



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Tuesday 24 November 2015

Session 4

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## Scottish Parliament

*Tuesday 24 November 2015*

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

### Time for Reflection

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** Good afternoon. The first item of business is time for reflection, and our leader today is Mrs Ivy Blair, who is co-ordinator of Prospects.

**Mrs Ivy Blair (Prospects):** Presiding Officer and members of the Scottish Parliament, thank you for this opportunity to speak to you.

The Bible says:

“We are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”

In our busy lives we need to take time to look at God’s wonderful creation. In my work with Prospects, I travel all around Scotland. Our country is awe inspiring in its diversity of landscapes, and in autumn the colours of the leaves are spectacular—green, yellow, red, brown and orange, and so many shades of each. As we look at the trees growing together, we notice that they are all different shapes and sizes, with leaves that are distinctive and varied but which blend together to achieve a spectacular masterpiece of beauty and colour.

In the Bible, we are reminded in the book of Ephesians that we are God’s masterpiece, and that, of course, includes people with learning disabilities. When we view ourselves and others as God’s masterpiece—his best work—we start to realise that there are no unimportant people. Each person has equal value to God and is loved and created in just the way he wanted.

In my work around Scotland, I encourage churches to welcome and value people with learning disabilities, to make churches inclusive places where each person is seen for what they can do and not defined by their disability. From Lerwick in Shetland to Peebles in the Scottish Borders, the Prospects song “God loves you just the way you are” is often sung. As we sing it to each other, we are reminded that God is pleased with his workmanship.

The second part of the verse from Ephesians reminds us that God planned good things for us to do—things that only we can do. We need to step into our God-given plan and purpose, be ourselves and not try to be someone else, do the things that God wants us to do and encourage and support others as they fulfil their role as only they can.

At the battle of Bannockburn exhibition, a poem is inscribed on the rotunda monument. It contains the words

“Small folk playing our part”.

As each leaf is unique, so are you. Can we be people who blend beautifully together to make a spectacular display to the glory of God?

## Topical Question Time

14:03

### Getting it Right for Every Child (Programme Board Abolition)

**1. Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government for what reason it has abolished the getting it right for every child programme board. (S4T-01189)

**The Minister for Children and Young People (Aileen Campbell):** In order to develop our getting it right for every child policy, the Scottish Government established a programme board and a strategic implementation group. The board's role was to help shape the policy in relation to the drafting of the duties in part 4 and 5 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and it met 14 times from February to September 2014. The national implementation support group has responsibility for oversight of implementation and continues to meet. We recently refreshed its membership to take us into the significant phase of the implementation of the new statutory duties.

**Liam McArthur:** As the minister said, the programme board was set up to oversee the implementation of GIRFEC and, according to the Scottish Government website, it

"drove improvements in outcomes for children and young people in Scotland by embedding the GIRFEC approach across relevant services."

At the weekend, the Scottish Government made it clear to the press that

"a decision was made at ministerial level to wind up the GIRFEC Programme Board after May 2014."

Does the minister think that it was acceptable for ministers to take such a decision without having any recourse to the Scottish Parliament, which had responsibility for scrutinising and approving the GIRFEC legislation?

**Aileen Campbell:** As I said, the programme board was established to take us through the legislative phase of getting it right for every child. After the 2014 act was passed, I took the decision to look at options for maintaining strategic engagement and driving forward the implementation of GIRFEC. The programme board's job was done. We had got through the legislative phase, and I took the strategic decision to focus on implementation. The national implementation support group is there to provide that strategic engagement and to drive forward the implementation of GIRFEC. There was consensus on that decision at the last meeting of the programme board in September 2014, and it was recognised that we needed to have the right people on the group to drive forward the

implementation of GIRFEC. While the board wound down, there was continued emphasis on implementation, and that was done through the national implementation support group.

**Liam McArthur:** I am grateful to the minister for that further clarification, but I want to press her on the point about when and how the Parliament was informed about a decision on a programme board that the Parliament was responsible for setting up. Despite the fact that the minister has said that consultation took place with the programme board members, the Parliament does not appear to have been informed of a decision in which it had a very legitimate interest.

**Aileen Campbell:** I reiterate that we had gone through the legislative phase and, to maintain the strategic engagement with the sector, agencies and other people, I decided to focus on implementation. That is why the national implementation support group continued. It had sat under the programme board, but it continued so that we could drive forward the GIRFEC agenda.

I can make sure that the member is furnished with all the details of the meetings, if he so wishes, so that he has the clarity that he seeks. I am determined to get the implementation of the legislation, which is important, right, which is why the focus of our attention changed from the legislative phase that the programme board was charged with to implementation. We decided that we did not need both organisations, and we decided to maintain our focus on implementation, which is the role of the NISG.

**Liam McArthur:** On implementation, I am looking at the minutes from the programme board meeting in May 2014. Assistant Chief Constable Malcolm Graham of Police Scotland

"raised issues surrounding ensuring high-risk children remained a focus."

The minister will recall that, even among those of us who were prepared to accept the case for named persons, one of the key concerns was that attention and resources should not be diverted away from those who have genuine welfare issues in order to address wider concerns in relation to wellbeing issues. What reassurances have been given to Police Scotland and other members of the programme and implementation boards that there has not been a redirection of focus away from those high-risk children?

**Aileen Campbell:** The whole thrust of getting it right for every child, as we have learned from the Highland model, is that it allows us to focus and to be more strategic with our resources, and to make sure that we are getting it right for children who show that level of need and require additional support. There is no retracting from our focus on

trying to do things better for a group of vulnerable children. That is part of the whole GIRFEC approach. It is about getting it right for every child every time. The GIRFEC approach, with the named person behind it, is about doing just that and using our resources in an effective, strategic way. The Highland model shows that that works.

