of displacement and loss, which are hugely personal and unique. That highlights the importance of putting lived experience, equality, inclusion and human rights at the heart of our policy making in Parliament.

Holocaust memorial day not only allows us to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust and subsequent genocides but reinforces our on-going collective duty in the present to counter all forms of bigotry and prejudice. Hate must always be confronted and condemned, and the humanity of each individual must be recognised and celebrated. Those are the foundations of a decent society, and I have no doubt that that unites every one of us in the chamber.

This evening, I will join others at the UK national Holocaust Memorial Day Trust virtual event. With others, I will light the darkness by lighting a candle in my window at 8 o'clock to remember those who were murdered simply for being who they were. We will never forget. It is their suffering that should ignite in each of us a desire to build a kinder and more just tomorrow—one day, free from hatred, prejudice and intolerance.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes the debate. I suspend the meeting, albeit only briefly, until 2.30.

14:04

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Portfolio Question Time

Education and Skills

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): I remind members that Covid-related measures are still in place and that face masks should be worn while moving around the chamber and the wider Holyrood campus.

The next item of business is portfolio questions, and the portfolio is education and skills. If a member wishes to ask a supplementary question, they should press their request-to-speak button or put the letter R in the chat function during the relevant question. As ever, I appeal to members and ministers to ask brief questions and give brief responses.

Question 1 is from Elena Whitham, who joins us remotely.

Outdoor Clothing (Support)

1. **Elena Whitham (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to extend financial support for outdoor clothing to early learning and childcare settings. (S6O-00676)

The Minister for Children and Young People (Clare Haughey): Childcare providers have worked creatively over the pandemic to increase opportunities for outdoor learning, as evidence shows that the risk of transmission is reduced outdoors. To support that, we launched in December 2020 a £1 million outdoor clothing fund for providers of funded early learning and childcare as part of our wider winter support package. The fund was used to buy outdoor winter clothing for children who needed it most. A total of 1,040 childcare providers successfully bid for that funding, and children continue to benefit from the clothing this year.

We continue to work closely with the childcare sector to monitor the impacts of the pandemic and to keep the need for further financial support under review.

Elena Whitham: I thank the minister for that answer. Will she outline what steps are being taken to increase children's access to outdoor play?

Clare Haughey: We are supporting the growth of outdoor learning and practitioner confidence in that area in a number of ways. During the pandemic, we funded a virtual nature school programme, which supported more than 2,000 practitioners and 40,000 children and family

members to have quality outdoor experiences. We funded Inspiring Scotland through the early learning and childcare expansion to increase outdoor play and learning activities. We continue to add to our "Out to Play" practitioner guidance series, and the national practice guidance "Realising the Ambition" is also supporting practitioners to deliver more outdoor play. We will work with practitioners to develop strong communities of practice.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We have a supplementary question from Colin Smyth, who joins us remotely.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): The minister will know that, at the moment, pupils are not just in need of warm clothing outdoors. To be frank, they are freezing indoors in classrooms. What additional financial help is being made available for parents to keep their children warm inside schools? Teachers are having to open windows in the middle of winter in place of proper classroom ventilation.

Clare Haughey: As Mr Smyth will be aware, the Scottish Government provides school clothing grants to school-age children. That provision has increased over the years, and we will continue to support families who need our assistance to provide adequate school clothing.

Free School Meal Provision (East Kilbride)

2. **Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how many pupils in East Kilbride will be included in the roll-out of free school breakfasts and the expansion of free school lunches. (S6O-00677)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary joins us remotely.

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Shirley-Anne Somerville): We are committed to expanding free school meals and providing breakfasts to all primary school pupils during the course of the current session of Parliament. Once free school meals have been expanded to include primaries 6 and 7, the total number of pupils who are offered free school lunches in Scotland will be about 390,000, based on the most recent pupil census figures. We have already expanded free school meals universally to primary 4 and 5 pupils from January this year.

I cannot provide specific information on the number of pupils who will be eligible for those important benefits in East Kilbride. However, in South Lanarkshire, there are 17,627 pupils in primaries 1 to 5 and special schools, and just over 25,000 pupils in primary and special schools, who will benefit from free school meals and breakfast expansion in due course.

Collette Stevenson: Will the cabinet secretary outline how the Scottish Government will work with local authorities and organisations such as Magic Breakfast to deliver the expansion? What nutritional and wellbeing benefits for pupils will the provision have?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: The Scottish Government works closely with our local authority partners on an on-going basis to support them as they deliver food and drink in schools. We will continue to do so as universal school meals provision is expanded. All food and drink in schools, including for lunch and breakfast, must meet the school food and drink regulations, which are designed to ensure that children and young people are provided with balanced and nutritious food and drink to support their growth and development.

As they deliver school meals, local authorities can, of course, choose to partner with organisations, such as Magic Breakfast in the member's constituency, taking account of local needs and priorities.

Access to Further Education (Covid-19)

3. **Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of how access to further education by students from the most deprived areas has been impacted by Covid-19. (S6O-00678)

The Minister for Higher Education and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training (Jamie Hepburn): I am clear that every young person should have an equal chance of success, no matter their background or circumstance.

Scottish Funding Council college data that was published this week shows that 32.2 per cent of credits for FE college courses in 2020-21 were provided to learners from the 20 per cent most deprived areas in Scotland. Higher Education Student Data university student statistics, which were also published this week, show that, in 2021, a record high of 16.7 per cent of full-time first degree entrants to university came from those same areas. That maintains the previous year's position by exceeding our interim target of 16 per cent by 2021.

Financial support to students over the course of the pandemic has been substantial. More than £96 million has been provided via hardship funding and support for digital access, mental health and student associations.

Bob Doris: Glasgow Kelvin College in my constituency has informed me that, over the past two years, Covid-19 has had a disproportionate impact on the part-time, community-based and

non-advanced further education programmes that the college would normally be involved in. The impact has been most pronounced for learners in the most deprived 20 per cent of postcodes in the Scottish index of multiple deprivation. Will the minister ensure that that is taken into account when allocating resources for the coming year, to ensure that those from our most deprived communities who are most impacted by Covid-19 can access the educational pathways that they require to help to close the attainment gap? Will he accept my invitation to visit Glasgow Kelvin College to discuss those challenges further?

Jamie Hepburn: I am, of course, happy to accept my friend Bob Doris's invitation. I have always been impressed by Glasgow Kelvin College and the work that it undertakes, particularly on apprenticeships and the community learning and development work that Bob Doris mentioned.

The SFC is currently identifying the best split of available funding resources for the coming financial year, taking into account our priorities and the needs of the sector, with a view to providing indicative institutional allocations in March. My clear expectation is that those allocations should be responsive to our social and economic needs but also to community requirements. In that regard, the issues that Mr Doris has raised are pertinent.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call James Dornan, who joins us remotely, to ask a brief supplementary question.

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): Does the minister share my concern that the most recent—[Inaudible.]—statistics show a continued drop in the number of European Union students who come to study here, in Scotland?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Did the minister catch that question?

Jamie Hepburn: I think that Mr Dornan might have been referring to the drop in the number of EU students who come to Scotland to study.

The impact of Brexit, magnified by the pandemic, has contributed to a significant drop in the number of EU applicants. That is very regrettable. We have world-leading institutions, and we very much value the contribution that EU students make to our economy, culture and academic institutions. They enrich our campus life. I hope that we can welcome many of them to our world-leading institutions in the future.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, minister. All of that is true, but I am not sure that those students have been impacted by Covid by coming from the most deprived areas.

OVO Energy

4. Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what assistance Skills Development Scotland can provide to OVO Energy employees in Perthshire South and Kinross-shire who are reportedly facing redundancy. (S6O-00679)

The Minister for Higher Education and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training (Jamie Hepburn): We have already offered support to OVO through our partnership action for continuing employment initiative for employees who might be affected by redundancy. Skills Development Scotland leads on the delivery of PACE support on behalf of the Scottish Government. SDS PACE representatives met OVO on 20 January to discuss the type of support that might be available, and PACE representatives will maintain contact with OVO to progress the planning of PACE support.

Jim Fairlie: The minister might be aware that I met senior members of OVO's management last week. I have to say that John Swinney, Pete Wishart and I left the meeting with more questions than we went into it with, so it is somewhat reassuring to hear that, despite the lack of reassurance from OVO, the Scottish Government will be able to give some assistance.

What support might the Scottish Government be able to provide to ensure that facilities such as the OVO office in Perth can continue to be used as major employment hubs or training hubs?

Jamie Hepburn: Of course, the issue impacts on my constituency as well. Some 600 jobs are under threat in Cumbernauld. Ivan McKee, as the Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise, is leading on the matter, but I can say, from my previous experience as business minister, that Scottish Enterprise would be very happy to have any conversations about how it can be taken forward. For my own part, I very much expect Skills Development Scotland to continue to play its part in discussing the matters and considering how it can support Ivan McKee in responding to the issues that Jim Fairlie raises.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): My colleague Liz Smith and I also met OVO on Friday and impressed on it the need to continue supporting workers.

As Jim Fairlie said, a large office building in Perth will be left lying empty as a consequence of the decision. Previously, the Scottish Executive had a programme for relocating public sector jobs out of Edinburgh to different parts of the country. Is that something that the Scottish Government could consider?

Jamie Hepburn: Of course, we have done that previously. Social Security Scotland was located in Dundee for that very purpose. In this instance, we are seeking to engage with OVO and, as I have laid out, understand its plans, to see how we can support the workforce. Those other matters could be part of our wider consideration.

Apprenticeships (Agriculture and Rural Sector)

5. Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it is supporting Skills Development Scotland to engage with the agriculture and rural sector to promote opportunities and apprenticeships for young people as a positive career destination. (S6O-00680)

The Minister for Higher Education and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training (Jamie Hepburn): The skills action plan for rural Scotland has driven forward a partnership approach to developing the skills and talent needed to make sure that Scotland's rural economy and communities continue to flourish and grow. The plan recognises that rural areas face particular skills challenges and supports activities to address them.

The Scottish Government provides funding and direction to Skills Development Scotland to ensure that it delivers against our priorities. In 2021-22, priorities included driving the implementation of the plan by supporting the development of the employers toolkit for the agriculture sector and commencing planning for a review of land-based apprenticeships, to ensure that they deliver the skills that the sector needs now and in the future.

Emma Harper: Through engagement with local manufacturing and agricultural businesses, I have had feedback that Skills Development Scotland can be sometimes challenging to engage with on manufacturing and agriculture career opportunities. Will the minister outline what further action the Scottish Government can take to support SDS to promote apprenticeships involving agriculture and rural skills, particularly given their importance to Scotland's economy and our fight against the climate emergency?

Jamie Hepburn: If Ms Harper wants to raise any specific challenges with me, I will take them away and pursue them with Skills Development Scotland. My clear expectation is that it engages.

In relation to challenges around ensuring that rural Scotland is supported, SDS is a member of the skills for farming group; it is engaging with the NFU Scotland conference in February; it is sponsoring the Lantra Scotland land-based and aquaculture skills awards in March; it has updated the My World of Work website, which has been supportive of the skills for farming group; as part of

Scottish apprenticeship week, it is taking out an advertorial in *The Scottish Farmer* newspaper; it contributed to the skills action plan for rural Scotland, as I mentioned; and it produced the rural employers toolkit, which I also mentioned. There is significant engagement.

More fundamentally, I expect SDS to deliver. In 2021, the number of apprentices in our rural communities who started was broadly consistent with population share. For example, Dumfries and Galloway constitutes 2.8 per cent of the Scottish population and accounts for 3 per cent of modern apprenticeship starts, and Scottish Borders accounts for 2.1 per cent of the over-16 population, but 2.3 per cent of apprenticeship starts. I think that Skills Development Scotland is doing a fairly good job of delivering for rural Scotland.

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): Rural depopulation is an issue, and we need vibrant communities across Scotland and to keep new entrants in farming. Does the minister agree that the Scottish Government should put greater emphasis on food and farming in schools and further and higher education settings?

When did the minister last meet the Royal Highland Education Trust to discuss the importance of education in providing the skills that are needed to manage the countryside, produce good food and, indeed, tackle rural depopulation?

Jamie Hepburn: I have had the pleasure of meeting the Royal Highland Education Trust in the past. I have also engaged with the Royal Highland Show and, when that is able to be up and running again, I will be happy to do so again.

We place considerable emphasis on supporting the sectors that Ms Hamilton has referred to. We would also expect our developing the young workforce regional groups to engage with those sectors, so that young people are aware of the great opportunities that they have in them.

Teacher Recruitment

6. **Pam Gosal (West Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its teacher recruitment drive. (S6O-00681)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Shirley-Anne Somerville): Teacher numbers have increased for six years in a row. There are now more teachers than at any time since 2008 and more than 2,000 more teachers than before the start of the pandemic in 2019. We have provided £240 million of additional investment over two financial years to support that and a further £145.5 million of permanent funding

from April this year to support the sustained employment of those teachers.

The new phase of our teacher recruitment campaign is under way. We are continuing to offer bursaries for career changers to move into STEM—science, technology, engineering and mathematics—teaching, and we have increased initial teacher education targets for student intakes this year.

Pam Gosal: In a recent Educational Institute of Scotland member survey, 17.8 per cent of respondents said that violence and abuse from pupils was the greatest cause of stress in the past 12 months. In West Dunbartonshire, in my region, pupils at a secondary school went so far as to create fake dating profiles to humiliate teachers. Does the cabinet secretary agree that the long-term retention of teachers will be more difficult if such problems continue? What action is the Government taking to end such abuse permanently?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I thank Pam Gosal for raising that important point. Teacher wellbeing is absolutely critical at all times, but particularly given the challenging circumstances in which teachers and support staff have been working during the pandemic.

Behaviour such as abuse of or attacks on teachers and support staff is completely unacceptable under any circumstances. It is very important that schools and local authorities have strict processes and measures in place to deal with certain circumstances when they happen. If there is a requirement for further support—from the Government or Education Scotland, for example—for councils and, indeed, schools directly as they target that abuse, we stand ready to give that support.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There are a number of supplementary questions. I would hope to get them all in, but the questions and responses will need to be brief.

Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): The cabinet secretary has talked about the increasing number of teachers. Can she confirm how many of those new posts will require applicants to have additional support qualifications or experience?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: As the member knows, all teachers are trained to be able to deal with and support pupils with additional support needs. He will also be aware of the proposal and assurance in our agreement with the Scottish Greens that we look at what more we can do to insist that teachers are able and supported to deal with those matters. I will gladly keep the member and the Parliament updated on that as we move forward with that work with our colleagues in the Scottish Greens.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I remain very concerned about the large number of unemployed teachers, as well as those on casual, short-term contracts. The last time that I asked the cabinet secretary how many there were in the country, she did not have a clue. If the Government does not know the scale of the problem, how will we fix it? Does the cabinet secretary have an answer yet?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: As Mr Rennie well knows, workforce planning goes on in both the Scottish Government and local government to ensure that we have sufficient teachers in place in individual schools. We work on that with local authority partners.

As I said in my first answer, the Scottish Government has committed additional funding to ensure that the number of teachers on permanent contracts is looked at exceptionally seriously. The funding for local government has now been baselined. There is no need for teachers to be on a temporary contract if they were previously on a temporary contract under the Covid funding. That is a matter for local authorities, which recruit and retain teachers.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will take a final, brief supplementary question.

Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): What impact is increased investment in teacher recruitment having on pupil to teacher ratios?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please be as brief as possible, cabinet secretary.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: As I said, there are now more teachers than at any time since 2008. The ratio of pupils to teachers is at its lowest since 2009.

Revision Support (Access to Resources)

7. **Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what resources will be provided to ensure that all students have equitable access to revision support ahead of any exams. (S6O-00682)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Shirley-Anne Somerville): Schools are best placed to support learners who have experienced disruption to catch up on their learning and have the best chance to demonstrate their potential.

To complement and enhance school-based supports, Education Scotland has put in place a package of support through the national e-learning offer. Through glow, our national schools intranet, senior phase learners can access e-Sgoil's supported study webinars and resources. The senior phase Easter study support programme, which was extremely popular last year, will be

repeated this year, offering live webinars covering more than 60 courses at a range of levels from national 4 to advanced higher.

All learners also have access to more than 1,850 West Partnership online school videos to support senior phase learning.

Colin Smyth: We know that disruption to students' education continues with on-going, significant absence levels among pupils and school staff. Some parents will be able to afford additional tutoring for their children ahead of exams, but the poorest will not. Does the cabinet secretary accept that we need to escalate support for students who are sitting Scottish Qualifications Authority exams this year, including by providing additional resources for targeted learning support in schools during the Easter holidays?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I agree with the premise of Mr Smyth's question. That is exactly why the Scottish Government is working with colleagues in local government on the issue of Easter support. We are working with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on that. Once the proposal has gone through the usual COSLA process, we will be able to make a further announcement. I agree that we need to ensure that support is in place, particularly for those students who have experienced severe disruption this year. That is why I am delighted to be working with COSLA, and I hope to make an announcement on that very soon.

Student Housing Strategy

8. **Foysoil Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions education ministers have had with ministerial colleagues regarding the development of a student housing strategy that includes rent controls and student tenancy rights for every student in Scotland. (S6O-00683)

The Minister for Higher Education and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training (Jamie Hepburn): Although the Scottish Government has no direct role in the provision of student accommodation or in relation to capacity within the private rental market, we are aware of the pressures relating to those. That is why we are committed to bringing forward a student accommodation strategy for Scotland, which, in part, will be informed by a review of purpose-built student accommodation. We will look to develop and incorporate the student accommodation strategy alongside and within the rented sector strategy. That will include looking at issues such as supply, affordability and wider planning and regulatory issues.