As I said, at the last meeting of the programme board in September 2014, there was consensus among the board members about winding down the board. I thanked everybody there for their input and efforts to get us through the legislative phase, but it was clear that we needed to turn our attention to the effective implementation of an important policy that is designed to ensure that our children get the best outcomes, which they deserve.

I will make the minutes of the meetings available on the Government's website. I will also ensure that we give members any reassurances that they want if they want to get in touch with me or write to me. If they want a further briefing, we will ensure that that happens. However, there is no hiding from the fact that GIRFEC is an important plank of Government policy. We had a programme board that helpfully got us through the legislative phase. It is correct that our attention is on getting it absolutely right for children. That requires adequate implementation, and that is why our focus turned towards implementation via the national implementation support group. Police Scotland and others who have contributed to our work through the programme board are involved in that.

I am happy to share any information if the member so wishes, but the thrust of our efforts towards implementation is correct.

**Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Is there not a case for getting it right for the public? The minutes that were published were very clear in telling us exactly what was going on. Now that that board is no longer in existence, we are not in a position to know what is going on. Is it not time that the Scottish Government published all the information and advice that it is being given about the implementation of GIRFEC and named persons?

**Aileen Campbell:** I understand that the member does not share my views on the GIRFEC approach, but I am absolutely committed to that policy. I know that it is the right thing to do for our children, to make sure that we have much more co-ordinated and coherent approaches to helping them. If there is any information that the member requires, we will look into those queries.

I have made clear that the programme board was there to fulfil a function, which was to steer us through the legislative phase. Implementation is

where our focus is now, and we will make sure that we are driving that forward for the benefit of children. I understand that the member does not share the aspirations that we set out through GIRFEC, but it is the right approach to take.

We are doing our best for children, making sure that we get it right for every child every time. We are using our partners across the health authorities, local authorities, police, social work, the Care Inspectorate and many different third sector organisations, working collaboratively in partnership to do our very best for children. If the member has any bones to pick with that, she can get in touch with me and I will let her see any information that she wishes to see.

I know that our approach is right. We have focused on the legislation; we are focusing now on implementation. I am content that we are doing all that we can in an open and transparent manner.

### **Common Agricultural Policy (December Emergency Payment)**

**2. Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government how many farmers will not receive the 70 per cent common agricultural policy emergency payment in December. (S4T-01182)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment (Richard Lochhead):** The first tranche of direct payments will be paid to about a quarter of claimants and should start arriving in bank accounts before the end of the year. The majority of farmers should receive their initial payment in January, with all first instalments being paid by the end of March. The balance of those payments is due to be settled in April. Our decision to deliver payments in two instalments is, of course, similar to the situation in 2005 when the previous reforms were introduced.

**Murdo Fraser:** The cabinet secretary will be aware, I am sure, of the anger and dismay among the farming community about the delays in those vital payments. In February, the cabinet secretary told the annual general meeting of the National Farmers Union Scotland that everything was on track for payments to be made in early December. That has not been delivered.

The issue is entirely the responsibility of the Scottish Government. The cabinet secretary cannot blame Brussels and he cannot blame Westminster. The buck stops with him and his department. Will he now make a proper apology to Scottish farmers, who have been badly let down?

**Richard Lochhead:** I say to Murdo Fraser that the vast majority of the farmers to whom I have spoken understand the situation—given that we took the decision jointly with the industry over what the policy should be in Scotland. The agreement

that I had with the industry was that if the policy outcome was right, the policies should be implemented, with the additional complexity that that would bring—with Scottish decisions over and above the complexity that we already have from Europe—even if we had to make payments later than in the payment window last year under the old system.

I also gently remind Murdo Fraser that at least £500 million-worth of support to underpin agriculture will be issued in the next few months. If his Conservative Party had had its way, there would be no payments going to farmers in Scotland over the next few months because the Conservative Party's policy is to get rid of pillar 1 of the common agricultural policy. That is what it argued for during the negotiations in Brussels. Murdo Fraser displays sheer hypocrisy with his anger today—there would be no support for agriculture if his party was in charge.

We understand the challenge of cash flow for many farming businesses, which is why we are working flat out to maximise the number of farmers who can receive the first payments, and for them to receive as much as possible in the first payments. We have said that we will pay a minimum of 70 per cent in the first instalment, with the second part being settled in April.

Given where England was in 2005 when it changed from historically based payments to area payments, and that we in Scotland are implementing not only the reforms that England had to go through in 2005 but the second set of reforms, I think that what we are doing is reasonable under challenging and difficult circumstances. Many farmers to whom I have spoken understand that, even if Murdo Fraser does not.

**Murdo Fraser:** You can tell that the cabinet secretary is in trouble when he starts blustering in the fashion that we have heard over the last few minutes.

The National Farmers Union Scotland asked the cabinet secretary to commit to paying 90 per cent of CAP payments by mid-January, but in the course of his answer the cabinet secretary has made it pretty clear that he is not prepared to do that. Will he ask for parliamentary time to make a full statement to Parliament, so that he can explain in full the reasons for his decisions, and allow proper questioning?

**Richard Lochhead:** I have said to the industry and to members that I will make a statement to Parliament in December, before we issue to farmers the letters that will give the estimated value of their payments. I have also said that we will continue to make every effort to increase the level of the first payment; I have said that it will be

a minimum of 70 per cent, and that if we can go above that we will do so.

However, we cannot give the full payment or a higher level at the moment, given the information that we have, because we cannot finalise the value of entitlements until we know the total number of eligible hectares for basic payments and for the greening element in each of the three payment regions that we decided to have. The situation is a bit more complex in Scotland, because we agreed with the industry that we would have three levels of payment, depending on the type of land. We also introduced voluntary coupled support schemes to support the sheep and beef sectors. Those schemes were initially opposed by the United Kingdom Conservative Government, until we persuaded the UK Government that in Scotland we have to deliver such schemes, and it really had to listen to us.

Against that backdrop, we will continue to work flat out, because we acknowledge the cash-flow problems that farmers and crofters face and so that £500 million in support will make its way to those important businesses over the next few months.

**Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD):** I hope that the cabinet secretary accepts what crofters said to me last night, which is that the crucial issue is not just timing but the payment that people will get.

Does the cabinet secretary accept that when the Government held its roadshow in Shetland, the officials who were present made it crystal clear to crofters that reseeded and improved croft land would receive the higher payment level—in other words, the payment for permanent grassland, rather than the payment for rough grazing? Some 523 areas of Shetland croft land will now receive the lower payment, and crofters are wondering what the assurance that they received earlier this year was about. Will the cabinet secretary enlighten me and Parliament in that regard?

**Richard Lochhead:** We are talking about very radical reform of Europe's common agricultural policy, and I accept that lessons will have to be learned. This is the first year of implementation of the new policy; we will be able to revisit the matter of payment regions if there is a case for doing so.

The move from the historical basis for payments to area-based payments will help many of the western parts of Scotland and, I hope, many island communities, by bringing additional payments to upland and hill farms, in particular.

As we go through this period of very radical change in European agricultural policy, there is no doubt that the industry, the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee and Parliament will reflect on the first year of



implementation. Such reflection is going on in every other part of the UK and Europe.

**Graeme Dey:** Is the cabinet secretary aware that the NFUS acknowledges, in its in-house magazine, that complexity was always going to increase the risk of payments coming later? The NFUS acknowledges that the complexity stems from meeting the European Commission's new rules, from the limited Scottish budget and from the NFUS's own demands for a three-region model, phased transition and coupled support.

Will the cabinet secretary say to what extent both factors that are outwith the Scottish Government's control and the Government's willingness to listen to the NFUS have contributed to the delay in full payments being made?

**Richard Lochhead:** I also note that the Scottish Tenant Farmers Association said:

"As stakeholders we have known all along that there would be challenges for Scottish Government with regard to payment timings, as was the case when the Single Farm Payment was introduced in 2005. The payment schedule that has now been indicated ... will now remove the uncertainties".

On the reason for the complexities of the new common agricultural policy, it is extremely difficult to fit European decisions to Scottish circumstances. We have uplands and lowlands, sheep and cattle and islands and mainland, and we have areas that experience severe weather problems and climatic conditions and other areas that do not. That is why we sat down with the industry and stakeholders to consider how we could mould the European policy to Scottish circumstances, and that is why we agreed with the industry that even if the price was to delay payments by a month or two—or whatever the timescale—we would have three different payment regions, unlike other parts of the UK, and we would implement greening support and voluntary coupled support schemes for sheep and cattle, while going through the big, radical reform of moving from historic to area-based payments.

Given all those ingredients, I think that we can understand why there are complexities and challenges. The key point is that we are getting there, and that £500 million in support that would not be there if others had had their way will be delivered to Scottish agriculture and food production.

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** Can the cabinet secretary tell us—given that he has spent £180 million on his computer system—what proportion of the 21,000 single application forms have been successfully processed, how many farms have still to be inspected, and when individual farmers will know which category of payment they will be in so that they can budget

accordingly, given the financial crisis that is affecting many of them?

**Richard Lochhead:** Sarah Boyack is right in that we have—from memory about 1,300—farms to inspect. Officials are working flat out on that and are making good headway through the inspections, which we have to carry out before we make payments to the farms concerned.

On the £178 million business case for implementing the new common agricultural policy in Scotland, that money is not just for the information technology system and it will be spent over several years. It equates to 4 per cent of the CAP payments over the next six years, and it is hoped that the system will last a lot longer than six years. We have to invest that resource, as has happened in other parts of the UK and Europe, to deliver within the complexities of the common agricultural policy.

As Sarah Boyack said, we have to go through all the applications so that we can get the degree of accuracy that allows us to make the payments. Because it is an area payment scheme, if we did not know all the entitlements, we would have to revisit applications and get refunds from many farmers who had already received their payments. That is why the wise and sensible thing to do is to pay out in two instalments, as happened in 2005, with a minimum of 70 per cent in the first payment and the balance being settled in April. That is the background.

**Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con):** Will the cabinet secretary accept that the inadequacy of the IT system—which has, so far, cost £10,000 per application—caused the process to be extended by a month, and that it is that extension that has led to the delay in the rest of the process. But for that, payments could have been made on time in December, as has become the norm.

**Richard Lochhead:** I fully accept that things have not gone well with the IT system, compared with what they could have been. That is a situation that is facing all Governments; we all have lessons to learn in relation to IT projects. We gave a month's extension because of the complexities of the new system and to give people in the sector more time to submit their application forms. The root of that issue, too, is the complexity of the new policy. If the policy had been simpler, the IT would have been easier. It was not simpler. It is a complex policy, so IT issues arose.

I think that I read somewhere that the Conservative Government south of the border has, in effect, dumped its IT system and is using paper for the transition, and it is not even having to go through what we in Scotland are going through—

compared with what it did in 2005—as well as this reform.

We have to get the payments out. The IT system is now working and we are working our way through the applications. The key thing is to get the £500 million of support out to Scottish farming businesses. We agreed with the industry that that will take a few weeks longer because of the complexities. As long as we get the policy right, that is what matters, and that is what we have done.

**Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP):** Let us not forget that farmers have in recent years been fortunate in receiving their payments in December rather than later in the payment window, which goes up to the following June, and let us not forget that we are where we are because of the more complex policy that has been requested by farmers and crofters.

Can the cabinet secretary confirm that the economic impact of delayed payments will be modest, as has been confirmed by the banks, and that most farms should have little difficulty in securing bridging funding if necessary?