Foyso Choudhury: Given the 34 per cent rent hike over the past three years, does the minister agree with the National Union of Students that

“the student housing system in Scotland is fundamentally broken”

and

“the disconnect between student income and rent levels poses an extreme and immediate threat to access and participation in education”?

Will the Scottish Government commit to creating a student housing strategy that includes rent controls and student tenancy rights for every student in Scotland?

Jamie Hepburn: I have been able to meet the National Union of Students to discuss those issues, and I understand its concerns. The issues have been exacerbated in the past year by events that have put pressure on housing supply.

The issues that Mr Choudhury has raised will be fully considered as part of our review of purpose-built student accommodation and as part of the student accommodation strategy that we are committed to taking forward. If Mr Choudhury would like to provide me with any information and engage with me on that matter, I would be very happy to discuss it further with him.

Budget (Scotland) Bill: Stage 1

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-02949, in the name of Kate Forbes, on the Budget (Scotland) Bill.

14:56

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy (Kate Forbes): I thank the Finance and Public Administration Committee for its report on the budget.

The budget is clear in its missions: it will tackle the climate emergency, support economic recovery and reduce poverty. It will also deliver on other priority commitments, including free bus travel for young people, non-domestic rates relief for businesses and substantial increases in health and social care spending.

As I have made clear previously, the absence of Covid-related funding, despite the real on-going impacts of the pandemic, which all of us can attest to, has meant that this is a challenging budget. The Scottish Fiscal Commission has highlighted that, as a result of reductions, the overall Scottish budget for next year is 5.2 per cent lower in real terms. With Covid funding having been removed, our day-to-day funding next year is less than that for the current year, at a time when we undeniably need to invest in the economy and help services to recover.

As I have said before, this is a budget of choices—some hard choices—but I believe that we have made the right choices. As I stated yesterday, I recognise the valued contribution that our local government partners make to the delivery of our front-line public services. Having engaged with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and individual local authorities regularly over the past few months, I am conscious of the challenges that they face, including the increasing impact of inflation.

I have repeatedly said that next year’s Scottish budget is fully allocated. That remains the case. However, I have also been clear that I have been monitoring this year’s budget very closely. The United Kingdom Government spent weeks advising us that we should not expect further funding. That has changed in the past few days. It has now advised that we should anticipate further funding for this year, which will be finalised and confirmed in the spring supplementary estimates next month.

As I said last week in the chamber, the fact that next year’s Scottish budget is fully allocated remains the case but, in light of the new information from the UK Government, I now have

some new and additional flexibility on this year's funding.

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Kate Forbes: If Stephen Kerr will allow me to finish this piece, I will bring him in.

I am pleased to confirm my intention to utilise the Scotland reserve to carry forward sufficient funding from this year to next year to allow me to allocate a further £120 million of resource to local government. Councils will have complete flexibility to allocate that additional funding as they wish next year. I intend to lodge an amendment to the Budget (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 to deliver that.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Kate Forbes: Once I have finished this part of my speech, I will give way to Mr Kerr.

Councils asked for an additional £100 million to deal with particular pressures. We have heard them and listened and we are going to go further. That will allow them to deal with the most pressing issues that they face, at a time when people are understandably worried about the cost of living. That increase in funding would be equivalent to a 4 per cent increase in council tax next year so, although councils have full flexibility in setting local council tax rates, I do not believe that there is a requirement for any inflation-busting increases next year.

I will take an intervention from Mr Kerr.

Stephen Kerr: Can the cabinet secretary further amplify whether that £100 million, which is coming as part of the additional money from the UK Government, is on top of the money that the UK Government already committed to the Scottish Government as part of the Covid recovery money? That is the money that the Scottish National Party Government made such a big fuss about, saying that nothing was certain about it and that we might end up with less. Can she confirm that that is additional money?

Kate Forbes: Mr Kerr is right to ask those questions. Next month, as in every year, we expect the UK Government to confirm, at the supplementary estimates, our final position for this year. Over the past few days, I have had a personal conversation with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and, of course, officials have been engaging extensively with the Treasury. As Mr Kerr will recall, when it came to the £440 million, there was some suggestion that some of that would be clawed back if the consequentials were not generated. The UK Government has now confirmed that that will not be the case for the £440 million, but the final position will be confirmed next month. That provides me with

sufficient flexibility to prioritise funding for local government.

Miles Briggs: Can the cabinet secretary confirm to the chamber whether the £70 million that has been given to ministers in relation to the national insurance contributions compensation fund is part of that funding, or is that another announcement that we will have to hear from ministers?

Kate Forbes: As I said, that £120 million allows local government to cover the challenges that they face. Clearly, national insurance contributions are costs that local authorities have to deal with, and that £120 million will allow them to deal with those additional costs.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Kate Forbes: I will take a third intervention.

Willie Rennie: I thank the cabinet secretary for being very generous with her time.

There will still be massive cuts for local government. Does she think that local councils should be grateful that the cabinet secretary has just taken the foot off their neck a little bit? Should she not recognise that massive cuts are coming to local services?

Kate Forbes: Willie Rennie has articulated an important point. All members of this chamber have been calling for me to go further with local government, particularly in the light of the pressures of inflation, and we have done that today. I have painstakingly identified additional funding from this year's budget. I have not changed my position on next year's budget, which is fully allocated but, out of a challenging budget settlement, we have chosen to prioritise additional funding for local government, and local government will be able to determine how that funding is spent. That is something that we can all welcome.

As the member would expect me to say, the real question will be whether, at 5 pm tonight, all parties in this chamber back additional funding for local government. That decision will ensure that next year's budget delivers for Scotland's local authorities a total funding package of more than £12.6 billion, which is an increase of more than £1 billion or the equivalent of a 6.1 per cent increase in real terms.

The budget provides the best funding package that we can offer for local government, based on our current resources. It will deliver increased resources for social care and education, and it will ensure the continued delivery of vital local services across Scotland. It is a fair settlement for local government within a challenging budget.

The budget recognises that we face some of the most challenging economic circumstances, through rising inflation, increased costs and the fact that Covid-19 has had an unequal impact across society. The budget reflects the on-going realities for many families, and some of those challenges have only increased since the budget was laid. It delivers on our national mission to tackle child poverty through increasing family incomes and continues our action to tackle the poverty-related attainment gap.

We are investing £197 million in our new Scottish child payment, including by doubling it to £20 a week from April 2022. That will fund the most ambitious anti-poverty measure anywhere in the UK.

Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab): Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Kate Forbes: I would be delighted to, but I look to the Presiding Officer to ask whether there is time in hand, because I am quite behind the time.

The Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary is in her last minute.

Kate Forbes: Okay.

In line with the Scottish Fiscal Commission forecast, we are committing over £3.9 billion for benefits next year. We are also continuing to tackle homelessness, by committing £831.5 million next year towards the delivery of more affordable and social housing.

Underpinning those spending commitments, the budget also invests in Scotland's ambition of being a wellbeing economy and a growing economy that enables successful business activity, entrepreneurship and innovation. It is a particularly crucial time to support businesses. That is why we will deliver the highest level of investment for our enterprise agencies since 2010, with over £205 million in capitalisation for the Scottish National Investment Bank. The budget will continue to offer a generous non-domestic rates package and ensure that we support all parts of Scotland.

This is a transitional budget. It supports Scotland's recovery next year but also looks beyond, as we build the foundations for, and invest in delivering, a just transition to a net zero and climate-resilient Scotland.

The budget delivers on Scotland's priorities, which are the priorities that I imagine most people across the chamber share. They are the priorities of tackling poverty, supporting Scotland's economy and ending Scotland's contribution to climate change. I commend the budget to the chamber.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Budget (Scotland) Bill.

15:06

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I warmly welcome the actions that have been taken by the UK Government to assist with the budget.

I will start with a few points of consensus. First, I acknowledge that the backdrop to the budget is particularly challenging: a lengthy Covid pandemic, which, although the signs are improving, is by no means over; worldwide economic trends, which, due to major issues with supply chains and energy costs, plus the political dangers of aggression by Russia against Ukraine, are creating serious inflationary pressures; labour markets having to cope with the post-Covid and post-Brexit landscapes; and increasing issues in relation to forecasting errors and timings.

The cabinet secretary will be pleased to know that we do not believe that any of those are within her control, so we understand why she has been keen to describe the budget as being one of "difficult choices". It is. I certainly know that we cannot commit to absolutely everything that we would like to do.

Secondly—to pursue the consensus for a little bit longer, although it will not last—we agree with the cabinet secretary on some key commitments, including the doubling of the Scottish child payment, investment in employability schemes, additional funding to tackle the attainment gap—which is ever widening, as we know—and maintaining landfill tax in line with UK rates.

I am afraid, however, that that is where the consensus has to stop, because we are very clear that the Scottish Government has created many more problems in this budget than it has solved, despite its having received a £3.9 billion increase in core block grant funding from the UK Government.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): I wonder why the member is mentioning the £3.9 billion. Is she suggesting that some of it has not been allocated?

Liz Smith: I am suggesting that that is a very substantial increase in the core block grant. That is extremely important, as a backdrop to the budget.

I will deal first with business—specifically, the sector's very strong feedback about the future of the Scottish economy, which is backed up by extensive statistical analysis from economic forecast groups. They all tell us that although, as we saw yesterday, there is little cause for optimism in the next few months, the longer-term

prospects are particularly grim for the Scottish economy. For quite some time they have been warning successive cabinet secretaries about the inherent structural weaknesses in the Scottish economy, which were present long before Covid and Brexit, and which this budget should be addressing as a priority.

The Scottish Fiscal Commission, Scottish Chambers of Commerce, the Scottish Council for Development and Industry and the Fraser of Allander Institute have all warned the Scottish Government about the demographic issues that are reducing labour market participation, and about slower growth in earnings and employment, relative to the rest of the UK. All of those have important implications for tax revenues and the Scottish budget.

The Fiscal Commission has told us that Scottish income tax revenues are growing more slowly than the income tax block grant adjustment, which means that there is a net negative position of £190 million for the coming year, which will possibly rise to £417 million by 2026-27. It also noted concerns that the scaling down of the oil and gas industry, with its highly skilled workforce, will exacerbate those problems. Those are serious statistics; so, too, are the statistics about weaker productivity and economic growth. It is our contention that the budget should be responding to them.

Kate Forbes: In a constructive spirit, I ask what fundamental policy Liz Smith thinks is missing that would significantly deal with those challenges. What funding would she allocate to it?

Liz Smith: I am just coming to that. Business is saying that one of the most important things is the skills gap. Policies to address what we can do to ensure greater productivity and economic growth are also important. There are two things that we can concentrate on. We said in our manifesto that we would commit to 100,000 lifelong learning accounts specifically being spent on training, qualifications and longer-term, more flexible and demand-led apprenticeships, which are a big ask from the business community.

We also know from business that there are serious concerns about our town centres. They were already in trouble before the pandemic; that is why we are so keen to see business rates relief being extended to relief for the whole year, and not just the three months to which the SNP has committed.

That brings me to local government. Notwithstanding the announcement today, in a debate last week, the Conservatives, along with Labour and the Liberal Democrats—although notably not the Greens, who, not so long ago, with Andy Wightman in their ranks, would have agreed with us—exposed the full extent of the SNP attack

on local government. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, every council group leader—including the SNP's own—and various groups, including care workers, who are on the front line of delivering council services, have all said that they see really big cuts coming. In her budget statement on 9 December, Kate Forbes said that she felt that the budget “deepens” the relationship between the Scottish Government and local government, but that is clearly not what local government thinks.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): Will the member take an intervention?

Liz Smith: I will not. I need to make progress.

The SNP has rightly asked where we would find the money. Before I say more, I say that we would definitely not be devoting millions of pounds to a second referendum, preparing for independence or doubling up on external affairs. That money would be far better spent supporting business and local government.

Like many people in local government across the political spectrum, we Conservatives are concerned about the controversial setting up of a national care service, which has all the signs of being an extremely costly reorganisation of care services. Many people in local government feel that it will not work. Indeed, we think that it is the last thing that care workers need right now. Today's Audit Scotland report into social care spells out some of the biggest concerns.

No one believes that setting budgets is easy, but Kate Forbes has had at her disposal the largest UK budget settlement and extensive additional money for Covid recovery from UK Barnett consequentials. She has asked for a rational approach from the Opposition parties for her spending plans; we will continue to take that approach. However, she cannot, in the same breath, explain why, although it is Scotland's oil, the SNP will walk away from that sector. She cannot say what currency the SNP would adopt if Scotland were to become independent, and nor can she explain why she has been so harsh to local government at the very time when she claims that it is central to delivery of more efficient public services.

The budget does nothing to properly secure Scotland's economic future or to safeguard essential local services, so we will oppose it at stage 1.

I move amendment S6M-02949.1, to insert at end:

“, but, in so doing, regrets that, despite a £3.9 billion increase in core block grant funding from the UK Government, the Scottish Government is delivering a cut of £371 million to local government budgets, which will have

serious implications for the delivery of front line services and local businesses.”

15:14

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): Presiding Officer, I apologise for not being there in person. I am dealing with something of a domestic omicron wave. However, by the same token, that allows me to attest to the efficacy of the vaccine and the booster.

After two years of Covid-19, the budget needed to be a turning point. It needed to build resilience and support recovery, it needed to create jobs and build back our public services, and it needed to help people who had put themselves on the front line to care for the vulnerable and those who had missed out on their education.

We support some things in the budget, such as the increased funds for the national health service and the increase in the child payment—which, as the Government knows, will not be enough to meet its own statutory child poverty targets.

The budget delivers neither the focus on, nor the foundation for, the wider needs of recovery. Instead, it offers an insulting pay rise of just 48p for social care workers and underfunds our councils.

On the cabinet secretary's announcement, £120 million is welcome, but still leaves local services short of £250 million. Moreover, it seems that although Derek Mackay's sofa has been moved out of the office, Kate has found a few pennies down the back of her armchair. That is no way to construct a budget seriously and rationally, as the cabinet secretary seems to seek to propose.

We need more honesty about the numbers. The Government wants to compare the budget to this and last year's emergency Covid funding. The Government was clear that Covid money would only be used for non-recurring Covid spending. I took it at its word and agreed with that principle. However, that means that with a £2.9 billion real-terms increase in core funding in the block grant, that sum was unallocated as it went into the budget. To bake emergency Covid funds into its calculations and compare a year of emergency with a year of recovery misrepresents the position that we are in, but that is the approach that the Government took, as it allocated the emergency funds.

Less money is available in total, but almost £3 billion is unallocated and available for investment in recovery. If the Government were to apply the logic that it applies to its funds to the funds of local government—including the emergency funds that local government has had at its disposal—local government would have faced a 25 per cent cut,

which is not the line that I hear from the cabinet secretary.

We know that the Government is not transparent when it comes to its budget and to how Covid money has been spent. Audit Scotland said so in July—and again in September and December—and was also clear that it was not possible to track the money from budget to announcement to outturn to consolidated accounts.

The Government must be honest about the numbers, but so must the Conservatives. Using the figure of £3.9 billion at a time of raised inflation is disingenuous, and to claim that figure as additional spend is simply to imply a cut in every other budget line in real terms, not cash terms.

The budget requires difficult decisions—more so because of the SNP's mismanagement of the economy. The Scottish Fiscal Commission's forecasts are clear: Scottish income tax receipts are underperforming compared not only with the south-east, as the SNP tried to claim, but with the average of the UK as a whole. On wages and employment growth, every Scottish region, bar one, underperformed compared with the UK average. That failure to grow jobs and wages not only lets down Scottish workers; it has also left the Government with £200 million less than it would have had if income tax had not been devolved.

What we needed in the budget was focused intervention to get people into work, to fill labour shortages and to re-skill people into better pay. When it comes to the economy, the Government's constitutional distraction leaves Scots with less money in their pockets and the Scottish Government with less money to invest in public services and recovery.

Where is the plan to address labour shortages? Where is the plan for our cities and for building green industry and supply chains? What sums up the SNP Government is that, two years into the pandemic, it has yet to publish an economic or jobs recovery plan. Its promised 10-year plan is delayed until another day—there is no plan for the here and now, and there is a delayed plan for the distant future.

It is in social care and local services that the budget moves from being flawed to being unsupportable. The continued decrease in local authority funding is unacceptable, regardless of what the cabinet secretary manages to pull out at the last minute. Analysis from the Scottish Parliament information centre confirms that local councils are the losers in the budget. Almost every other budget line was static in its share of spending, whereas cash-strapped local government's share of funding has fallen by 2.4 per cent. Whether we look at the real-terms cut

that COSLA outlined or at the SPICe analysis of local government's share of total spend, whichever way one cuts it the budget further centralises public services and undermines local services.

On top of that, the pay offer to social care workers of an increase of just 48p per hour is nothing short of scandalous. The reality of their work is that staff deal with vulnerable people around the clock and work under tremendous time pressure.

Findings from the Audit Scotland report that was published this morning underline those points and the stark realities. The report outlines the lack of worth that is felt by every social care worker, and it outlines the immense vacancy pressures across the sector. It notes that

"36% of services reported having vacancies in December 2020",

which is three times higher than the rate across all employers in Scotland. Furthermore, 20 per cent of staff

"are not on permanent contracts ... 11% are on zero hours contracts",

and "15% ... work unpaid overtime".