**Richard Lochhead:** Angus MacDonald is right in that the legislative payment window that we have—which we have not mentioned and which some people have conveniently put aside—is 1 December to the end of June. We have had in past years under the old system a good record of getting payments out as early as possible in the payment window. Clearly, people are comparing our timetable for the new CAP with the fantastic success that we had in paying out at the beginning of the payment window under the former policy.

On the economic impacts, I have met the banks and they are comforted by the fact that they know that £500 million-worth of support will be making its way into the sector in the coming months. They urge any farmer who has problems to contact their bank as early as possible. I hope that all members who represent rural and farming communities will take that advice back to their constituencies. The banks will work with their clients, which should give us all comfort.

## Violence Against Women

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-14930, in the name of Margaret Burgess, on violence against women: 16 days of activism. I advise all members who want to take part in the debate that we will be generous with time this afternoon and that the Presiding Officers will be sympathetic to their expanding on any points. I call Margaret Burgess to speak to and move the motion.

14:25

**The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess):** Tomorrow is the international day for the elimination of violence against women, which marks the commencement of the annual 16 days of activism to eliminate all forms of violence against women around the world. That runs until 10 December, international human rights day, which is fitting given that violence against women and girls is one of the world's most grievous abuses of human rights. Tackling it is at the very heart of the First Minister's personal and political agenda. At the women in the world summit that she attended earlier this year, she expressed her passionate belief that violence against women and girls is not only a result of gender inequality but a cause of gender inequality. The Scottish Government is clear that we will never have true gender equality until we eradicate violence against women and girls.

It is a tragic fact that, today, females in Scotland and across the world are at risk of, and are experiencing, violence and abuse precisely because they are women and girls. In Scotland, gender-based violence continues to disproportionately affect women and girls, with 80 per cent of survivors of domestic abuse and 95 per cent of rape victims being female. Sexual abuse and harassment continue to be an issue, and women and girls from some communities are at risk of, or have experienced, the brutality of female genital mutilation or the misery of forced marriage.

Violence against women and girls is a broad issue that encompasses all those forms of violence. It is completely unacceptable and the Scottish Government is committed to preventing it and eradicating it from society. We have made progress in recent times. Domestic abuse, rape, sexual assault and other forms of violence are now widely recognised to be unacceptable, and those who commit such acts will find themselves faced with the consequences—not just through the actions of the justice system, but in the deep stigma that now attaches itself to the perpetrators of such abuse. That stigma acts as a powerful

deterrent, but it is not enough to systematically eradicate the problem.

That is why, in June last year, the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities published “Equally Safe”, our shared strategy to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls. It sets out our vision of a strong and flourishing Scotland where all individuals are equally safe and respected and where women and girls live free from all forms of violence and abuse and the attitudes that help to perpetuate them. We acknowledge and warmly welcome the cross-party support that exists for the strategy, which has been shown across the Parliament, and we are willing to accept Labour’s amendment.

The strategy sets out unambiguously that no woman or girl in Scotland should be subjected to violence or abuse of any kind and that no child or young person should have to live with gender-based violence or the impact of it. To achieve that vision, our aim is to work collaboratively with key partners across all sectors—public, private, charitable and civil—to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls.

Let us be clear that there are no quick fixes to this deep-rooted problem; it requires significant economic, social and cultural change over the long term, which calls for the sustained commitment not just of a wide range of partners but of individuals and communities, too. It is underpinned by a gender analysis that is based on the United Nations definition, which recognises that women and girls are disproportionately affected because they are females.

**Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** To the very great shame of the men here and throughout Scotland, it is not just that women are disproportionately the victims, but that men are disproportionately—overwhelmingly—the perpetrators of violence. We have to change what goes on in men’s minds as well as protect women.

**Margaret Burgess:** I absolutely agree. In many ways, the Scottish Parliament can show an example in the number of men who are highlighting that very fact—that the male of the species is the main perpetrator of violence against women and girls. That is recognised, and we must deal with it by changing attitudes.

Since the publication of our strategy, we have driven a step change in our approach to the issue. As I said, the First Minister has made it clear that it sits at the very heart of her personal and political mission.

Police Scotland is showing strong leadership in this area through the establishment of a national domestic abuse task force to target the most

prolific perpetrators, and the disclosure scheme for domestic abuse has had an excellent start since it was rolled out across Scotland at the start of October. As of last week, 227 applications had been received. I believe that that level of applications demonstrates that people have confidence in the scheme and are engaging with Police Scotland and other relevant services. The fact that the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service has a dedicated national prosecutor for domestic abuse confirms its strong commitment to bringing perpetrators to justice.

In addition, the Scottish Government has recently introduced into Parliament a range of reforms to strengthen the law, including provisions that will, if they are approved by Parliament, create a new offence of sharing private, intimate images, and within the next few weeks we will consult on the exact wording of a specific offence to deal with those who subject their partners to coercive and controlling behaviour.

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice has made it clear that the Scottish Government is committed to developing a specific offence of domestic abuse. We consulted between March and June of this year, and the views that we received in response to that consultation revealed that although there was broad support for the principle of having a domestic abuse offence, there was no consensus on how such an offence should be developed.

In light of that, in this year’s programme for government we committed to consulting on a draft specific offence of domestic abuse. We consider that the right approach is to listen to key stakeholders and to take forward the development of such an important new offence, informed by their views, so that a consensus can be achieved. A draft offence will be shared with stakeholders in the next few weeks.

Funding is at record levels—this year alone, we are investing £11.8 million from the equality budget to support a range of projects and initiatives, and earlier this year the First Minister announced that an additional £20 million would be provided over the next three years from the justice portfolio. That funding will seek to enhance support for victims of violence and sexual assault, and to widen access to specialist advocacy and support services for the victims of crime. It also aims to improve education and information resources to help increase public understanding of such crimes, and to reinforce a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse and sexual crimes.