We need a social care system that pays its staff well and attracts people to the sector. The question is not whether paying £12 an hour is affordable; it is whether, in terms of recruitment and preventing bed blocking in the NHS, we can afford not to pay care workers that reasonable sum.

There are, of course, things in the budget that Labour supports, including the needed increases in the Scottish child payment and NHS funds, but the SNP budget fails to deliver for the people who desperately need it. We cannot build a national care service on low pay—

The Presiding Officer: Will you conclude, please, Mr Johnson?

Daniel Johnson: We cannot grow the economy by underfunding local services, and we cannot build recovery or re-skill without targeted support. For those reasons, Scottish Labour cannot support the budget.

I move amendment S6M-02949.2, to insert at end:

" , but, in so doing, believes that this must be a Budget that prioritises Scotland's recovery; expresses concern that the measures in this Budget are not of a scale or pace needed to meet the child poverty targets and lift children in Scotland out of poverty, and notes the calls on the Scottish Government to deliver an immediate increase to social care pay to at least £12 per hour."

The Presiding Officer: Can I confirm that you have moved the amendment in your name?

Daniel Johnson: I just did, in my closing breath, Presiding Officer. I apologise if it was not clear.

The Presiding Officer: Lovely. Thank you very much.

15:21

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): I am pleased to speak to the Finance and Public Administration Committee's report on our budget scrutiny.

The Scottish Government, the Scottish Parliament and Scotland face a challenging year. The independent Scottish Fiscal Commission has made clear in evidence to our committee that this Parliament will suffer a real-terms cut in the Westminster block grant. It has said:

"Overall the Scottish Budget in 2022-23 is 2.6 per cent lower than in 2021-22, after accounting for inflation the reduction is 5.2 per cent."

Indeed, further declines in resource expenditure are likely in the years that follow. However, we now find that additional moneys will be made available. It would therefore be helpful to have clarification of the detail of those resources as soon as possible.

With UK Government capital grants slashed by 9.7 per cent, borrowing to the £450 million maximum that is permitted is required to enable a 1.2 per cent increase in infrastructure expenditure after inflation.

It is inevitable that previous budgets and reports have focused on the health pandemic and its economic and fiscal impact. However, although we are still dealing with Covid, we must look and are looking to the future and recovery, assessing the extent of the economic damage and how we move beyond it. The FPA Committee acknowledges the need to balance short-term demands of responding to and recovering from Covid-19 with continuing longer-term pressures such as demography, poverty, inequality and structural imbalances. That is a key theme of both our pre-budget and final budget reports.

Scotland faces structural inequalities as we move back towards a more normal way of life. To ensure that our public finances are placed on a more sustainable footing, we note in our budget report that productivity, wage growth and demographic change should focus the Scottish ministers. Scotland must improve its economic performance in absolute terms and relative to the rest of the UK. Doubtless other members will pick up—two already have—on those and other issues

such as business investment levels, labour market participation and skills.

We face a number of risks. Inflation is rising at the fastest rate in three decades, with the worst possibly still to come, and average earnings are failing to keep up. The Office of Gas and Electricity Markets is expected to announce soon that the energy price cap will rise again on 1 April. The SFC points to a slow recovery in wage growth and income tax receipts as we emerge from the pandemic.

The FPA Committee is particularly concerned to note forecasts showing Scotland's income tax receipts falling behind the block grant adjustment, which could put Scotland's future fiscal sustainability at risk, with social security expenditure likely to reach £764 million more than allowed for in the block grant adjustment by 2024-25. Next year, Scotland's net income tax position is likely to be negative by £190 million. The SFC expects that gap to grow, reaching £417 million by 2026-27.

It is clear that, with UK Government grants continuing to decline, it is time to consider further fiscal flexibility for Scotland. Borrowing limits are too constrained and are being eroded by inflation. Tax rates remain unchanged but, as in the rest of the UK, inflation will bring more people into higher bands through fiscal drag, while UK increases in national insurance contributions erode disposable income yet further. The committee believes that the two Governments must engage on the impact of UK tax policies, including national insurance, that interact with devolved tax policy to ensure that Scottish taxpayers are not negatively impacted. The fiscal framework review provides an opportunity to put in place formal arrangements for intergovernmental working to ensure that interactions between tax policy decisions by the UK and Scottish Governments are fully considered.

Regarding tax receipts, the committee was drawn to the reasons behind the gloomy forecasts. Labour market participation is driven by demographic factors and is declining as Scotland's population ages. The number of working-age people—people aged 16 to 64—is falling, while fewer migrants and a record low birth rate mean an upward trend in the number of people aged over 65, many of whom have longer-term health-related needs. Any future population growth is projected to come from inward migration.

The committee is keen to hear more about the work of the population task force and how it plans to reverse adverse demographic trends, given that it has no control over immigration. That presents challenges for the Scottish ministers in considering how to grow the working population and, in turn, income tax receipts.

In scrutinising Scottish Government plans for the budget and resources available to it, the committee wrestled with the figures and information received. Identifying and tracking Covid funding is becoming more difficult as the lines between what is and what is not Covid funds become increasingly blurred. Although the committee recognises the challenges around that, transparency in the full and timely presentation of figures is essential, alongside how moneys are allocated by the UK Government and subsequently the Scottish ministers, and the impact of that expenditure. The committee flags that in its budget report. Transparency in the presentation of figures is also highlighted by Audit Scotland, which agrees that the Scottish Government had to act quickly and decisively to respond to the pandemic. Nevertheless, we would welcome clarification on how the additional financial package for business is being funded. As part of the fiscal framework review, both the UK and Scottish Governments must consider and agree a process whereby Barnett consequentialia are clearly communicated, to bring greater certainty over what is new and what is reprofiled money.

I briefly referred to the fiscal framework review. Although the medium-term financial strategy and resource spending review framework have informed our budget scrutiny, the committee is undertaking a separate short, focused inquiry that is aimed at influencing the framework and a targeted content review of the strategy, to ensure that both support parliamentary scrutiny. We will report on those in March.

Those reviews provide an opportunity to engage with stakeholders about how public resources should be invested to meet future challenges. The scope of the independent report to precede the fiscal framework review will focus on block grant adjustments only. The review itself will be broader, and stakeholder views will be sought as part of both processes. It would be helpful to continue to receive updates from the cabinet secretary on the review and timetable.

The committee notes Scottish Government assumptions that it will receive extra income of £620 million for the resource budget in 2022-23 from a range of sources, including Crown Estate offshore wind leasing. The SFC expressed reservations about some of those sources but thought that, on balance, the assumptions were reasonable. When we agreed our report, there was a paucity of information about Crown Estate income that might contribute to the £620 million. The subsequent ministerial statement was useful in clarifying that the money raised will reach the Scottish exchequer and fund, in part, net zero policies with any surplus utilised across other portfolios. It would, however, be helpful to know in

more detail how and when the funding will be deployed and how the Scottish ministers will secure economic benefits for Scotland.

When the committee considered SFC concerns about future workforce and tax receipts, we specifically noted the loss of highly paid oil and gas jobs in north-east Scotland, given the historic importance of that sector to overall income tax receipts and its projected decline. Such a huge structural change will surely require a change to the baseline figure by which the block grant adjustment is assessed.

The Scottish ministers are committed to using some of the ScotWind leasing income to ensure a just transition for oil and gas workers. The committee will return to demographics and the tax base, and it looks forward to receiving the cabinet secretary's response on those matters.

In terms of net zero ambitions, we welcome the on-going work by the joint Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament review of the budget to improve information on climate change. To progress that, the joint review commissioned external research through ClimateXchange. An update was provided to the committee last November, and we look forward to more. It would be helpful to hear how the cabinet secretary intends to ensure that the joint review delivers improvements to subsequent budgets, in line with the programme of work shared with the committee.

The FPA Committee's budget report also included comments on the replacement of European Union structural funds. Having pursued him relentlessly since October, in February, the committee will take evidence from Michael Gove MP, the UK Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and question him about the criteria for replacing EU funding. It would be useful to hear about representations from the Scottish ministers to their UK counterparts regarding the lack of clarity around the UK shared prosperity fund.

The FPA Committee and its predecessors flagged preventative spend as an important area for prioritisation. The committee remains convinced that such spend can help to protect the health of the nation and environment. The Scottish Government has set out the areas that it wants to prioritise, but we seek clarification of how ministers deliver preventative measures, along with examples of how the approach has resulted in a shift in policy direction and expenditure, across the budget. The committee will return to that in the review.

The FPA Committee looks forward to feeding its views into the resource spending review, which represents an opportunity for the Government to

prioritise where it wants to spend its available funds in subsequent years. In doing so, the Scottish ministers must prepare for potential future pandemics or adverse events to minimise the adverse impact of such shocks, should they transpire.

15:30

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): I speak in this afternoon's debate for the Liberal Democrats. As with all other budgets, the Liberal Democrats approached the budget that we debate today in good faith and with an open mind, but I am afraid that a considerable gulf still exists between our position and that of the Government on that budget. I will come on to the detail as to why that is the case.

When Governments set budgets, they must look, first and foremost, to the most vulnerable in our society and build their offer around them as a matter of principle. It is not clear that that has happened in relation to the budget that is before us today. Although it is a matter of public record that the Scottish Liberal Democrats support the doubling of the child payment, in this budget what the SNP Government gives with one hand, it takes away with another. Scottish families—especially those below the poverty line—are being hit hard from all angles. With the cost of food and energy soaring, and with the rise in national insurance and the cut to universal credit, many people are feeling the squeeze like never before. It is not clear that the budget recognises that reality.

The UK's biggest supermarket, Tesco, has said that its prices could be set to rise by around 5 per cent. Energy costs are reaching an all-time high, while wages are stagnating because of inflation, which, this year, will reach its highest level in nearly 30 years. Citizens Advice Scotland has found that a third of Scots are worried about being able to pay for food and other essentials. That means that parents will face the anxiety of not being able to provide for their children, which is not a good reflection on government in our country.

We need to reflect that crushing reality in the Budget (Scotland) Bill that we pass but, instead, we see cuts—they are cuts—to local government. That will result in an unavoidable rise in council tax, which will compound that reality still further.

John Mason: The member makes some general points about areas where he would like there to be extra expenditure, but can he tell us where he would make savings in order to give more to families?

Alex Cole-Hamilton: I will come on to that later in my speech, but first I would like to make some progress.

Despite the additional money that has been announced this afternoon, COSLA has already indicated, as Daniel Johnson said, that we still face a real-terms cut to the local authority grant of around £250 million. Much of the additional money will be taken up by the £70 million uplift that is required to match the increase in the national insurance contribution of employers.

What does that equate to? In Edinburgh, SNP budget cuts are already impacting on every primary and secondary school. In addition, all funding has been removed from community police, and all qualified teaching posts have been removed from our nurseries. In the Highlands, the cut to local government funding will put pressure on services and local communities. There was already a severe funding gap in the far north. The budget will serve only to compound that.

COSLA recognises the budget for what it is. It has told us:

“Whichever way you look at it, the reality of the situation is that yet again the essential services Councils deliver have been overlooked by the Scottish Government.”

I want to pause on the words “yet again”, because this is a dance that we do every year. Every December, the cabinet secretary brings forward a budget that utterly terrifies our 32 local authorities—one that looks as though it will demand cuts in every aspect of public spending. They are held in that awful limbo until stage 3 of the budget bill or—as on this occasion—the stage 1 debate, when Government ministers miraculously find money down the back of the sofa and are suddenly lauded as heroes for delivering a smaller budget cut than was expected, but a cut nonetheless. Would you believe it? Here we are again today.

I find the Government’s whole approach to local government finance quite shameful. If Westminster was treating the Scottish Government in the Thatcherite way it treats local authorities, SNP members would be taking to the streets.

Kate Forbes: I think that Alex Cole-Hamilton will find that he and his party’s coalition partners at Westminster significantly reduced the equivalent local authority budgets south of the border for years. Will he speak to Willie Rennie, who I thought made an excellent point in last week’s debate on local government funding when he asked the Conservatives where, if all parties agree that we should pass on health consequential, we get the money from?

Alex Cole-Hamilton: We can tell that the Government is deep in a hole when it has to dig back 10 years to tag my party.

The budget does not answer the crisis in social care. Our care workforce is hollowed out, as we

heard extensively during First Minister’s questions today. Our care staff are exhausted and tell us that they cannot give those they care for the dignified support that they deserve. They are in desperate need of colleagues, but they will not find them and will not recruit new staff if this derisory pay settlement is all that is offered. The settlement is not transformational. It will not attract people into the profession. It is myopic.

I said at the beginning of my remarks that we will always try to find consensus on the budget process and in other matters, such as the public health response. We act in good faith, but this Government does not make it easy. In recent days, it has once again announced an overarching agenda that makes it almost entirely impossible for Liberal Democrats to support it.

Since the beginning of the emergency, the SNP has used the pandemic as a ubiquitous shield. It has deferred action and excused inadequacy by making repeated reference to the exceptional circumstances in which we find ourselves. Patients are waiting in pain. Children have been deprived of life-enhancing education. Health workers are on their knees in want of a break. Those problems and people have not gone away—they grow in number every day.

Despite all that, we are expected to believe that the pandemic and its impact have evaporated to the point at which the Government and the Parliament will soon drop everything to pass legislation on another independence referendum. We know that the cost for that preparation is hidden in the pages of this budget. The answer to a freedom of information request, published this afternoon, reveals that almost £700,000 will be spent this year in preparing the prospectus. That is not so much a white paper as a white elephant.

That is unforgivable. For that reason and for the others that I have offered, we stand at a considerable distance from the coalition Government on this budget’s priorities. We will not vote for it tonight.

15:36

Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP): When I was an MP, I sat on a Finance Bill committee and on the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Select Committee, and my entry in the register of members’ interests shows that I remain an ambassador for the all-party parliamentary group for fair business banking. In those roles, I dealt directly with UK Treasury ministers, so it is a pleasure to join this Parliament and to deal with such a competent finance and economy team.

However, the greatest contrast is not at the personal level, but at the level of the powers and

constraints imposed on the budget-setting process.

We face major supply-side shocks caused by Brexit and the pandemic as well as significant climate issues requiring sustained action towards our net zero ambitions. Those three challenges have one element in common: the need for significant investment in Scotland's infrastructure and economic development. To that end, I commend the provision of significant support for the three economic development agencies, with spending at its highest level since 2010 despite the wider financial challenges of setting this budget.

However, the constraints on the Scottish Government mean that we do not have sufficient powers to borrow to invest on the scale that is required.

Liz Smith: Will the member take an intervention?

Michelle Thomson: Perhaps after I make this point. That is not just my view but also that of Nigel Wilson, the chief executive of Legal and General. At the recent launch of Legal and General's latest version of the rebuilding Britain index, he called for a massive investment boom and for increased borrowing powers for the devolved Administrations.

The political narrative thus far from the Tories is to ask Scotland to give thanks for their largesse, but they fail to mention the ways in which the Scottish people have, for generations, bankrolled the UK Government.

According to the UK Debt Management Office, UK Government borrowing currently stands at more than £2 trillion. Most of that is funded through the issuance of gilts, with purchases made by pension funds, investment trusts and some individuals. That is just one of the ways in which Scots lend money to the UK Government.

Liz Smith: Is Michelle Thomson really saying that the announcement that has come from the UK Government today is not welcome?

Michelle Thomson: Of course I am not saying that. I am saying that I do not have the paucity of ambition that means I would go cap in hand, asking for money. We are a wealthy country and a wealthy society, and I want to see a lot more ambition in this Parliament for betterment.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: Will the member take an intervention?

Michelle Thomson: Not at the moment.

There is another route whereby we Scots, in return, show our largesse. Some of the more mature members of the Parliament may hold premium bonds, which provide cheap borrowing

for the UK Government, given that only about 1 per cent per annum is distributed through winnings. At the moment, the total value of UK premium bonds is £114 billion, which represents about 5 per cent of UK Government debt. We can therefore estimate that, through that relatively small financial vehicle alone, Scots are currently lending the UK Government almost £9.5 billion.

If we consider that in another way, we can see that, through premium bonds alone, Scots have on loan to the UK Government twice as much as the Scottish Government is allowed to borrow in total for capital and revenue combined. The borrowing limits represent a quite ridiculous constraint on the Scottish Government and they are dwarfed by the amount that ordinary Scots lend to the UK Government.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: I do not mean to interrupt Michelle Thomson in full cry, but we are fascinated by some of the numbers that she is coming out with. Can she tell the Parliament when she expects to have a column regularly printed in *The National* with those kind of figures?

Michelle Thomson: When they ask me, I will be delighted. I thank the member for suggesting that.

Another area where the Scottish Government is denied the power to act is financial crime. Stopping institutional crime is predominantly the preserve of UK authorities such as Companies House and HMRC, which do a poor job of preventing abuse of the financial system. Only this week, Lord Agnew, who was a Treasury and Cabinet Office minister, resigned over the UK Government's lamentable track record on Covid fraud, stating that the Treasury shows no interest in tackling the issue.

On the same day, Spotlight on Corruption published a report estimating that financial crime costs the UK economy £290 billion per year. The UK Government has consistently failed to act on multiple calls over years to tackle large-scale financial corruption, as I know only too well from my work with the APPG that I mentioned. To put that figure another way, I note that the UK Government is failing to act on financial crime that costs approximately 276 times the annual borrowing powers of the Scottish Government.

Presiding Officer, excuse my frustration about being boxed into a system in which our people in Scotland lend to an incompetent Tory Government that shields large-scale financial corruption, denies our Scottish Government access to proper borrowing powers and subjects our budget to constant cuts.

That is why I remain passionately ambitious for change in Scotland. We seek powers for a purpose. Scotland is our business and the SNP

means business. Only by having the normal financial powers of an independent country can we better fund the Scottish National Investment Bank, invest more in our infrastructure and increase our support for new developments such as hydrogen technologies.

15:43

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland)

(Con): I am a member of the Finance and Public Administration Committee, which has been hearing evidence over a number of weeks from a variety of groups. What we have heard is a catalogue of confusion and obfuscation from the Scottish Government in respect of how it is spending resources. This is a devolved Government that loves to make grand announcements but provides little detail and is woeful on delivery. This is a Government that cares more about spin doctors than our nurses on the front line of our NHS. I will give some examples of that.

We keep hearing from this devolved Government—and we have heard it again today—that its funding is going down. In reality, it is going up, but the devolved Government is muddying the waters by including the emergency Covid funding. The Fraser of Allander Institute has confirmed that the core resource block grant will be £35 billion in 2022-23, which is 8 per cent higher in real terms than it was in 2019-20 and is higher than it has ever been outwith the pandemic years. However, it is all about grievance politics for this devolved Government.

Kate Forbes: The Scottish Fiscal Commission sets our forecasts. They are the ones that determine the budget. They claim that next year's budget is 5.2 per cent lower in real terms. Are they wrong?

Douglas Lumsden: They are including the emergency Covid funding. Is the Fraser of Allander Institute wrong? [*Interruption.*] They are right? Great, so we know that the core budget has increased.

A great example of political deceit is local government funding. The SNP-Green coalition of chaos badged it, just earlier today, as an increase. COSLA said that it was a cut. The SNP council leaders said that it was a cut. SPICe tells us that it is a cut. Everyone in the chamber knows that it is a cut of—now—£251 million. That is how the devolved Government views local government. It is not partnership working.

I agree with Alex Cole-Hamilton. Every year, we go through the pantomime. For me, as a council leader over the past four years, today is like groundhog day. The gap was always about £350 million, and £100 million was always thrown in at

the last minute. We used to think that the Greens were saving the day; now we know that it was going to happen anyway.

The Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth (Tom Arthur): I am grateful to the member for giving way. I have a very simple question. What exact amount in the budget does he believe that the total local government settlement should be?

Douglas Lumsden: I will easily set the budget whenever the Government wants to move out of office.

Again, it is all spin. When we cut through the spin, the detail is very hard to find. For example, the just transition fund for the north-east and Moray remains a mystery that Agatha Christie could not solve. Little contact has been made with local authorities in the area, and local representatives have been kept in the dark about the scope and the aims of the fund. We can see it as a budget line, but we do not know where, how or by whom the money will be spent, nor what engagement will be made with local authorities in the north-east, or when.

The budget is about priorities and this budget is about a devolved Government whose priorities are all wrong. The Government's priorities should be to help businesses recover from the pandemic, help our high streets and retail sector, find ways to halt the economic divergence from the rest of the UK, grow our economy, manage the energy transition and not throw the oil and gas industry under a bus. Instead, there is spending on offices and staffing abroad, with no detail and no reason why that money is being spent or who benefits. In addition, resource is being diverted to planning for another divisive independence referendum, which will drive investment away, wreck business confidence and be bad for jobs because of the uncertainty that it causes.

The Finance and Public Administration Committee's report shows the economic challenges that Scotland faces. It is sheer recklessness even to talk about an independence referendum. If the Government cared about Scotland's economic future, it would take that threat off the table now.

I remind members of my entry in the register of members' interests, which shows that I am still a member of Aberdeen City Council. It is from a council point of view that I am so angry about the budget. As well as cutting funding for essential services, the devolved Scottish Government has increased the ring fencing of council budgets: further project announcements mean that the bread and butter of council work—the issues that people care about—are cut further. Local councils deliver such projects in good faith, but are

concerned that, because funding is being cut, essential services can no longer be delivered.

Yesterday, I took part in an Aberdeen City Council education committee meeting, in which we learned that the funding for early learning and childcare had been cut by £4.6 million, despite a promise from the Scottish Government to fully fund early learning. That service is now statutory, so it must be delivered, which means cuts to other services. SNP-run Moray Council also reported a £3.3 million black hole in its funding for ELC, thanks to the Scottish Government breaking its promise.

The reason why I get so angry when it comes to local government funding is that I am sick of the hypocrisy that comes from the devolved Government. Time and again, we hear about prevention; I heard about it in committee, and I heard about it in the chamber just yesterday. Early intervention is key to so many challenges that we face as a country. Much of the best prevention and early intervention takes place through local government. It is local government that provides the youth clubs, social centres, sports facilities, lunch clubs, community policing teams and school counselling services. All those services are at risk if the Scottish Government fails to properly fund local councils. Those are the things that will bring savings to the health and justice budgets and will improve people's outcomes. Without those preventative services, how will we tackle, at the earliest possible opportunity, the challenges that Scotland faces? The budget is a missed opportunity.

15:49

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): The budget could not have come at a time of greater economic and social uncertainty for families, communities and services across Scotland. The pandemic created unprecedented challenges for businesses and our schools, and it added immense pressure to our struggling health and social care sector. There has been more job uncertainty than ever before, and there is not a high street in Scotland that has not seen closures over the past two years. In the face of all that, one would think that the Scottish Government would have introduced an ambitious, forward-thinking and recovery-focused budget, but, sadly, we are faced with something that largely disappoints.

I welcome the increase in the Scottish child payment, which Labour and third sector organisations called for and campaigned for, but I make the observation that it will be insufficient to meet the target to reduce child poverty. We are facing a cost of living crisis of a scale and intensity that has not been experienced for many years. Household bills, energy bills and water bills are

rising, and it is likely that council tax will rise, too. Given what we face, this year's budget document reads like missed opportunity after missed opportunity. The SNP is making hard-working families across Scotland pick up the bill for almost 15 years of fiscal mismanagement.

I turn to the impact that the budget will have on our national health service and the social care sector. Earlier today, the First Minister reminded us that she was the health minister previously. How could we forget? She was the health minister who failed to pass on record levels of funding for the NHS from a UK Labour Government led by Gordon Brown. Had she passed on to health the Barnett consequentials that she received from 2007 to 2010 instead of diverting the money elsewhere, the health budget would be £1 billion more than it is now. Of course, the SNP used to say that all Barnett consequentials for health would remain in health, but that is simply not true now. Now, it uses a strange formulation of words to say that they are the consequentials for front-line health and social care.

If members need any more evidence, they should just look at the £45 million that was taken from the health and social care budget and given to the business hardship fund in December. I am sure that the cabinet secretary will have a line in her briefing to justify that, but how many care packages would £45 million have bought? How many delayed discharges could have been prevented, to free up capacity in our hospitals? What measures could have been put in place to support staff?

Figures published only yesterday by the Royal College of Nursing Scotland highlighted the fact that a staggering six in 10 nursing staff in Scotland are thinking about leaving the profession. Nurses told the RCN that they feel undervalued and poorly paid—at a time when the NHS cannot afford to lose a single member of staff.

The workforce crisis existed before the pandemic. The First Minister cannot stand in the chamber and tell us how many more nurses there are, when there are clearly not enough to meet demand. It is also just a little bit rich, given that, when she was the health minister, she was responsible for cutting the number of nurse training places.

The facts are clear. There is a workforce crisis in our NHS. There is an urgent need to put measures in place to value and retain the existing workforce and to make sure that there is a supply of clinical staff in the future.

Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Jackie Baillie: No, I will not.

The workforce planning strategy has been delayed yet again. What about the Health and Social Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019, which was passed by this Parliament? It is all about safe staffing levels, high-quality services and better outcomes for service users—nothing with which anybody in the chamber would disagree. The Government might point to the pandemic, but there is no reason not to implement that legislation now. So far, it has not done that, and it needs to be part of the context for workforce planning.

I turn to social care. The 48p pay rise for social care workers is a slap in the face from the SNP and a stab in the back from the Greens, who, only months ago, promised a £15 per hour wage in their manifesto.

Kate Forbes: I know that the member wants us to go further on social care pay, but dismissing the rise as 48p reduces its impact. It is equivalent to £3,000 per annum if one compares last year's minimum wage with next year's £10.50 per hour wage. It is £3,000—a 10.5 per cent increase.

Jackie Baillie: The cabinet secretary fails to identify that the workforce is severely low paid, and she wants us to thank the Government for giving those workers a small increase. That simply is not good enough. We are asking for £12 an hour immediately. We have done the costings and the cabinet secretary knows them. I shared them with her last year and we have shared them with her again this year. It is doable, if the Government has the political will to do it. However, the SNP coupled with the Greens simply do not.

Delayed discharge remains a problem, as does dealing with the issues of pay for social care workers. Delayed discharge removes bed capacity from the national health service. A staggering 650,000 people—one in nine Scots—are now waiting for diagnostic tests and treatment.

To go back to social care, I note that the Audit Scotland report found that social care workers—a predominantly low-paid, female workforce—felt that they were neither valued nor rewarded for the work that they do. That is not me saying that; it is Audit Scotland telling the Government that it is not paying social care workers enough. The problems in social care are simply not addressed by the budget. Family carers have struggled to cope as care packages have been withdrawn. Respite care has been cancelled and support has been removed. Urgent action is required to reinstate care across the country, and the budget simply does not provide it.

In our response to the budget, Scottish Labour has set out detailed plans of action that can be taken across the NHS and social care to address those challenges. Those plans have been informed by talking to those on the front line of

health and social care, and they are about supporting and restoring our NHS, improving social care and valuing the staff who are the backbone of both services. However, I am sorry to say that the Government is simply not listening. The Government is happy to clap for NHS and social care staff on a Thursday, but when it comes to this budget—this Thursday—it is simply deaf to their concerns.

15:56

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): I guess that budgets are about choices and, in particular, how we choose to prioritise among a range of good things. Of course, we would all like to spend more on the NHS, as Jackie Baillie has just been saying. We would like to spend more on local government, more on business support, more on the railways and more on other public transport—the list goes on.

There is also the choice between spending more on existing services, including pay increases for public sector staff and trying to expand services with initiatives such as the child payment, 1,140 hours of nursery and childcare provision, free bus travel for under-22s and a national care service. I guess that there is no absolute right and wrong in those choices. We all have manifesto commitments and want to protect existing services and, at the same time, develop new areas.

However, we all have to accept that it is about choices, particularly choices about how we spend the money that we have. There does not seem to be much appetite for raising taxes, so we know roughly how much money we have. The vast bulk of that money is being allocated in the budget, so we know where it is committed. If we would like more spending in an area—I suspect that all 129 of us would like more money for something—we need to be responsible and say what should be a lower priority.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Mr Mason makes the same speech every year in the budget debate, so it is no surprise to hear him make the points that he is making.

On the premise of Mr Mason's proposition, does he accept what the Fiscal Commission has said, which is that the budget is £199 million less than it could be and that, if the economic growth and tax revenues in Scotland matched the UK average, an extra nearly £200 million would be back in the budget?

John Mason: Murdo Fraser highlights a problem with the fiscal framework. He might not have heard it, but we had evidence from Wales that it is getting an extra 5 per cent of Barnett consequentials every time, which we miss out on. There are issues with how the whole framework is

structured. We cannot compete with London, yet the system is set up for us to compete with it.

The biggest obvious choice that we have to make is between health spending and local government spending, as those are the two largest parts of the Scottish budget. They account for something like 43 per cent and 30 per cent of the budget respectively, which means that 73 per cent of our budget goes to those areas. More money for local government broadly means less money for the NHS, and more money for mental health means less for physical health. I do not apologise for repeating such points every year, because I do not believe that the Conservatives and Labour have been listening.

The Finance Committee spent a lot of time between 2011 and 2016 looking at the question of preventative spending, especially following the recommendations of the Christie commission. We have been returning to that again lately. Again, it is a question of choices. It is all very well stating that, if we spend £1 today on X, we will save £5 on Y in five years' time. That might well be true—as many third sector organisations are keen to tell us—but that does not answer the question of where the £1 today is to come from. That is broadly what is called disinvestment, which means we reduce spending on something urgent and reactive today in order to spend preventatively and, we hope, save money tomorrow.

One example of that, which members of the previous Finance Committee might remember, is the American state that needed a new prison but decided to put the money into preventative work so that, in the longer term, it would not need so many prison places. Of course, in the short term, that meant that there were not enough prison places and there was overcrowding and other problems. In the same way, we face the potential decision of cutting back on some important reactive expenditure in order to spend more on prevention. An example might be cutting back expenditure on hospitals and putting more money into general practices and primary healthcare.

At committee, when I asked John Swinney—since he had previously been the finance secretary—whether any party or individual member had ever asked him to cut current expenditure in order to spend on preventative measures, his answer was, “No.” That shows how difficult such choices are.

To move on to other aspects of the budget—

Douglas Lumsden: Will the member give way?

John Mason: I am sorry, but I do not have time.

As the convener has already touched on, it is assumed that there will be £620 million for the resource budget, but that is not certain. The

committee and our advisers and witnesses consider it to be reasonable to include such a figure, although the exact amount and the timing of receipts are up for debate. In particular, the personal allowance spillover dispute has been running for quite some time, and I am not clear when it is likely to be resolved so payment can be made.

There is definitely a risk in that £620 million figure, although, based on past experience, it is likely that Westminster will announce increased spending at some point and we would then be due a share of that. However, Westminster could be more helpful by clarifying earlier what extra resources—if any—Scotland will get. The convener also touched on that point. To some extent, I accept the argument that the UK Government cannot always guarantee Barnett consequentials, as happened at some points with Covid spending. However, when it announces new spending in England, the UK Government should say up front how much of the money is new and how much is being reallocated from existing budgets.

In relation to capital expenditure and capital borrowing, I am concerned that we are heading towards our limit of £3 billion. That is largely an artificial limit imposed by Westminster, and it does not take into account inflation or our ability to pay the money back.

I will cut out a little bit of what I was going to say, Presiding Officer. We should be thinking about a prudential framework, which would work well for local government.

Overall, I am very happy to support the budget at stage 1. As usual, both the Labour and Conservative amendments propose more spending without saying where the money should come from. They should both be rejected.

16:03

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I will start—as I did last week, when I opened the debate on local government finance on behalf of the Conservatives—by thanking all those who work in our local authorities across Scotland, especially for the work that they have done during the pandemic.

I will concentrate my comments on local government funding specifically. At 3 pm today, COSLA and all local authorities across Scotland faced a cut of £371 million. As of now, following what the cabinet secretary has said, they will still face a cut of £251 million. The core local government budget, which has been frozen in cash terms, had represented a cut of around £271 million, and will now represent a cut of £151 million. Across Scotland, council leaders and

councillors will be considering what services they need to cut.

Even after everything that has been said today, SNP and Green ministers are asking our councillors and councils to do more with less. In the spin from the Government, the cabinet secretary has tried to present this as a fair budget, but it is simply not fair to local government. Something has to change beyond what has been announced today.

Ross Greer: On the theme of doing more with less, the member's colleague Liz Smith proposed a further increase in rates relief for the coming financial year. How do the Conservatives propose both to fund that and find the £250 million that I presume they want for local authorities? From which part of the budget would they take that money?

Miles Briggs: Mr Greer is not on particularly strong ground on that, because, last week, I asked him specifically about national insurance and why the Government has not handed on that money. His response was:

"there is no specific consequential for the national insurance increase."—[*Official Report*, 19 January 2022; c 54.]

The cabinet secretary has announced £70 million-worth of that funding today. I welcome that, but that was a matter of the UK Government handing on £70 million, which Mr Greer said did not exist. The cabinet secretary has confirmed that it does.

Kate Forbes: Will the member give way?

Miles Briggs: Yes, if I can get the time back.

Kate Forbes: It is on a fundamental point of principle. If Miles Briggs can identify the line in the UK Government's budget that we receive that states the national insurance contribution, I would be really interested to see it.

Miles Briggs: Over £800 million is being passed on to all devolved Governments. That £70 million includes £40 million for local government, £30 million of which is still to be presented for the teaching pay rise. We have not necessarily heard anything from the Government today about how local authorities will meet that. Maybe that is something for stage 2, when we will get more detail.

I want to consider what the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee has been looking at in the budget. Consideration has been given to a number of cuts that local authorities face. We heard from Martin Booth, who is executive director of finance at Glasgow City Council and who was representing the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers. He stated that, from all their

negotiations on all the work that was to come in councils, they will have to look at over £34 million of cuts. That was in a leaked document that we saw yesterday. He stated in his evidence:

"The opportunity to increase charges is fairly limited. Quite often, we are a provider of last resort, so the people who would be impacted the most by charging would be those who we would like to impact on the least."

Therefore, when SNP and Green ministers try to spin the budget as one that delivers fairness for our communities, let us remember that every council across Scotland will be forced to make cuts because of it.

It is little wonder that council leaders such as the SNP Dundee City Council leader, John Alexander, have labelled the budget as

"perhaps the toughest in recent memory".

I do not think that what has been announced today will make that statement go away or change it. It is slightly less tough, but it will still be tough for local government. We all fear for services and the impact that that will have.

COSLA has been clear that the SNP-Green Government needs to look again at the budgets that it provides to councils. It talks about

"what we need to survive".

I do not know whether the cabinet secretary has really heard that message. I know that the First Minister met COSLA and council leaders this week, but simply asking the UK Government for £50 million of additional funding to be made available, which I welcome, and the national insurance contribution of £70 million is not enough. We need to have a serious look at that again at stages 2 and 3. I hope that the cabinet secretary has genuinely heard that message, including from the leaders of Highland Council, who have also condemned the budget.