Part of that funding has already been put to good use. An additional £2.4 million has been allocated to our prosecutors and courts service. That funding will ensure that any cases that involve domestic abuse will be heard more quickly. Trial diets in such cases will be set within a 10 to

12-week period by the end of this year, which will reduce to eight to 10 weeks during 2016-17 and onwards. That will reduce the stress and inconvenience associated with waiting for trial dates to call in court.

More recently, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice announced that £1.85 million has been awarded to Rape Crisis Scotland over the next three years to allow the organisation to expand its advocacy services across the country and to extend its services to Orkney and Shetland. That specialised service does not currently exist in those islands but, as a result of the additional resource, Rape Crisis Scotland will be working in partnership with Women's Aid Orkney and the Highland centre over the coming months to deliver and develop those services. Those are significant developments, real changes and a sign of our strong and enduring commitment to this agenda.

As a Government, we recognise that enhancing the justice system's response to violence against women and girls is not enough. We need to do much more, and it is through the effective implementation of equally safe that we believe real change will be delivered in the long term. I am pleased to inform Parliament that the violence against women and girls joint strategic board, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights, had its inaugural meeting earlier this month. The board has a prestigious cast of members, comprising senior leaders from across the public sector and third sector partners, alongside academic experts. The board will ensure that progress is driven from all sectors, that the work under equally safe is taken forward and that the key partners are held to account.

To take forward implementation, an action group on primary prevention has been established and met for the first time last month. I think that everybody will recognise that prevention has to be the way as we go forward. We have to prevent to start with, but for some time we will need to continue to support and fund the front-line services that are dealing with the very serious cases that come to them. However, prevention is what we are looking to for the future.

COSLA is leading a working group to improve the capability and capacity of mainstream and specialist services. At the same time, Scottish Women's Aid is working with the Improvement Service and others to ensure that equally safe is underpinned by robust outcomes and indicators so that we know whether we are making progress. The justice expert group met at the end of September and will be working to submit an action plan.

**Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** I have been listening carefully to the minister, and

I think that we all welcome the work that the Government is doing. However, is the Government looking at the higher incidence of domestic abuse in some cities in Scotland compared with others? The Government's figures show that Dundee city has 700 incidents per 100,000 more than the Scottish average. Will the minister look at why the incidence is so much greater in some areas than in others and perhaps look at the resources there?

**Margaret Burgess:** We will certainly be looking at that. We need to establish the incidence of domestic abuse over the country, then where it is happening in the country and then look at resources and targeting. Work is still being done on that, and we will certainly not disregard it.

We are in the process of updating equally safe to reflect the developments since the summer of 2014, and the joint strategic board will consider the update over the next few weeks. That emphasises that the strategy—this might help to answer Mary Scanlon's question—is a living document, and we will work with COSLA and others to ensure that it remains so and that we can maintain a relentless focus on improvement.

In taking this agenda to the next level, we recognise that the issue is not confined to the justice portfolio; nor is it a problem for the third sector to solve alone. It is an agenda that spans Government. As Minister for Housing and Welfare, I have an interest in ensuring that social landlords and homelessness services can play their part in early intervention and that the new social security powers that are being devolved to the Parliament are designed in a way that embeds flexibility and choice for women.

This debate coincides with the international day for the elimination of violence against women, but it is about much more than that important symbol. As I have illustrated, the debate also comes at a time when the Scottish Government and our partners are reinforcing that domestic abuse is inexcusable, entirely unacceptable and can never be justified. The debate also comes at a time when we are taking action to eliminate domestic abuse. Above all, this debate must mark the Parliament's clear aim and vision to eradicate from our society the scourge of violence against women and girls, so that everyone can live equally safe.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 24 November 2015, marking the start of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence; commends the ongoing contribution of people and organisations across Scotland and the wider world toward raising awareness and changing the outdated attitudes that still persist in society in relation to gender-based violence; notes continuing progress to take forward Equally Safe, Scotland's strategy on preventing and eradicating all forms of violence against women and girls; welcomes the inaugural meeting of the

Equally Safe Joint Strategic Board, co-chaired by the Scottish Government and COSLA, on 11 November; notes that, on the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the agreement of the new Sustainable Development Goals, women and girls across the world continue to experience violence and abuse, and calls on everyone in Scotland to play their part in creating a strong and flourishing country where all individuals are equally safe and respected, and where women and girls live free from all forms of violence and abuse and the attitudes that help perpetuate it.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):**

I call Elaine Murray to speak to and move amendment S4M-14930.1. Ms Murray, you have 10 minutes or so, with time for interventions.

14:40

**Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab):** I will start by saying a few words about the intention behind the Labour amendment. It replaces the word “welcomes” in the motion with the word “acknowledges”, so that the motion would read that the Parliament

“acknowledges the inaugural meeting of the Equally Safe Joint Strategic Board.”

We are of course very pleased that the board has met at last, but we are disappointed that it took 16 months from the strategy being launched for the inaugural meeting to take place—indeed it took place eight months after the original deadline for the interim report. We want to make sure that in future we make progress faster than we have done so far.

We also included in our amendment reference to

“the need for continued strategic funding for projects and organisations and for further legislation to tackle all forms of gender-based violence in Scotland.”

I hope that everyone in the chamber will agree that we must continue to financially support the implementation of the strategy and the organisations involved in it and that further legislation aimed at preventing gender-based violence is needed, although I suspect that there might not be universal agreement on exactly what that legislation should be.

The colour orange has been used for some time by the UNiTE to end violence against women campaign as a symbol of a brighter future in a world free from gender-based violence. I apologise for not wearing orange today, but I did not have a sufficiently warm piece of orange clothing to wear on a day like this.

The campaign considers this year to be critical. The United Nations sustainable development goals came into force in September, and ending violence against women and girls must be embedded in their implementation. Although violence against women was one of the 12 critical

areas of concern highlighted in the Beijing declaration 20 years ago, progress on tackling it across the world has been slow and uneven. Gender discrimination, inequality and stereotyping prevent women and girls from achieving their full potential, and the disrespect shown to females through those practices may lead to physical and psychological violence and is indeed a form of violence in itself.

One of the campaign’s asks of all Governments this year is to organise a public discussion to mark the occasion of the 16 days of activism, and I guess that this debate is the Scottish Government’s response to that request. However, campaigners are asking us to do a lot more than just talk to each other; we are being asked to take new actions and allocate resources—which is another of the intentions behind our amendment.

We have taken some actions over the past year. The Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2014, which was initiated by my colleague Jenny Marra and adopted by the Scottish Government, recognises that trafficking, including the trafficking of women and children for the sex trade, is a vile and serious offence that will rightly receive a long sentence on conviction. However, although that very welcome act addresses the supply side of that part of the sex trade, we still have to address the demand side, which “Equally Safe” recognises to be a form of gender-based violence.

The Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015 introduced a licensing system that enables local authorities to control the number of so-called sex entertainment premises in their area. That is welcome, because certain urban areas have suffered a proliferation of lap-dancing and similar establishments, and many of us hope that councils will set the number of licensed premises of that type at zero. However, the act does not address the reason behind the existence of that type of establishment, which is that our society accepts the premise that it is permissible and appropriate for women and girls to be objectified and for their sexuality to be sold principally for the gratification of men.

During the stage 1 debate on the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Bill on 23 April, my colleague Cara Hilton—who wished to take part in today’s debate but unfortunately had to drop out at the last minute—made an important contribution about an issue not covered in the bill, which was the display of harmful sexualised material in places where it can be viewed by children, such as on supermarket shelves. In her speech, she referred to the Girlguiding campaign that was run in advance of this year’s general election, which revealed that 75 per cent of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 and 48 per cent of seven to

10-year-olds—primary school children—believe that there are too many sexual images of women in the media. Those statistics are important, because they reveal how young women feel that women are often judged. Young women are not content to be objectified and have their worth classified according to the way they look and whether they conform to what is perceived to be sexually desirable.

The Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Bill, which has recently started its stage 1 process in the Justice Committee, is also welcome as it proposes to make crimes of violence, whether physical or psychological, aggravated offences when domestic abuse is implicated, which we hope will result in almost every crime committed against a partner or ex-partner becoming an aggravated offence. That has been welcomed, but many domestic abuse campaigners feel that, in itself, it does not go far enough and that, in addition to the aggravation, there should be a specific coercive control domestic abuse offence. That was contained in the pre-legislative consultation, and I understand that there will be further consultation on those proposals.

The bill also seeks to tackle the scourge of so-called revenge porn, although, like the term “legal highs”, that term is now considered to be undesirable. The evidence on that has been revealing in an unpleasant sense. Not only are images of people sent to partners—sometimes under duress—and revealed to others without their consent, there are other very unsavoury practices of which I was completely unaware. For example, upskirting and downblousing are when intimate photos of women and girls are taken without their knowledge and published on websites.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Does the member share my revulsion at the *Daily Mail*, which this week published what could be a sexual image of a woman in a bath, saying that it was one of the Paris suicide bombers? It was not that person at all; it was something that happened in a revenge porn context and is an exact example of how the media uses images of women in an entirely inappropriate and unacceptable way.

**Elaine Murray:** I thank the member for bringing that to my attention; I was completely unaware of it, but it sounds absolutely disgraceful and it deserves to be condemned.

We do not know who is viewing or contributing to the websites and, even though they are hosted in the US, we in Scotland must not be complacent about our attitudes to women and girls. We might welcome the fact that three of the five party leaders in the Scottish Parliament are women, along with half the Government front bench and half the Opposition front bench. That is good and I

hope that it sends out the message that politics is female as much as it is male. Women and girls here do not suffer the same inequalities in education, opportunity or fertility control as they do in other parts of the world, but everything is not okay here and it is not sorted.

Far too many young men, and possibly young women, learn about sex through internet-based pornography, some of which might be violent and all of which objectifies women. That presents a perception of sexuality that is not based on mutual respect and equality of esteem but on female sexuality as a commodity to be used and exploited. Counteracting that view is possibly more important than it has ever been because of the availability of that type of image. Many men of all ages are completely signed up to the respect agenda, and their voices are very important in counteracting those attitudes.

More could be done in this Parliament as in any other. In November 2013, my colleague Jackie Baillie led a member’s debate specifically on the need to do away with page-3 type portrayals of women by some of our newspapers. There were many excellent contributions from all parties in that debate but, two years on, we have failed to take action in a number of areas relating to violence against women and girls. The point was made during the passage of the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Bill and is being made again during the discussions on the Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Bill.

Sex education in schools needs to be updated to reflect the exposure of children and young people to pornography on the internet. It should focus on respect and consent and on addressing the malicious influence of some material that is available through social media. In my view—and this is not Labour Party policy—those aspects of sex education should be mandatory because all young people are at risk of being exposed to those influences.

**Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** I am sure that the member is aware that in many schools, certainly across my constituency in the Borders and Midlothian, the police go in and educate primary school children about the dangers of sexting and so on at a very early age.

**Elaine Murray:** Indeed, but even more about the way in which sex is presented in terms of respect and consent needs to go throughout the curriculum. We also need to address the constant bombardment of children with sexualised images of women and girls.

It is no surprise that lads’ mags are going out of business as the material that they used to contain is available in mainstream publications and on

advertising hoardings. However, some of the worst offenders are in publications that are aimed at young women and girls. I have been a bit shocked by some of the ways that I have seen women portrayed in the magazines that I have seen at the hairdresser.

There is still a need for further legislation and other actions in Scotland on many matters connected to gender-based violence. Some campaigners are pushing for more wide-ranging gender-based violence legislation. Perhaps it could be part of the programme for government in the next Scottish parliamentary session.