Let us be in no doubt that, if SNP and Green ministers do not look again at local government funding in the budget, the most vulnerable in our society will be hit. The cabinet secretary clearly knows—we know this from every debate in the Parliament—that the Greens' votes are in the bag and that deals done behind closed doors will see the Government able to get the budget through Parliament. However, I appeal to Green MSPs and every MSP who will be out campaigning for their SNP councillor colleagues to speak out as we see the budget go through. The cuts are SNP-Green ones that will impact on all services. I hope that they will pay a severe price for that at the council elections in May.

16:08

Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP): I want to address the context in which the budget is set and

the implications of that. On the positive side, Scottish economic growth returned to pre-pandemic levels in November. Scotland is developing, delivering and building on economic strengths in key sectors for a modern economy. On the negative, the drag of Brexit continues to hinder economic growth. The Office for Budget Responsibility has forecast that Brexit will reduce the UK's potential productivity at twice the level of the Covid pandemic impact. Brexit has sorely hindered the availability of skilled labour, which is the number 1 concern of many businesses. After years of building up exports, we see eye-watering drops in export business.

However, just about everyone now acknowledges that the financial arrangements of this Parliament cannot properly respond to crises such as Covid. This Parliament has no substantial powers to borrow. More generally, the adjustments from the UK are unpredictable and lack transparency, and transfers are often way behind the original announcement of health, business, culture or other funds for England. Scotland is due its fair share, but often, as we heard from today's announcement, the transfers come very late in the financial year. The expectations of people in need in Scotland are raised, but they cannot be fulfilled until those transfers are finally made.

There is a vice-like squeeze on the parameters of what the finance secretary can work with in her budget decisions. The fiscal framework review must look at those issues; for example, multiyear funding would be a welcome improvement within and to the Scottish budget.

On top of that, the political choices that are being made in Scotland diverge from those in the rest of the UK. In part, that is due to specific Scottish choices to deliver fair, progressive and net zero policies but it is also due to UK Government decisions for England, whereby political choices to transfer funding for wider health and education services to private models reduce the commensurate payments to Scotland. That is the nature and consequence of devolution when we have Governments of different parties with different priorities.

However, even if members believe that the financial arrangements for this Parliament once worked, they cannot be said to work properly for Scotland now. The wealth, capability and economic and financial power of Scotland need to be leveraged for all Scotland. As we heard from Michelle Thomson, that need far outweighs the confines of the Scottish Government's budget. We need the tools to magnify the budget.

Liz Smith: I do not disagree with some of the comments that Fiona Hyslop has made, and I particularly echo some of the issues that were raised at the Finance and Public Administration

Committee, but does she accept that John Swinney signed the fiscal framework along with the UK Government in 2016? It is not just a question of Scotland being able to decide; both the SNP and UK Governments agreed on that.

Fiona Hyslop: I acknowledge the history of the agreement on the fiscal framework, but Liz Smith should also acknowledge that everybody understands that it needs to be improved and changed. That is why I hope that the review will address some of those issues, including some of the criticisms that members have made in the chamber today.

In the budget as it stands, health and social care spending now accounts for £18 billion, and there is £12.5 billion for local councils. That means that £30.2 billion—68 per cent—of Scotland's budget is distributed to health, social care and local government alone. That percentage is steadily increasing and, with a needed national care service on the horizon, will increase further.

Miles Briggs: Will the member take an intervention?

Fiona Hyslop: I want to move on.

That means that other important portfolios are left with the remaining 32 per cent and have to take the strain and absorb the pressures. Therefore, even within those constraints, I was pleased to see the cabinet secretary support funding for the three enterprise bodies at the highest level since 2010 and deliver the Government's commitment to the Scottish National Investment Bank.

However, I am concerned that phase 2 of the tourism recovery plan, as recommended by the Scottish tourism recovery task force, does not yet have any funding. As much of what is needed is for one-off promotional work, I urge the cabinet secretary to make that area a priority for any early in-year underspends and not to wait until year-end reconciliations and adjustments.

Despite a real-terms cut in the capital budget of 9.7 per cent, the Scottish Fiscal Commission states that the Government should be able to meet the national infrastructure mission target, but it is concerned about net zero needs, which are capital dependent in many cases. On net zero and making funding work by leveraging private funds, we face a real danger of serious risk aversion—by councils and other public bodies that co-fund private sector initiatives to cut net zero—if the centralising Subsidy Control Bill at Westminster passes without serious amendment. Therefore, the cabinet secretary has an enormous and increasingly difficult challenge.

Meanwhile, at Westminster, UK minister Lord Agnew resigned because of his concern that £4

billion of funds is being lost due to a systemic failure to operate fraud recovery and initial fraud prevention in relation to the Covid loans. He said that those responsible were ably assisted

“by the Treasury, which appears to have no knowledge of, or interest in, the consequences of fraud to our economy or society.”—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 24 January 2022; Vol 818, c 20.]

Scotland needs to be independent by right, but it must be independent for a purpose. The purpose of independence is that we can shape our own future with a budget that is supported by policies that reflect the values and the vision of the people of Scotland, and not the waste and wantonness of Westminster.

Scotland has what it takes. What we need is a fresh start for Scotland, with independence.

16:15

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): As was the case for Miles Briggs and others who spoke last week about local government funding, some of what I am about to say is very much a repeat of that debate, although Mr Briggs and I are certainly not singing from the same hymn sheet. However, given some of the contributions that have been made so far this afternoon, it is important to re-emphasise the context of this year’s budget, which was discussed last Wednesday.

Scotland’s budget for the coming year will be around 5 per cent lower than the budget for 2021-22. That is the result of Covid consequentials being largely withdrawn at a time when Covid and its physical consequences across the country are still very much with us. For example, bus and rail use is down by a third. Keeping those essential services operating requires significant subsidy. Without a repeat of last year’s Covid consequentials, the choice is either to provide those subsidies to operators from the core transport budget, which would put pressure on the other areas that that funds, or to let public transport services collapse across the country as operators withdraw.

Those pressures are being felt across every area of Government spending. No Opposition party has yet put forward a proposal for bridging the funding gap of £1 billion, whether it be through tax rises, spending cuts or a combination of the two. It is easy to call for more spending in areas that we all care about—I certainly want to see more spending. However, although it is, to some extent, reasonable for external stakeholders to push for spending in their areas without saying where the funds would come from, members of this Parliament have a responsibility to do more than just make impossible demands.

The Greens did better than that when we were an Opposition party. We wanted to increase spending on everything from the core local government settlement to public sector pay and the nature restoration fund. We secured that spend, but we did so alongside proposals—which we made and then secured—for tax changes, including an end to the council tax freeze and an overhaul of the rates and bands of income tax.

That alternative of constructive engagement is available to all Opposition parties, but, year after year, we have instead seen exactly what we are seeing this afternoon: demands for more spending from a fixed budget without any explanation of where that would come from. That was not even an electorally rewarding strategy in the previous parliamentary session, so I really cannot understand why it is being doubled down on now.

I am proud of what this budget—the first that has been co-produced by the Greens from inside Government—includes. It reflects the strategic priorities of this Government: tackling the climate emergency, eradicating child poverty and focusing on a green recovery from the economic damage of the pandemic.

Miles Briggs: Why does the SNP-Green Government no longer see local government as a priority?

Ross Greer: This Government prioritises local government to the extent that the local government settlement is increasing by more than £1 billion in the coming financial year compared with the current one. That is a six per cent real-terms increase in that budget line.

The budget also fully funds the first year of free bus travel for young people. That flagship Green policy and genuinely transformational initiative will ease the pressure on family budgets as costs of living are increasing. It will help take cars off the road, thus cutting emissions and cleaning up the air in our urban areas.

The budget includes a record £150 million for walking, wheeling and cycling, and £35 million for low-emission and ultra-low-emission buses, which will contribute towards public health and climate ambitions. It establishes a fund, which was first proposed by the Greens and which Unite the Union has asked for, that will assist local authorities to develop plans for bringing local bus services back into public ownership.

With transport being the one area in which emissions have risen rather than reduced in Scotland, those investments are absolutely critical if we are to play our part in giving the planet a fighting chance of staying below 2°C of warming.

Transport is far from the only area in which climate action is being prioritised, though. The

climate justice fund has been trebled, and £50 million has been allocated to support farmers to tackle the climate and nature crises. The first £20 million of the north-east and Moray just transition fund is provided for. There is £45 million to progress the circular economy and reduce waste and £2 billion overall for climate initiatives.

One measure in the budget that I am particularly proud of is the piloting of a four-day working week. That has become an increasing priority of both the Greens and the trade union movement, and I am glad that we will be able to progress that through pilots in the coming year.

I will turn back to local government. Despite the pressure that was mentioned earlier, the budget delivers a real-terms increase through the local government settlement. That includes an additional £145 million for teacher recruitment, which is enough to fund 2,500 permanent posts. There is £72 million for free school meals in primaries 1 to 5 and £30 million in capital funding to facilitate the expansion of free meals to primaries 6 and 7 as soon as possible. There is also £175 million to fund a pay increase for care sector workers and £200 million for health and social care.

I am not suggesting that everything is rosy. COSLA has a perfectly legitimate case to make for more funding—and it is not the only one.

The budget represents the fairest possible distribution of extremely limited funding in extremely challenging circumstances. Once again, I have yet to hear from where, exactly, the Opposition would reallocate a further £250 million or what changes they would make to tax policy to raise £250 million in new revenue. I am grateful for the contribution made by Green councillors across the country, whose feedback we were able to take into discussions with the cabinet secretary. The additional £120 million that was confirmed today will certainly go a long way towards that.

By contrast, the only income tax proposal that I can remember coming from the Conservatives in the entirety of the previous session of Parliament was for a cut to the tax rate for the highest earners in the country, which would have taken a further half a billion pounds out of our budget. Today, we have heard yet another proposal—a perfectly legitimate proposal for further rates relief—that would only grow the gap in our public finances, and there was no explanation of where that money would be found from.

I am of the view that substantial additional revenue will need to be raised through changes to our existing tax mechanisms and the creation of new ones. For the reasons cited by the convener of the Finance and Public Administration Committee, bold decisions will be required in this

parliamentary session if we are to meet the ambitious targets that we have set ourselves, particularly on child poverty reduction and net zero. The Greens are prepared to make further constructive proposals about where we believe the additional revenue can come from. For now, though, we are proud to vote for a budget that delivers for people and for Parliament.

16:21

Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab): Human rights belong to all of us. When determining whether we, as a nation, are promoting and protecting them, the first thing that we must do is consider what the minimum core of those rights should be. The idea of a minimum core is simple: it sets a red line below which people should not fall.

In a wealthy nation such as Scotland, the minimum core of those rights should be high and it should be met. It takes only a short glance around at the reality of food bank use, child poverty, in-work poverty and care workers on poverty pay to realise that we are not meeting even the lowest of bars. It is often said that Governments should not tell us what they value but show us where they are putting their money. The Scottish Government has said that it values reducing child poverty and inequality, but I am deeply frustrated that the budget does not go far or fast enough to address either.

The task ahead is huge. Child poverty in Scotland sits at 25 per cent. That is one in four children, and I doubt whether anyone in the chamber is comfortable hearing that figure. The budget will not set us on track to meet our child poverty targets. Scottish Labour has called for an increase in the Scottish child payment, but the Scottish Government's plans do not go far enough.

The increase is too small for us to stop there, and it helps too few people for us to call it anything like a victory. That will not allow us to meet our targets, and that is not just my opinion. Earlier this week, the Government's advisors in the Poverty and Inequality Commission confirmed what we already know: the Scottish Government is simply not going hard or fast enough to meet the child poverty targets that Parliament has set, unanimously and without caveat. To miss those targets would be a complete dereliction of duty. Unless the Government takes urgent and bold action, that is exactly the path that it is heading down.

The only guaranteed way to ensure that we meet our interim target is to increase the Scottish child payment to £40 by April 2023. The Scottish Government has run out of other options. Even at

the current rate, the Scottish child payment is failing to deliver for thousands of children. While they wait for full roll-out, 125,000 eligible children are not receiving any payment at all. I have asked the Government at every turn whether it will address that—I have suggested how to do that—but there is still no commitment or plan to do that.

The Government cannot ignore the situation. Those children depend on their Government to find a solution. There are 170,000 children who get bridging payments, but they will miss out on the vital £10 increase to the Scottish child payment. The Government has made no provision to double the bridging payments. When I asked about that, I was given no indication that it intends to change that. There are 295,000 children who will not receive the £20 payment that they are entitled to when the increase comes into effect later this year, and more than one third of them will receive nothing at all.

The budget does little to address inequality, either. We cannot address women's or disabled people's inequality if we do not address the care economy. The pay offer for care workers is a paltry 40p increase. I look to my Scottish Green colleagues, who now sit in Government and who committed to a £15-an-hour pay rate for social care workers, as all of us in the Labour Party did. Why do they now believe that that pay rise is sufficient?

Ross Greer: In opening for Labour, our colleague Daniel Johnson acknowledged that difficult decisions would have to be made. I would love to see care workers earning £15 an hour. What difficult decisions would the Labour Party take to fund that payment if it was in Government?

Pam Duncan-Glancy: I am sure that the member will have heard my colleague Jackie Baillie explain earlier to the First Minister that we have fully costed that payment. If he is committed to the manifesto on which he stood, I am sure that he will be eager to read it and help to get that delivered.

Unpaid carers, most of whom are women, have stepped up and stepped in throughout the pandemic, plugging the gaps of a social care system that does not meet people's needs. Now, those carers are floored—the budget has let them down, too. Despite the reassurances that the Minister for Social Security and Local Government gave last year, no provision has been made in the budget to extend the double payment of the carer's allowance supplement. The Government rushed through legislation on the matter, limited opportunities for scrutiny and batted back criticism about the limited nature of the extension to the double payment.

The Government reassured the Parliament, committees and carers that the legislation allowed scope for ministers to extend the payment, but it rejected amendments from Scottish Labour that would have protected the uplift. I have lost count of the number of times that I have spoken and heard in the chamber about the detrimental impact of removing the universal credit uplift. In looking at the budget, I have a question for the Government: why does the budget not include the uplift that it promised to unpaid carers? If the Government still intends to double carers payments, where will it find the additional funding in June?

It is not only underfunding in care that risks further increasing inequality. The budget line for lone parents—the majority of whom are women—is now set at zero. Unless we properly recognise the value of women's work and design a system that supports their participation in the workplace and recognises unpaid work, tackling the gender pay gap and moving towards our child poverty targets will be a distant dream.

The third sector, too, has long been the key to addressing inequality. This year, those organisations have gone above and beyond, so I am dismayed at the Government's decision to cut their budget. The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations has been clear that those cuts threaten a weakening of support for voluntary organisations and their volunteers, so I urge the Government to reconsider them.

I started my contribution by talking about human rights. We have immunised our country against a virus that has exacerbated inequality. We needed a budget that immunised us against inequality and that protected human rights. To do that, we needed to be able to assess the impact of what we are doing. I am concerned that the considerable data gaps that must be addressed if we want to do that work will not be rectified until 2025.

The budget will not meet child poverty targets, will leave women on low pay and will deny disabled people the support that they need, and it fails to fund the public sector properly. Because of those things, it will not enable the realisation of the most basic of rights for so many in Scotland. It is far too little, and we already know that it is far too late, especially for the hundreds of thousands of children in poverty.

We are staring long-term inequality in the face. The budget does not deliver nearly the scale or the pace that we need to address that. We are Scotland and our ambitions are high. We needed a budget that met them and empowered us to realise our human rights and escape poverty and inequality. As it stands, others and I do not believe that the budget will do that.

I ask the Government to reconsider its budgetary priorities to ensure that people can reach their full potential and that Scotland really can be the land of opportunity that we all want and need it to be.

16:28

Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP): I am delighted to speak in the stage 1 budget debate, which at its heart is about building a fairer, greener and more prosperous Scotland. As we recover from Covid, securing stability and support for my constituents in East Lothian is my utmost priority.

The budget sets out an ambitious path while balancing the management of the Covid crisis and the rising cost of living. Our public services and the hard-working people within them have held the country together during the pandemic. I thank all those who worked in our public services in East Lothian and Scotland. We owe them a debt of gratitude.

As we continue the battle against Covid, the budget has set out provisions to bolster support for our public services, such as a record £18 billion investment in health and social care, which includes £1.6 billion for social care and integration. Those provisions will progress the commitment to increase spend by 25 per cent by the end of this session. The budget also sees an increase to nearly £13 billion for our health boards, and that generous package will be essential in supporting the vital services in East Lothian and beyond.

As we rebuild our economy, we are taking every step to ensure that our approach prioritises the needs of the people of Scotland. As a strong advocate for the wellbeing economy, I think that our economic recovery must put the health of the people and our environment first. A principled and focused approach on wellbeing will help Scotland to heal from Covid and meet the challenges of the cost of living crisis that is impacting on our constituents.

In November, the Wellbeing Economy Alliance Scotland produced the report "Failure Demand", which argues that we should be doing more on preventative spend. Its point is that a failure to do so will result in Governments spending more money in the long term. The £20 cut to universal credit is a prime example. How much will that cost us through different services in the months and years ahead?

Alongside fixing harms, we, in Scotland, are spending £600 million on mitigating harmful policies from Westminster such as the bedroom tax. The most recent UK budget includes measures that exacerbate the cost of living crisis, with national insurance rising while energy prices

soar, alongside the highest inflation rate for a long time.

I will focus on a few other commitments. The investment of £831 million in affordable housing, delivering 110,000 affordable and energy-efficient homes across the next decade, will benefit all our constituencies.

The Scottish Government is putting welfare first, with the investment of more than £4 billion in social security and welfare payments, including doubling the game-changing Scottish child payment. Of course, we need to do more, but that is a massive step forward.

Tackling inequalities is core to building a fairer and more equal society. The Scottish Government's commitment to a £500 million whole family wellbeing fund and its investment of 5 per cent of the community-based health and social care spend in preventative whole family support is very welcome. We had a debate on such support just a couple of weeks ago. It has been recognised by all parties in the chamber as a key element in tackling poverty, supporting attainment and preventing mental health issues. The investment will help the Scottish Government to deliver the commitments that it made when it accepted the Independent Care Review's report, "The Promise".

East Lothian has been a key player in showing the path for sustainable living, as Dunbar was Scotland's first zero waste town. I am proud that the budget will work to tackle climate change, with a commitment to a just transition providing £2.5 billion-worth of public and private investment, which is needed to meet our net zero target. That investment, alongside equipping businesses to grasp the opportunities of a green recovery, will secure new jobs and lay the roots for long-term job security and prosperity—I have already seen opportunities in East Lothian in that regard. The £350 million to drive forward decarbonisation and a generous package to support active travel are other key commitments in the pledge to tackle climate change.

The budget is a step in the right direction. We can achieve a wellbeing economy. That has been discussed in many debates in the chamber. With ambitious policies, our economy can prosper and Scotland can care for its environment and people.

I want to touch on our constraints as a devolved nation. On borrowing powers, the Fraser of Allander Institute, in its report on devolved fiscal frameworks, said:

"there is a case for a modest extension to the scope and scale of the devolved governments' borrowing powers in 'normal' times. The ability to borrow to fund discretionary resource spending would provide additional flexibility to respond to unforeseen events and therefore reduce the need to hold back funding instead."

We have already heard about that. The report went on to say:

“Even fairly substantial borrowing by the devolved governments would have little impact on the UK’s borrowing and debt.”

A level of flexibility would allow us to invest more in our recovery, for example by increasing funding to the Scottish National Investment Bank.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies added:

“With the Omicron variant of coronavirus ... across the UK, it is vital to learn lessons from earlier waves of the pandemic for the devolved governments’ funding arrangements. If new policy and spending announcements start to come in quick succession, the devolved governments should swiftly be given some combination of the funding guarantees successfully deployed last year, and/or enhanced borrowing powers, to allow them to respond in a timely and effective way.”

I look forward to both the Labour and Conservative parties supporting that view.

Without the full economic levers of independence, we cannot fully deliver the bold economic redesign that a wellbeing economy requires. I ask members to support this budget.

16:33

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): Today has been a frustrating experience for many members. As colleagues have outlined, this is meant to be a recovery budget and a bold statement of intent for the country. Instead, it fails to address the lasting impact of Covid, fails our local authorities and public sector workers and risks compounding the financial challenges that households across Scotland face.

As my friend Jackie Baillie has said, the 48p pay increase for social care workers is unacceptable, given the tireless work that they have put in as part of the national effort to tackle the virus. The Government should treat fair pay for workers as an urgent priority and commit to an immediate £12 an hour settlement, moving towards a £15 an hour baseline as soon as possible, which would be in line with our aspirations for the national minimum wage. If only all health consequentials had been protected, that would have been a mechanism to deliver the measure—it would have driven wealth back into the lowest-paid sectors of the economy.

I thank my Glasgow colleague Pam Duncan-Glancy for her strong case for further increasing the Scottish child payment if we are to have a hope of coming close to the target of reducing child poverty to 10 per cent in relative terms by 2030 from our current situation of 25 per cent and flatlining or potentially getting worse in the coming year. The Fraser of Allander Institute’s modelling has said that Scotland could meet its child poverty targets. Under all three of the published policy

models, we would succeed in meeting the targets, and all three of them include a significant increase to the Scottish child payment.

The payment might well be game-changing, as the Child Poverty Action Group has said, but I am afraid that the Scottish Government is playing that game very badly indeed. In the face of the cost of living crisis, a commitment from Government to further doubling the payment is therefore even more pertinent, and we wish to see that happen in the current financial year.

It makes sound economic sense to do that. Think about the tax base underperforming that of the UK. Surely, the lowest income households need every penny, because every penny will be spent in the economy, creating a multiplier effect that will repay itself in due course and increase the tax base in time. That is what we call a virtuous cycle rather than a vicious cycle, and if there were more economists rather than accountants in Government, perhaps we would have that sort of thinking at the heart of what is going on in the budget.

I turn to the cuts that local authorities face. Since 2013, the Scottish Government’s revenue fiscal resource budget limit has increased by 3.1 per cent. Despite that, the funding that it has allocated to councils has decreased by 2.4 per cent. Today’s starting point was therefore a cut of £371 million to councils across Scotland. It has been ameliorated by the announcement of an additional £121 million that has been pulled out of the bag. Councillors across Scotland might be grateful for that, but I doubt it, because it is cold comfort when it leaves them with £250 million more to cut.

How will they do that? They face an invidious choice. This is a one-year patch-up job in a year when there are council elections. The Government has put local authorities in an impossible situation in which they will have to consider making cuts to local services and increasing the price of accessing local amenities when people already face a cost of living crisis, or hiking the regressive and obsolete council tax, which the Government pledged to axe in 2007 to make up for that critical and fundamental lack of funding.

Glasgow City Council’s draft budget options for the next financial year include horrific proposals to offset a funding gap of £33.9 million by axing a holiday scheme for children who are eligible for free food, withdrawing services for dyslexic pupils, increasing crematorium charges for bereaved families and cutting teaching staff. That effect might well be reduced marginally by what was announced today, but it certainly will not take away the pain completely. In fact, it will address only one third of the potential cuts that are faced by local government. The bulk of the pain remains,

and it is disingenuous and cowardly of the Government to force councillors to wield the knife in this way.

On 17 February, Glasgow councillors will be asked to agree that budget, which is simply about how to slice a much smaller cake. The fact that there will be severe cuts is a fait accompli decided by a Government that controls 80 per cent of Glasgow City Council's annual budget allocation.

Ross Greer: The member seems to be suggesting that it should be the Government rather than local authorities that make the difficult decisions. Leaving aside the difficult decisions that have already been made in the budget, if this was a Labour Government, where, from what has already been allocated, would it find £250 million? Where would it cut, or where would it raise taxes?

Paul Sweeney: I thank the member for his intervention and note the commitment of the Greens to protecting local government funding and increasing it in real terms every year of this session of Parliament, although that has obviously not been achieved.

As for how we address the tax gap and increase revenues, we have presented creative ideas. In fact, there was a cross-party commission, including the member's former colleague Andy Wightman, that suggested introducing a land value tax that would have raised an additional £12 billion in revenues for Scotland. We could be introducing and pushing such ideas now.

Where is the sense of urgency coming out of the pandemic? Where is the idea of fundamental renewal? The local government settlement that was achieved in 1996 has fundamentally failed and we need a root-and-branch review of local government. Devolution has failed to address that in two decades. I hope that we can all agree that that needs to happen sooner rather than later.

The impact on funding is evident to citizens across the country, and nowhere more so than in Glasgow. We have seen communities having to picket their libraries, week in and week out, to protect the most fundamental services. We have seen facilities such as the iconic People's Palace lying empty. If Labour had done that when it was in administration, we would have been hounded relentlessly by the SNP on a weekly basis yet, when the SNP does it, it passes without comment. Facilities in Dennistoun such as the Whitehill pool are on the brink of collapse because of repair backlogs. The city's cleansing department is falling apart.

Our councils deserve better, workers deserve better and, quite frankly, Scotland deserves better. It is for that fundamental reason that Labour cannot possibly support the budget at stage 1, given its severity and the civic vandalism that it

proposes. I urge members to support our reasoned amendment, in an effort to salvage the budget before it is too late.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I invite Murdo Fraser to wind up for the Scottish Conservatives.

16:40

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): It is my pleasure to close the debate on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives. I will start where the debate set off, on the size of the overall budget settlement. The backdrop to the bill is the provision by the UK Government of the most generous budget settlement, in terms of a core block grant, in the history of devolution. The finance secretary should be turning cartwheels down the Canongate, celebrating the fact that she has more money than any of her predecessors in office.

Kate Forbes: Do I or do I not have more money for next year, compared with this year?

Murdo Fraser: Taking out the extraordinary additional sums that have been paid for Covid over the past financial year, the coming year's core block grant is up by 10.6 per cent in cash terms and 8 per cent in real terms. As Liz Smith said, some £3.9 billion extra is being provided. You would think that the SNP would be celebrating that additional resource, which is part of the largest block grant in the history of devolution.

SNP members like to talk about how this is a "fixed budget". Of course, that is not correct, because the Scottish Government has tax-varying powers that it is free to use if it feels that the budget is insufficient. The Scottish Government used to call for the devolution of air passenger duty and corporation tax so that it could cut those taxes. It has reneged on both those policies. Instead, it uses its tax powers to increase the tax burden on ordinary working Scots, and it damages our economy as a result.

This week, in a damning cross-party report on the Scottish budget, the Finance and Public Administration Committee concluded that Scotland is lagging behind almost all other areas of the UK on key indicators of economic performance. That is deeply worrying. We have the same macroeconomic policies across the whole of the UK, yet Scotland—almost uniquely—is performing the poorest. We must conclude that responsibility for that rests at the door of the SNP Government.

The consequence of that is clear when it comes to the Scottish public finances: our block grant is being reduced because of poor Scottish income tax performance. According to the Scottish Fiscal Commission, as the convener of the Finance and Public Administration Committee reminded us, the

budget is expected to be £190 million worse off because of fiscal devolution, and that figure will rise in subsequent years.

So, here we have a tale of two Governments: a Conservative Government at Westminster that is putting more money than ever before into the Scottish budget; and an SNP Government here in Holyrood that, because of its economic incompetence, is actually reducing the amount of money that is available because we are not matching the economic performance elsewhere in the UK.

Michelle Thomson: On the contrast between the two Governments, I would be interested to hear whether any Tory member is prepared to condemn the fact that, under the regulation of the Tory Government, £290 billion is lost to financial crime every year. That has a direct consequence for the money that is available to the Scottish Government and, in turn, to councils. Will Mr Fraser condemn the UK Government's lack of action on that?

Murdo Fraser: What a splendid line of attack that would be if the Scottish Government had such strong fiscal rectitude that not a penny was being wasted.

That sets me up nicely for my next point. Throughout the debate—for example, by John Mason, in his annual speech on the subject, and by Ross Greer—we have been challenged on where the Opposition would find additional money.

I will summarise where we could find some savings. We could find savings from the £200 million that has been spent on building two ferries that will probably never serve any island communities and that are years behind schedule. So far, £40 million has been paid in compensation to the victims of the malicious prosecution of those involved with Rangers Football Club. Tens of millions of pounds have been paid in subsidies to Prestwick Airport, Burntisland Fabrications and Liberty Steel. Millions have been paid out in legal costs in the unsuccessful defence of challenges against this Government, including one from their former First Minister—the man who cannot be named. Look at all the resources that are being spent in preparing another bill for an independence referendum that everyone knows is not going to happen. That is where the money could come from, and it would be far better spent on the people's priorities than wasted as it currently is.

Despite all the extra money that we have identified as being available to it, what does the Government actually deliver? It delivers a real-terms cut in the funding of local authorities, which COSLA has estimated at £371 million. That is money just to stand still, not to do anything extra.

Earlier in the debate, the finance secretary told us about an extra £120 million from the UK Treasury. We should welcome the fact that money from the UK Government is mitigating the impact of SNP cuts on our communities. That is welcome, but it still leaves us with a cut of £251 million just to stand still, as Douglas Lumsden said. That will mean increases in council tax and cuts to local services and, like Miles Briggs, I am sure that people will be reminded of that on the doorstep in the run-up to the elections in May. That is what this SNP Government is delivering.

The settlement has been attacked by council leaders from across the political spectrum, including SNP leaders. Shame on the SNP Government for delivering those cuts, and shame on the Greens for enabling them.

In previous years we could perhaps have relied on Andy Wightman's negotiating skills, as part of the Green group, to force the SNP Government to provide more generous support to local councils. Alas, in a sad loss to this Parliament, Andy Wightman is no longer here and his memory is besmirched by his erstwhile colleagues in the Green party. With him gone, they have sold their souls for ministerial salaries and limousines, and our councils and local communities are poorer as a result.

Fiona Hyslop and Paul McLennan talked about independence. If only we were independent, how much money we would have! [*Interruption.*] There we go. I gently suggest that they should read the paper published this morning by David Phillips of the Institute for Fiscal Studies. His calculation is that Scotland's projected deficit in 2026-27 would be 7.5 per cent of gross domestic product, or almost £3,000 for every man, woman and child in Scotland. That would mean tax rises and spending cuts, and the Scottish Government has no idea how to meet any of those challenges.

Scottish Conservatives cannot support this budget. With record sums available to spend, it actually delivers cuts to the services that people rely upon while money is being wasted and spent on SNP vanity schemes. I urge members to vote down the budget at decision time.

16:48

Kate Forbes: This is stage 1 of a budget that tackles poverty and helps families meet the cost of living. It invests in the just transition that we all, apparently, believe in and it secures economic recovery. Despite that, Labour, Tory and Lib Dem spokespeople could not start talking about the constitution fast enough in their remarks. That is why we are setting the budget and why, after 15 years, they are still opposing it. Their rhetoric

today suggests that they will be opposing it for a few more years yet.

I will move to the substance. Kenny Gibson began with comments on behalf of the Finance and Public Administration Committee. He spoke about additional funding and the need for transparency. I place on record that we expect the UK Government to finalise our budget in the coming weeks. Until then, we are proceeding on the basis of personal indications in meetings with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and of communications with Treasury officials about where our budget might end up. I have chosen to prioritise funding for local government from those additional flexibilities. Just yesterday, everyone in the chamber was calling on me to do just that, yet I imagine that most will vote against it at decision time. That sums up the Opposition.

Many members talked about priorities. I agree that this is a budget of choices, which are, by their very nature, hard. Let us look at some of the choices. Douglas Lumsden talked, quite rightly, about front-line nurses. Let us talk about our front-line nurses, who are, under this Government, paid over £1,000 more per annum than they are paid under Douglas Lumsden's party. Those are choices.

Jackie Baillie talked about social care. I agree with where she wants to end up, but we are delivering increases. It is not just rhetoric. I think that to dismiss it as 48p does a complete disservice to the value of the wage increase to social carers, which is the equivalent of £3,000 per annum if we compare the £10.50 per hour with the previous year's national minimum wage, which is what many carers in Wales, under Labour, and in England, under the Conservatives, are being paid right now.

There are other choices. It is a fact of parliamentary life that every member wants all budget lines to increase. Jackie Baillie wants at least another £1 billion to be spent on health. The Tories want several hundreds of millions of pounds to be spent on local government, and rates relief, and skills, and presumably they agree with the UK Government that health consequential should be passed on to health and social care.

In members' contributions, there were areas of agreement. I think that we all agree that our priority is recovery. As Fiona Hyslop said, it should be welcomed that, with the estimates of growth this month, Scotland has exceeded the pre-pandemic level of GDP. We need to build on that. It reflects the resilience of our business communities and our workers and the country's ability to pull together in times of crisis.

The challenges that we face right now require that same solidarity and commitment in making hard choices and determining our priorities. We need all the tools that we can get in order to do that, and particularly the fiscal tools, which can be delivered through the fiscal framework review. As Liz Smith said—I agree with her on this—there is an opportunity if both Governments are willing to approach the review in good faith. I will certainly approach it in good faith. I think that all parties probably agree on where there need to be significant changes. I will meet the Chief Secretary to the Treasury next week, and I hope that those conversations will be constructive and will progress the discussion.

This is just stage 1. There are, if members can believe it, more debates to come on the budget. In those debates, which will cover areas that we agree on and areas that we disagree on, let us not lose sight of the fact that the budget delivers on some key commitments. I am always struck by Pam Duncan-Glancy's remarks, and I was struck by what she said today. I recognise the importance of opposition and scrutiny to push us to go further, but next year's budget delivers on our commitment to double the Scottish child payment. Other members talked about the need to focus on economic recovery, and I note that next year's budget delivers the highest level of investment for our enterprise agencies since 2010. All members have seen the importance of our health and social care services over the past few years and recognise the pressures that they are dealing with right now. Next year's budget delivers record levels of investment in health and social care.

I have talked about the budget being a transitional budget, and it is a budget for one year. We really want to end up in a position where we can set multiyear budgets so that we can deliver on our commitments to reform, to improving outcomes and to delivering tangible benefits to the people of Scotland. We now have that opportunity as a result of the UK Government's comprehensive spending review, and we are in the process of a resource spending review.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: The principle of setting multiyear budgets is about recognising things such as the spend-to-save principle. Does the cabinet secretary not recognise that an investment in social care with a meaningful uplift in social care pay will see us reduce delayed discharge and the massive cost that that creates to the public purse?

Kate Forbes: I agree with the principle, and that is precisely why we cannot just dismiss the choices that we have made when it comes to, for example, the increase in wages. However, I also set this challenge down: for preventative spend to work, we have to be willing to move budgets. It is

not that there will be additional budget to invest in, for example, social care and reducing isolation. For us to really deliver preventative spend, we all need to have a far more mature debate on budget lines because, for some lines to go up, other lines will require to go down. If we want to move more funding into social care, as Jackie Baillie believes in, it will need to come from other parts of the budget. In a parliamentary context, believing that budgets should only go up makes things very difficult.