Gender-based violence is a spectrum of attitudes and activities, and I would be very surprised if any woman in this building had not at some time been the victim of sexual harassment, unwanted and unwelcome sexual advances, or physical contact or comments. We all recognise those feelings of embarrassment and shame and the reluctance to make a fuss in case we are overreacting. Was it just a laugh? Do we have no sense of humour? There is the suspicion that we brought it on ourselves by the way that we were dressed or the fact that we smiled or were too friendly. Did we appear to be asking for it?

This morning, we heard from victims of domestic abuse, and much of what they were saying was that, somehow, they felt partially responsible for what happened to them. I am sure that none of us want our daughters, nieces or granddaughters to have those same experiences. Attitudes need to change and legislators have an important role in that process—look at how the public perception of drink driving has changed because of legislative changes.

Women adopting sexist attitudes and practices towards men is no part of the answer. I was quite disgusted to hear on the radio recently about a hotel in the Highlands where male staff were objecting to wearing kilts because they were being sexually assaulted by drunk women. Drunk women attacking young men is not funny. It may be the way in which those women think that they can counteract what has happened to them, but it is not acceptable and it in no way contributes to tackling violence against women and girls.

Gender-based violence is a serious issue, and we all need to take it more seriously.

I move amendment S4M-14930.1, to leave out from “notes continuing progress” to “11 November” and insert:

“reaffirms the cross-party support for Equally Safe, Scotland’s strategy on preventing and eradicating all forms of violence against women and girls; acknowledges the inaugural meeting of the Equally Safe Joint Strategic Board, co-chaired by the Scottish Government and COSLA, on 11 November and the need for continued strategic funding for projects and organisations and for further

legislation to tackle all forms of gender-based violence in Scotland”.

14:51

**Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con):** I welcome the debate on violence against women, and I am pleased to support the motion. We will also be supporting Labour’s amendment. This is an issue that transcends party politics, and I am sure, as is evidenced so far, that that will be reflected in the tenor of the contributions across the chamber this afternoon, as has been the case in previous years.

There is clearly consensus that we must all work collaboratively to eliminate this abhorrent practice, which has no place whatsoever in our society. However, in considering the way forward, I want to first emphasise that violence against women is inherently complex. It encompasses domestic violence, sexual violence, intimidation and maltreatment. It manifests itself physically and psychologically, with both immediate and much longer-term consequences. It knows no bounds, and it affects women and girls from all walks of life.

There are many root causes of sexual bullying, but I want to address one in particular that has been highlighted by Girlguiding Scotland in its recent girls’ attitudes surveys on sexual bullying and coercion. The surveys found that one in five girls aged just seven to 12 has experienced jokes of a sexual nature from boys and 59 per cent of girls and young women have faced some form of sexual harassment at school or college. However, an overwhelming majority of girls said that they would be reluctant to report such incidents because of fears of reprisals.

Furthermore, around four in five young women agree that girls are coerced into sex acts because they are frightened their boyfriend will leave them if they do not comply and 71 per cent of girls are frightened of physical or sexual abuse from their boyfriend if they do not do what they are asked to do.

The survey also reported that teachers have dismissed incidents of sexual bullying as “boys mucking around”, when it is precisely during those formative years that such attitudes and behaviour should be corrected. I am actually quite appalled that any teachers could be saying that sort of thing. Equally, girls and young women need to understand what counts as sexual harassment and that it is unacceptable. Parents, teachers and role models must educate our young people now by dismantling entrenched and archaic attitudes rather than perpetuating them.

That is all the more important because the most recent Girlguiding Scotland girls’ attitudes survey

found that only 40 per cent of girls and young women aged 13 to 21 agreed with the following statement:

“I believe we can change society to be free from violence against women and girls in the future.”

That is a sad indictment that violence in all its manifestations has become normalised in our society, and it falls to us to reverse that worrying trend. I have a grandson of 15 and a granddaughter who will be 14 tomorrow, and I find it deeply worrying and upsetting that they are approaching adulthood in this continuing cultural climate.

How are we progressing? We must pay tribute to third sector organisations such as Girlguiding Scotland, Scottish Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland, which are all working tirelessly to advocate on behalf of women in Scotland. As politicians, it is our job to help them push the reset button. I very much welcome the Scottish Government's legislative commitment to tackle revenge porn and domestic abuse. I also welcome “Equally Safe: Scotland's Strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls” and the other initiatives that the minister discussed in her opening remarks.

There is still a great deal to be done, as the statistics on sexual crimes that were released last week demonstrate. As I am sure members will be aware, the number of sexual crimes that were recorded in 2014-15 increased significantly, by 11 per cent on the previous year and by 46 per cent since 2005-06, with cases of rape, attempted rape and sexual assault on a consistently upwards trajectory. Meanwhile, the outgoing chief constable, Sir Stephen House, has confirmed that, on average, a domestic incident is reported to Police Scotland somewhere in Scotland every nine minutes, and that such incidents consume roughly 20 per cent of all police operational time. That makes for dismal reading.

It is encouraging that victims of sexual and domestic violence have found the confidence to report those crimes to the police and are increasingly doing so. Women and men need to be reassured that they do not need to suffer in silence, and it is heartening that victims are increasingly seeking the help that they need. That is particularly the case, given that the Scottish crime and justice survey for 2013-14 found that victims most commonly confided in friends and relatives—at 35 per cent and 27 per cent respectively—with only 13 per cent reporting partner abuse to the police.