The resource spending review gives us an opportunity. We have a commitment to consult as widely as possible—because the budget needs to be Scotland's budget—and we will publish the review report in May, after the conclusion of the consultation that is running just now. We have an opportunity.

We face many challenges. The budget is transitional. It backs Scotland's key priorities. I hope that the Opposition will vote for it at 5 pm.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes the debate on the Budget (Scotland) Bill.

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

16:56

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S6M-02964, on committee meeting times. I ask George Adam to move the motion on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that, under rule 12.3.3B of Standing Orders, the Criminal Justice Committee, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee and Social Justice and Social Security Committee can meet jointly at the same time as a meeting of the Parliament between 3.30 pm and 4.30 pm on Tuesday 1 February 2022.—[George Adam]

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

I am minded to accept a motion without notice that, under rule 11.2.4 of standing orders, decision time be brought forward to now. I invite the Minister for Parliamentary Business to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 11.2.4, Decision Time be brought forward to 4.56 pm.—[George Adam]

Motion agreed to.

Decision Time

16:56

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

There are four questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S6M-02949.1, in the name of Liz Smith, which seeks to amend motion S6M-02949, in the name of Kate Forbes, on the Budget (Scotland) Bill, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

There will be a short suspension to allow members to access the digital voting system.

16:57

Meeting suspended.

17:05

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: We come to the division on amendment S6M-02949.1, which is in the name of Liz Smith. Members should cast their votes now.

For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 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, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (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)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (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)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 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)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-02949.1, in the name of Liz Smith, which seeks to amend motion S6M-02949, in the name of Kate Forbes, on the Budget (Scotland) Bill, is: For 33, Against 88, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-02949.2, in the name of Daniel Johnson, which seeks to amend motion S6M-02949, in the name of Kate Forbes, on the Budget (Scotland) Bill, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)

Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine)

(SNP)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 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)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-02949.2, in the name of Daniel Johnson, which seeks to amend motion S6M-02949, in the name of Kate Forbes, on the Budget (Scotland) Bill, is: For 25, Against 98, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-02949, in the name of Kate Forbes, on the Budget (Scotland) Bill, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is now closed.

Neil Gray (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. The voting app did not work. I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Gray. Your vote will be recorded.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr 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)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (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)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (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)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (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)
 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)

Against

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)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (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)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 O’Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-02949, in the name of Kate Forbes, on the Budget (Scotland) Bill, is: For 69, Against 54, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Budget (Scotland) Bill.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S6M-02964, in the name of George Adam, on committee meeting times, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that, under rule 12.3.3B of Standing Orders, the Criminal Justice Committee, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee and Social Justice and Social Security Committee can meet jointly at the same time as a meeting of the Parliament between 3.30 pm and 4.30 pm on Tuesday 1 February 2022.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The final item of business is a member’s business debate on motion S6M-02798, in the name of Rona Mackay, on support for the 70/30 campaign to reduce adverse childhood experiences by 2030. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. I ask those who wish to contribute to the debate to push their request-to-speak buttons now or as soon as possible, or to place an R in the chat function.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament acknowledges what it sees as the devastation caused to lives through adverse childhood experiences (ACEs); recognises the aim of the Wave Trust 70/30 Campaign to eradicate poverty and reduce child abuse and neglect and other ACEs by at least 70% by 2030; notes the calls on all political parties to work collegiately, through cross-portfolio action, to achieve this; understands that 122 MSPs and 513 MPs have signed the 70/30 Campaign pledge to create a better future for everyone, including for people in the Strathkelvin and Bearsden constituency, and notes the calls for all elected members to do so.

17:14

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): I thank all members who supported my motion on the WAVE Trust’s 70/30 campaign to end adverse childhood experiences by 2030.

Before I was elected, I was a children’s hearings panel member in Glasgow East, and I found the work enormously rewarding. At every hearing, we saw a child, or sometimes just the parents or guardians of a child, who needed help or an intervention. Often, we saw or considered the case of a child who had been caught in the system for years—caught in an endless cycle of supervision orders, neglect or offending behaviour. That child was typical of a youngster who had suffered a catalogue of adverse childhood experiences throughout their life.

Everyone who is in the chamber or who is listening to the debate will appreciate that ACEs and their often devastating consequences are now well known. They are no respecter of background. A young person from an affluent home can experience ACEs just as one from a less privileged home can. A well-off parent can neglect or abuse their child in the same way as a poorer parent. However, we do know that poverty is an overwhelmingly acute driver of ACEs and is the root cause of so many damaging issues for young people. Poverty can lead to hopelessness, parental addiction that often leads to neglect, the lack of a positive role model, a chaotic lifestyle and so much more.

Children do not need money to stay on the right path, but they do need attachment, stability and love to feel secure and happy. ACEs can lead to a lifetime of trouble, low expectations, dependency, poor health and insecurity.

The WAVE Trust is a United Kingdom and Ireland-wide network of individuals, organisations and elected representatives. Led by chief executive officer George Hosking and his team, it also acts as the secretariat of the cross-party group of which I am the convener. The WAVE Trust is dedicated and passionate about achieving the ambitious goal of a 70 per cent reduction in ACEs by 2030.

At least half of the children in the UK will suffer ACEs during their childhood. To achieve the campaign's goal, it is essential that decision makers and those who hold the purse strings have the right policies and take the right actions. In 2015, Professor Sir Harry Burns, the former chief medical officer of Scotland, said:

"I do not view 70/30 as either wishful thinking or an unachievable goal. On the contrary, reducing child maltreatment by 70% in the next fifteen years is the minimum acceptable outcome in responding to this unacceptable (and profoundly costly) harm to our youngest children."

The cross-party group that I convene is for the prevention and healing of ACEs, and the word "healing" in the title is particularly important. ACEs can be healed with early intervention, attachment, and a holistic approach. For example, instead of saying to a troubled child, "What is wrong with you?" we should say, "What happened to you?"

We know so much more about the cause and effect of ACEs today, largely because of a group of dedicated health professionals. One of those is research scientist Dr Suzanne Zeedyk, who is a passionate advocate of attachment in early years. Dr Zeedyk's groundbreaking and on-going work has been pivotal to our understanding of ACEs and attachment.

I would also like to mention Pauline Scott, an amazing early years practitioner in my constituency; the late Tina Hendry; Julie Day; lawyers Melissa Rutherford and Ian Smith; and many more people who are adding to our understanding and contributing so much to eliminating ACEs, day in and day out.

I was proud to host an event in Parliament in, I think, 2018 to screen the groundbreaking film documentary "Resilience", which features the work of pioneering Californian paediatrician Dr Nadine Burke Harris. I whole-heartedly recommend that everyone should watch that inspirational film. Dr Burke Harris examines the science around childhood adversity and toxic stress, revealing the physical changes that happen in the brain when

traumatic events occur. She also reveals how we can disrupt the destructive cycle through interventions that retrain the brain and body, foster resilience and help children, families and adults to live healthier, happier lives.

Since I was elected in 2016, much progress has been made on ACEs, not least in public awareness. We are now working towards having a trauma-informed judiciary and trauma-informed law practices, educators and police. In fact, most public service practitioners now understand ACEs and how important being trauma informed is. Indeed, today sees the introduction of sentencing guidelines for young people that mean that trauma will now be formally considered by the judge, which is a huge step forward.

The Scottish Government is also committed to introducing a bairn's hoose, which is based on the barnahus holistic care system for children in the justice system that has been so successful in Scandinavia. We doubled the child payment and introduced the baby box, the tackling child poverty delivery plan and the Scottish ACEs hub, which aims to encourage action in sectors across Scotland. Those measures are important because we must tackle one of the key drivers of ACEs—poverty—to fight the problem at its root cause.

We must take responsibility for that as legislators. In my motion, I state that 122 MSPs and 513 MPs have signed the WAVE Trust 70/30 campaign pledge. That is a great figure, but we need everyone to sign up. I urge members who have not done so to contact the WAVE Trust directly or email me to say that they want to sign. It is incumbent on all of us to reset the future for disadvantaged children and families to give them a chance of a happier, healthier life. I ask that we work together to bring that about. We have the power, so let us use it to create a fairer, more equal society in which no young person has to grow up blighted by ACEs.

I thank all members who are taking part in the debate and I look forward to everyone's contribution.

17:21

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I thank Rona Mackay for securing the debate. It is a topic worthy of a Government debate, and I found it difficult to squeeze all my comments into four minutes—I will try my best.

In recent weeks, the impact of adverse childhood experiences has been at the forefront of my mind, as I have been involved in taking evidence in two of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee inquiries. The first, into perinatal mental health, has highlighted the importance of care for new and expectant mothers in not only

clinical settings but community settings. The second has been into the health and wellbeing of our young people.

Adverse childhood experiences take many forms, and I will concentrate my speech on the impact of ACEs on care-experienced young people and new parents with care experience. People who are care experienced are most likely to have had the largest proportion of adverse childhood experiences and, as a result, to have the worst health outcomes as adults. As a result of unresolved trauma, they could be in need of particular support as they go into adulthood and potentially become parents themselves.

At an informal session that I attended recently, a care-experienced young parent raised two matters with me. The first was that care-experienced new parents can often be stigmatised by some of the health professionals with whom they come into contact. A young father told us that he felt that assumptions were made about his ability to parent once his experience was disclosed. In that same session, another young parent said that she knows for sure that care-experienced mums can be worried about disclosing their childhood trauma and care experience because they are frightened that it might arouse concern about their own ability to parent and that their child might be at risk of being taken away from them. That might not be the case, but it can certainly be a perception for some. That, in turn, can lead to them not coming forward pre or post-birth if they are having issues with their mental health.

If someone's experience as a child has been of parental neglect or abuse, becoming a parent might already be quite a triggering experience. That does not say to me that such people cannot become successful parents—far from it. It says to me that, if people who have experienced ACEs do not get trauma-informed care and support not only in childhood but throughout life, particularly when the health and care systems know of their trauma, we are letting them down.

I was particularly impressed by a young woman who pointed to the good work done by Who Cares? Scotland, which, during the pandemic, used emergency Covid response funds given by the Scottish Government to set up a telephone counselling service that could be accessed at any point without any need for referral. For care-experienced young people who are living on their own after having left foster care, for example, isolation can be acute anyway but, during the pandemic, it was doubly so.

That young woman made a good point: we know that care-experienced young people with adverse childhood experiences and no wraparound family support are more likely to carry that trauma into adulthood and that their mental

health is at particular risk on leaving care. She said that local authorities know how many young people are leaving care settings every year, and on what date. She made a plea for the Covid counselling service model to be extended beyond the pandemic for care-experienced children and young adults. As ideas go, that is right up there with the best of them.

I am more than pleased to see the emphasis that the Government is putting on delivering the Promise and the many interventions on the causes of childhood trauma, particularly mitigating childhood poverty, which Rona Mackay mentioned. I thank her for her focus on that, because it is fundamental.

I fully support the 70/30 campaign. I thank Rona Mackay again for the opportunity to discuss ACEs and for her continued work with children and young adults.

17:25

Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con): I draw the chamber's attention to my entry in the register of members' interests, which states that I am a councillor on the City of Edinburgh Council. I thank Rona Mackay for bringing the motion to the Parliament and securing this members' business debate.

As we have heard, the 70/30 campaign is a UK and Ireland-wide network of individuals, organisations and elected representatives working together and committed to reducing child abuse and neglect and other adverse childhood experiences by at least 70 per cent by the year 2030. Although that sounds ambitious, it is necessary, because at least half of children in the UK will suffer ACEs during their childhood. It is fantastic that more than 700 MPs, MSPs, MLAs, AMs, mayors and local councillors, from across all political parties, have signed the 70/30 campaign pledge. I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate to help to continue to raise awareness of the campaign.

Last year, I met Jay Haston, a WAVE Trust ambassador, in my remit as the shadow minister for drugs policy. After meeting him, I was immediately on board with the WAVE Trust ambition to reduce levels of child abuse and neglect by 2030. Each time that I have subsequently met Jay, I have been struck by his resilience and I have seen his commitment and determination to have his children grow up in a family home that is different from his experience. I see his ability to inspire all those around him in his role as a WAVE Trust ambassador, despite all the challenges that he has faced.

In October last year, in my role as an Edinburgh councillor, I submitted a motion to full council

entitled “Early Days Prevention of Adverse Childhood Experiences”, in which I called on the City of Edinburgh Council to explore with the WAVE Trust ideas on how to achieve 70/30. I know that there are relevant departments across the council that would have no problem in talking with the WAVE Trust 70/30 campaign for further consultation. In fact, I was heartened to hear of the wide understanding of adverse childhood experiences across our city services, including education, and of the awareness of the impact that ACEs can have not only on children but on adults, and, in turn, on their care of their own children and the decisions that they make.

My conversations with the WAVE Trust make it clear that a preventative approach must be embedded across organisations, and it must involve not just a few select managers or senior leaders but all staff, from janitors and dinner ladies to the senior management. Taking a preventative approach to addressing and combating adverse childhood experiences will have a significant impact on the inequalities that, rightly or wrongly, currently feel so entrenched in our society. It will give every child or young person the very best chance to have a thriving life. We owe that to all our young people, and I share the determination that Gillian Martin has expressed this afternoon with regard to the issues that she raised around children and young people who have been in care. The information that we, as a committee, gathered through those informal sessions was really quite gut wrenching.

It is time to turn all the policy papers, promises and pledges to support the motion in front of us into action. Let us send a shock wave through our society and stop talking and start helping our young people. I welcome the cross-party support for the 70/30 campaign, and I will continue to do all that I can to support the campaign across Scotland.

17:29

Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP): I thank Rona Mackay for bringing this debate to the chamber. I support the WAVE Trust’s campaign to reduce adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, by 70 per cent by 2030.

Before my election, I worked in outdoor education and for a children’s charity, so I know how services can transform children’s lives, but I also know that we can and must prevent ACEs. The impact of child neglect and abuse is often severe and includes developmental issues, disability and poor life outcomes. It is important that we provide the services to mitigate those potential consequences and help children and young people to get the best out of life, but we must look beyond that, too. More than ever, when

it comes to child neglect and abuse, prevention is better than cure.

Prevention is at the heart of the 70/30 campaign. For the estimated one in five kids who even today experiences neglect and abuse, we must press on with that work. However, we need to remember that ACEs come in many forms. In fact, seven out of 10 adults in Scotland have experienced at least one ACE. For many people, that might not have a severe impact on their life, but it can depend on the nature of the experience. However, for those who experience four or more ACEs, the impact on adult life can be significant: lower educational attainment, more cardiovascular health problems and poorer mental wellbeing.

There are ACEs that transcend socioeconomics, but, in many cases, poverty is a common factor. There are things that too many people take for granted, such as buying new clothes for their kids when they need them and not having to choose between heating their home and eating. If we add to that the link between socioeconomics and mental health problems, addiction and early deaths, the effects of poverty on children become clearer.

There has been a lot of progress in Scotland in recent years, but we must continue work to eradicate poverty and deliver supportive services. The delivery of 1,140 hours of childcare is transformational. It gives children better opportunities to learn, play and build their confidence. It can help parents back into work and increase family resilience by improving the wellbeing of children and parents. The Scottish Government’s new Scottish child payment is, in the words of campaigners, a game changer in tackling poverty. I was also glad to see the recent announcement on the Scottish Government’s £500 million family wellbeing fund, which will play an important preventative role by helping families before they reach crisis point and will ensure that children get the support and compassion that they deserve.

However, while the Scottish Government undertakes that work to reduce poverty and help children to live safe, healthy and active lives, the UK Government has cut universal credit and is doing nothing to tackle the cost of living crisis. Let us continue the work to reduce ACEs, get it right for every child and ensure that, no matter their background, children can grow up happily in a safe, loving environment and have the opportunity to reach their potential.

17:33

Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): I thank Rona Mackay for bringing the debate to the chamber; it is on a matter that is close to my heart.

In my previous job as a teacher, I gained first-hand experience of working with children who had, sadly, suffered from great abuse or violence or had fallen prey to the impacts of parental drug and/or alcohol misuse, to name but a few harmful experiences. For such children, early intervention and noticing trauma and neglect are crucial. Taking the time to have gentle conversations and provide opportunities for expression—whether verbally or through play, music or art—can be the first step in getting the child the support that they need.

Like other members, I have been honoured to meet Jay Haston, an ambassador for the WAVE Trust. I met him only last week and have his permission to share some of his story. In his early childhood, Jay was caught up in domestic violence and was sexually abused. He attended five different schools, was unable to concentrate and often displayed erratic and unpredictable behaviours. Jay was, by his own admission, manipulative and controlling. Those factors made establishing and maintaining relationships difficult, which was further compounded by anxiety and depression. He clearly displayed the signs of ACEs. Later, Jay became involved in crime and eventually attempted suicide. However, by the age of 37, he was finally able to make the massive step of reaching out for help.

The lived experience of Jay's story demonstrates acutely the devastating impact of ACEs and the trauma that impacts on life chances, but it also highlights that hope exists for those who receive the right kind of support. A few years on, Jay now feels an immense sense of purpose and, although his experiences will stay with him, he is able to share his journey of recovery with others and instil in them the notion that help is always an option.

I whole-heartedly welcome the Scottish Government's ambitions to create a more compassionate, trauma-informed and trauma-responsive approach, with a focus on early intervention. In 2011, the Christie commission reported on the future delivery of public services, and estimated that 40 to 45 per cent of public spending in Scotland is focused on dealing with symptoms rather than root causes. Therefore, I welcome the Government's commitment to universal health visiting services, the roll-out of family nurse partnerships and investment in perinatal and infant mental health.

I know that ACEs awareness training is being delivered, because I have undertaken that training myself, but I would welcome further roll-out to all adults who are in contact with children and who therefore are in a prime position to notice behaviours that might be indicative of a wider struggle in that child's life.

Whether we are teachers, jannies, dinner staff, police officers or national health service workers, we all have a sense of duty to the young people around us to take the time to see and hear what the child is trying to communicate and to respond in a way that prevents further harm and supports recovery. I welcome the development of the bairn's hoose approach, as part of the child protection improvement programme.

Although the task of reducing adverse childhood experiences by 70 per cent by 2030 might sound daunting, I am optimistic that we can achieve it and that we can make Scotland the best country in the world for children to grow up in.

17:37

Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): I thank Rona Mackay for bringing the debate to the chamber.

The impact of adverse childhood experiences on individuals' lives can be scarring, devastating and long lasting. Memories of childhood often stay with us, but, for many, those memories are not ones to look back on fondly.

As we have heard from others in the debate, poverty, abuse, neglect and other ACEs cause significant mental and physical difficulty for people in our country and they can also impact on an individual's personal development.

However, in understanding more about ACEs, it is important to note that research conducted across the UK tells us that adverse childhood experiences are more likely to be experienced in areas of high deprivation. That highlights yet another devastating health inequality in our country, which needs to be addressed with purpose.

Moreover, as outlined by Public Health Scotland, an ACE survey of adults in Wales found that, compared to people with no ACEs, those with four or more ACEs—as has been mentioned—are more likely to have been in prison, develop heart disease, frequently visit their general practitioner, develop type 2 diabetes, have committed violence in the past 12 months or have other health-harming behaviours.

That is deeply concerning to us all, and I consider it important that the Scottish Government conducts a similar ACE survey with adults in Scotland to ascertain whether the impacts are similar, given that Public Health Scotland has advised that there could be a similar prevalence in the Scottish population.

However, we have to be absolutely clear that ACEs should not define an individual's life or stop them from being successful or content. It is crucial that support is in place for children, young adults

and adults to come forward and talk about their experiences. There can be no room for stigma in those discussions, and it is important that such support is accessible, free and comfortable for those who come forward.

The fact that adverse childhood experiences occur for children during a period of innocence and the unknown makes the impact that bit more significant. That is why I fully support calls from the 70/30 campaign to reduce incidence of adverse childhood experiences by at least 70 per cent by 2030, as we have all agreed in the chamber tonight.

That is not only an achievable target but a necessary one. It is one that we must meet if we are to be proactive and deliver for those who have experienced such events. We must invest more in early years. We must place more focus on addressing health inequalities. We must conduct research and analyse data to ensure that there is the most up-to-date information, where it does not exist already, to allow us to take actions that are underpinned by solid evidence.

In this chamber, I regularly call on the Scottish Government to do more to eradicate poverty. I do so because failure to act equates to a failure to stand up for those who, for whatever reason, struggle in life and need us to stand up for them in modern society. Adverse childhood experiences link closely to poverty and inequality. Therefore, to be effective in our endeavours, we must address the root causes. Doing so allows us to support those who are growing up in the most deprived areas today, and it allows us to hope that we can reduce the number of people who have an adverse childhood experience in the future.

The debate is important because it reaffirms the view of us all in the chamber—I have heard this from every speaker, and it is a matter that we all care about—that we must discuss this issue and address it. By working together, we can progress. My hope for the future is that no child will suffer adverse childhood experiences and that they will all grow up happy and content in their lives. We, as parliamentarians, can help that to happen.

17:41

Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): I thank my colleague Rona Mackay for securing this debate on such an important issue. I also draw members' attention to my entry in the register of members' interests, as I am a serving councillor on West Dunbartonshire Council.

Everyone in this chamber and across the country has likely had at least one adverse childhood experience in their life. Those experiences are wide ranging and can include family bereavement, neglect and child abuse.

ACEs are associated with poor health outcomes in the widest context. Research has indicated that they include injuries, death during childhood, premature mortality, suicide, disease, mental illness and poverty.

However, negative outcomes due to ACEs are not inevitable. Without hesitation, I signed the 70/30 motion on behalf of the residents of Clydebank and Milngavie. I represent an area that takes in part of West Dunbartonshire, which has above-average economic challenges that impact negatively on health and employment. Residents I have spoken to and visited, and people in organisations such as the excellent Alternatives project, have highlighted how their own ACEs have negatively impacted on their lives in adulthood and likely contributed to the statistics that currently reflect West Dunbartonshire. It was only when previous deep-rooted childhood experiences were brought to light that those affected could access local services and were able to move on and support others to share their stories.

With research showing a link between ACEs and the risk of experiencing a wide range of physical and mental conditions, which contribute to the issues that are faced in West Dunbartonshire, it is not surprising that the local authority is addressing the issue as a priority. The efforts of staff and volunteers need to be highlighted and commended, and I do so without hesitation today.

West Dunbartonshire Council was the first local authority to sign up to the 70/30 pledge. To promote the development of support to address the impact of ACEs, staff at West Dunbartonshire health and social care partnership organised screenings of the film "Resilience: The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope". The aim of the screenings was to develop approaches in West Dunbartonshire for developing nurturing relationships and peer support to address the toxicity of ACEs.

That led to a learning and engagement event on nurturing individuals and building resilient communities, which resulted from a collaboration between Clydebank high school, the West Dunbartonshire learning festival and the HSCP. The event was attended by 300 participants and culminated in the relaunch of the West Dunbartonshire ACEs hub, transforming it into the resilience hub.

The hub is dynamic in its actions. It is increasing awareness of ACEs and sharing information among people who work in West Dunbartonshire, including on changes to the national and local strategic context. It uses new research, new resources, video clips, training opportunities and local events. It enables networking and shares

organisational news and information about access to services and referral pathways. That positive approach is sharing good work practice and information about what works, and it has stimulated additional action among individuals and organisations. The hub has 412 members, and it provides a significant opportunity to develop the approach to supporting those who are affected by adverse childhood experiences and poverty.

We would all agree that that is tremendous work by professional staff and volunteers in my constituency. The aim of the WAVE Trust's 70/30 campaign is to eradicate poverty and reduce child abuse, neglect and other ACEs by at least 70 per cent by 2030. If all other areas across Scotland can replicate the work done in my constituency, working together to share ideas and good practice, our country will be well on the way to eradicating poverty, child abuse and ACEs by 2030.

17:45

Karen Adam (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I thank Rona Mackay for bringing the debate to the chamber. She has been a mentor to me in Parliament and I know that she cares very much about the campaign and about the cross-party group on ACEs, of which I am grateful to be a part.

One of the first organisations that I wanted to meet after I was elected was the WAVE Trust, because I am a parent and because adverse childhood experiences have been a part of my life. Like many who have experienced those circumstances, I had never reached out to any organisation. We try to muddle on and leave the past behind, often not disclosing those past experiences, because we are trying to shut them out and are unaware of how they can eventually catch up with us.

The WAVE Trust has 24 years' experience of researching and working in the field of trauma. It has delivered training and workshops on adverse childhood experiences across the UK. I support and empathise with the aim of WAVE's national council. WAVE has created a united voice of lived experiences. Survivors of abuse and neglect, like me, can become powerful change makers in society, coming together to tackle the negative impacts of childhood adversity and working to create a culture focused on the prevention and healing of ACEs.

As a result of my ACEs, I have been on a journey that has led me here, wobbly legs and all. The instability of my legs is caused by adrenaline regulation issues. They are a flight or fight response. Even when I assume that my mind has forgotten, my body remembers. It tries to protect

me when there is a sense of anticipation or a slight increase in my heart rate.

As many in the chamber know, I recently tried to speak up on the importance of acknowledging that abusers can and do walk among us. They are often people we know and trust, at least until the mask is taken off. I was subjected to horrific abuse and death threats for saying that. I take the opportunity to thank everyone, from all parties, who filled my inbox with notes of love and solidarity from Parliament and beyond.

That incident pushed me to explain myself. I opened up, albeit with my arm twisted behind my back. Many survivors of childhood abuse have since reached out to me, feeling empowered by my revelation of my ACE. It was in the midst of that that I realised that having a community and support after all these years was incredibly important. The shame is not mine to bear.

Rona Mackay's motion is rightly a matter for cross-party action and attention. Preventing ACEs means tackling the issue from all sides. I agree with my colleague, the cabinet secretary Mairi Gougeon, who once said:

"This is not just a health issue and it is not just an education issue. It is about health, education, social work, justice, welfare and many other elements all working together to challenge the myriad issues that children face."—[*Official Report*, 24 January 2018; c 105.]

The effects that abuse and neglect have on children must never be far from our agenda or our thinking. They never leave those of us who have suffered. They impact us at the time and into our future. I support the WAVE Trust's campaign to reduce the number of children who suffer abuse and neglect by 70 per cent by 2030 and to take a holistic and far-reaching approach to the causes of abuse and how we go about tackling it.

The campaign on violence against women is finally focusing on perpetrators, holding men to account and telling them, "Don't be that guy." In the same way, and while supporting our survivors, we must take a firm stance and shine not just a bright light but a blazing sun on those who neglect and abuse our children.

We cannot continue to fight fires without looking at the source. That means ensuring an education system that teaches boundaries and what inappropriate relationships are, provides an easy route for children to speak up, and a clear path and support for them to be heard and believed. It also means those in positions of authority being able to support those signs early. We cannot let the burden of duty fall on those who have been abused; we must all bear that burden and share it. I thank the WAVE Trust for doing just that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you very much, indeed, Ms Adam, and thank you for sharing that experience.

17:50

Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP): I thank Rona Mackay for securing the debate. Like a few others, I had the pleasure of meeting Jay Haston a few months back. I hope that he is watching the debate tonight. As Kaukab Stewart said, he is very open about his experiences and how he changed his life. Jay, if you are watching this, you are inspirational, and what you have been talking about has really opened up the topic and allowed us to have this debate. Thank you for that.

The 70/30 campaign pledges to create a better future for everyone with ACEs. Working with those with adverse childhood experiences must be seen in the wider context of tackling societal inequalities. I thank the 70/30 campaign for its work on reducing child abuse, neglect and other adverse childhood experiences. There is more of a risk of experiencing ACEs in areas of higher deprivation. In East Lothian, almost a quarter of children live in poverty.

I commend the Scottish Government for implementing policies such as increasing the Scottish child payment. However, there is much to do to reach the target of reducing ACEs by 70 per cent by 2030. When children are exposed to adverse and stressful experiences, it can have a long-lasting impact on their ability to think and interact with others, and on their learning. However, much can be done to offer hope and build resilience in children, young people and adults who have experienced adversity in early life. It is crucial to note that people with high numbers of ACEs in their childhood often have strong resilience and are able to lead fulfilled lives. Protective factors in children's lives can mitigate many of the adverse effects of those experiences.

There is increasing evidence that children and young people's mental health and wellbeing can be supported even in times of adversity by their having a trusted adult in their life. Jay talked about that when we had a discussion a few months back. It may be someone in their family, school or community, and it can make a difference to how young people cope with the adverse experiences that happen to them.

As has been touched on, the Scottish Government has a vision to make Scotland the best place in the world to grow up in. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 enshrines the actions that are required to support the wellbeing of Scotland's children and young people. It builds on GIRFEC, which is the Scottish Government's national approach to improving

outcomes for and supporting the wellbeing of children and young families.

The £500 million whole family wellbeing fund, with its aim of investing 5 per cent of community-based health and social care spend in preventative whole-family support, is very welcome. Locally in East Lothian, policies on care-experienced young people, the carers strategy, the young carers strategy, positive destinations, links with Edinburgh College and Queen Margaret University and child protection policies are examples of the development of the approach to supporting those with ACEs.

East Lothian has a four-pronged approach. There is pathway support, working with third sector organisations and key stakeholders to assess support needs and increase key points of support. There is increasing training capacity and network building—which we have touched on in relation to mental health training and school-based nurture work—and the creation of a practitioner network. There is also ensuring that data is being well used, so that young people are being listened to regularly, and that data is being gathered from CAMHS, the third sector and support pathways, alongside the multiagency trial to show the impact of the multiagency input. It is also about building resilience in individuals and communities, raising ACE awareness, increasing training for practitioners and implementing the place of kindness initiative.

I look forward to working with the 70/30 campaign and the Scottish Government to achieve the goals of the 70/30 campaign. For my constituents in East Lothian and for those across Scotland, that will allow us to continue our work to tackle child poverty and ensure that children grow up in a safer and more equal Scotland.

I note that I should have referred members to my entry in the register of members' interests, as I am a serving councillor in East Lothian.

17:53

The Minister for Children and Young People (Clare Haughey): I add my thanks to Rona Mackay for bringing the motion to the chamber. I also thank all those who have spoken in the debate for their important contributions. There were many considered contributions from across the parties about the impact of poverty and the need for a compassionate and trauma-informed approach. However, I am sure that we would all agree that the most powerful contribution was that from my colleague Karen Adam, who shared her personal experience, which was very moving to hear. I congratulate her on her bravery in being able to do that.

I whole-heartedly share the ambitions of the WAVE Trust's campaign, and I am extremely grateful for the strength of the cross-party input to the debate. I thank the WAVE Trust and the many third sector organisations and public services that work tirelessly to campaign for and support children and young people. In particular, I thank all the children and young people—and adults—who have bravely shared their personal experiences of the impact of adverse and traumatic childhood experiences. Without a doubt, that has led to an increased understanding of ACEs and action to tackle them.

We have declared a national mission to tackle child poverty, calling on the whole of society to work with us to drive change. The Scottish Government is doing all that it can within our devolved powers to help families who are impacted by the pandemic and by the current cost-of-living crisis. We have repeatedly called on the UK Government to make fundamental changes to universal credit and to reinstate the £20 uplift that was made to it during the pandemic, in order to make it a proper safety net and to help struggling families.

In the year ahead, we are making £197 million available to support the doubling of the Scottish child payment to £20 per child per week, from April. That will immediately benefit 111,000 children under the age of six. Ahead of the full roll-out of the payment to all eligible children under the age of 16, we are also continuing to deliver bridging payments—which, this year, are worth £520—for as many school-age children as possible. In addition, we are investing in the expansion of early learning and childcare, free school meals and grants for school clothing, and we are increasing access to good-quality, affordable homes.

Those actions are crucial to addressing ACEs overall. We know that experiencing poverty and inequality increases the risk of other adverse experiences and that it impacts on people's capacity to overcome such experiences.

Preventing and responding early to adversity and trauma are central to our long-standing national approach of getting it right for every child—GIRFEC. That multi-agency approach is currently being updated and refreshed, building on the valuable experience of practitioners and professionals across Scotland.

We continue to invest in our enhanced health visitor home visiting programme and the family nurse partnership programme, providing innovative support for first-time mums and their newborns. We have also invested more than £16 million in perinatal and infant mental health, as well as £16 million a year in secondary school access to counselling support.

Our £500 million whole family wellbeing funding will run over the course of this parliamentary session. The current priority is to work with partners to develop and test proposals for the initial £50 million spend. That will start from April. Quality holistic whole-family support is central to the wide-ranging actions that we are progressing to meet our commitment of implementing the promise by 2030.

As members know, the Scottish Government is committed to giving children's rights the highest possible protection in Scotland. By incorporating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, we will be providing children with positive, nurturing experiences and ensuring that their safety and protection are enshrined in law. The UNCRC requires a clear and unified approach to protecting children from all forms of neglect, abuse, exploitation and violence, as well as to supporting parents, families and carers. Scotland's approach is consistent with that principle. It is rooted in accessible and responsive universal services and in a holistic, proportionate approach to statutory intervention, while acknowledging that third sector expertise will often be key to reducing risk without stigmatising families.

That shift is made in the revised national guidance for child protection in Scotland, which we published in September last year. It integrates child protection with the GIRFEC approach, recognising that all children must receive the right help at the right time. Through the work of our national implementation group, local child protection committees and practitioners across services, we are working to ensure that robust child protection procedures are in place wherever there is a likelihood or a risk of a child coming to harm.

We are also taking action to help children who are affected by domestic abuse and by harmful parental alcohol or drug use, and we are currently creating a national bairn's hoose model to provide a child-centred approach to delivering justice, care and recovery for children who have experienced trauma.

Before I end, I will briefly highlight the groundbreaking work of our national trauma training programme, which progresses the joint ambition of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Government to develop trauma-informed workforces and services across Scotland. It supports workforces in understanding the impact of ACEs and trauma and in responding in ways that support people's recovery and prevent re-traumatisation. I have seen the difference that can be made to the lives of children and young people by dedicated, compassionate practitioners who work in such trauma-informed ways, which foster safety, trust and collaboration.

The Scottish Government has also committed to developing during 2022 a national strategy on trauma and adverse childhood experiences. That will build on the types of cross-portfolio actions that I have outlined and will further support the local and national embedding of trauma-informed approaches.

Again, I thank Rona Mackay and all the members who have contributed to what has been an important debate, as well as all those who are working so hard to give children and young people across Scotland the best start. The Scottish Government is firmly committed to tackling child poverty and adverse childhood experiences, and I will continue to do all that I can, working in partnership, to ensure that children grow up safe, loved and respected, so that they can all reach their full potential.

Meeting closed at 18:01.

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

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