Police Scotland has introduced a number of welcome and notable initiatives to combat violence against women, including the nascent disclosure scheme for domestic abuse Scotland, or Clare's

law as we know it, which was piloted in my home city of Aberdeen and in Ayrshire. Police Scotland has also turned its attention to domestic abuse in young relationships, for adolescents between the ages of 16 and 18. Extremely worryingly, the 2014 Girlguiding girls' attitudes survey found that, of those polled, 35 per cent know girls and young women their own age who have experienced control or bullying from a partner, while 25 per cent know someone who has experienced violence from a partner. That is a disturbing trend, given that the Scottish criminal justice survey found that 14 per cent of adults reported experiencing partner abuse from the age of 16. More must be done to prevent that.

As we look to the year ahead, it is vital that we build on existing momentum by ensuring that the criminal justice system is robust in its sentencing of individuals who perpetrate violent and sexual crimes against women. Zero tolerance of domestic abuse is, I am afraid, being let down by zero sentencing in many cases. That has to change if victims are to believe that the system takes them seriously.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We turn to the open debate, with speeches of seven minutes, please.

14:57

**Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP):** The 16 days of activism against gender-based violence campaign originated from the first women's global leadership institute back in 1991. There will be a wide range of activities across the world hingeing on the “Orange the World: End Violence against Women and Girls” banner.

It would be remiss of me not to mention and commend Ann and her team at Rape Crisis in Hamilton, who serve all of Lanarkshire, and Heather and her team at Women's Aid in Hamilton, who also serve all of Lanarkshire. They have done absolutely fantastic work, in conjunction with me and other organisations in the Lanarkshire area. I see that you have a smile on your face, Presiding Officer, because you know the very people I am speaking about and the work that they do.

It is no accident that the campaign uses the number 16. From 9 November, women in the European Union symbolically stop earning for the rest of year, because there remains a gender pay gap of 16.3 per cent. On average, women who are working part time earn 34 per cent less per hour than men who are working full time. We still have to make a lot of progress on that.

Back in 1968—which I should say was a fantastic year, because it was the year of my birth,



if I can be so twee—187 women sewing machinists at the Ford Dagenham factory in east London struck against sex discrimination in job grading. The women had been placed in the unskilled B grade, although they did the same level and quality of work making car seat covers as the men, who were placed in the semi-skilled C grade. The women were, at the lower grade, also paid only 85 per cent of the male B grade.

Those women met a lot of hostility from their male colleagues and a confused response from the trade unions, but they held firm and gained in confidence. In the end, the Ford women won 92 per cent of the men's rate, although it took another 16 years and another strike lasting seven weeks to win a proper regrading.

The strike gave a huge impetus to the women's movement. In the years that followed, women's trade union membership soared, and the Equal Pay Act was passed in 1970. It is interesting that the Trade Union Bill that is going through the Westminster Parliament now would probably have rendered those sewing machinists' strikes illegal. That is just another reason why we should think very seriously about whether we should support a Trade Union Bill that will take away the rights of women who fought for them 47 and a bit years ago.

When it comes to women in the workforce, families and education, we are not seeing the progress that we need on pay, skills, opportunities and cultural attitudes. The Welfare Reform Committee has found that women are disproportionately impacted by welfare reform across a range of issues and benefits, because 85 per cent of all welfare cuts fall on women and children. In 2006, Britain was placed 9th in the world's equality stakes, but last year it dropped to 26th. That is a sad indictment of the Britain in which we live today.

It might be nice to think that we did not need a campaign such as the 16 days campaign, but that would be complete fantasy. It is certainly a blight on our so-called western democratic society that we are still fighting to move forward the struggle for equality, but we are not giving up the fight, as I heard in previous speeches.

We take a lot for granted: we are used to thinking that education is a public good and a fundamental human right that is recognised in article 26 of the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In Scotland, we have a far longer tradition of supporting free education for all, but the Tory Government that is in power at Westminster continues to deny that freedom to students and looks set to reduce the human rights by which we live. The repeal of the Human Rights Act 1998 is a repeal of women's hard-fought-for rights. If we make the world a

better place for women and girls, we make it a better place for men and boys.

In spite of the universal declaration, many children across the globe miss out on an education. With the increase in radical Islam, more and more girls are denied the opportunity to learn. We saw the fierce fight that Malala Yousafzai, the young Pakistani activist for female education and the youngest ever Nobel prize laureate, put up. She stood up for education and was shot by the Taliban for doing so, which is a vicious reminder of the price of learning in certain countries. A little girl with a book was so dangerous that men with guns sought to end her education. That says a lot about our world.

In 2014, global military spending stood at \$1.8 trillion, while experts cite a \$26 billion finance gap to achieve basic education for all by the end of 2015. Children and young people of all genders can face further disadvantage due to disability, race or ethnic origin, economic difficulties and family, whether in times of violent conflict, after an environmental disaster or during relative peacetime.

Girls and young women face early or forced marriage, which can cut short their education. They also face the threat of different forms of school-related gender-based violence, including sexual violence and abuse on the way to or within education settings, as well as discrimination in the availability of essential infrastructure such as adequate and safely accessible sanitary facilities.

"The political, economic, and social implications of the right to and denial of education must be at the forefront of the agenda for policymakers, communities, and concerned individuals. When we have women, girls, people with disabilities, LGBTQI people, migrants,"

refugees

"and indigenous people denied the right to education in safe and equal spaces, we as a world community stand to lose. It is imperative that for gender-based violence to end, we work to end all forms of discrimination."

That was said by Krishanti Dharmaraj, the executive director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership, which is the global co-ordinator of the 16 days campaign.

The Scottish Government has a duty to end discrimination and a commitment to doing just that. We have heard about that commitment and how the Government is working hard to fulfil it. The progressive approaches that we have taken to banning revenge porn—a personal campaign of mine in the Parliament—providing better support for the victims of violence and outlawing human trafficking are all important achievements and we are right to be proud of them.

Recent data show that about 38 million people are internally displaced worldwide, and that

16.7 million are refugees. Girls and young women in particular are the most adversely impacted by insecurity and crisis, with the most recent estimates showing that 31 million girls of primary school age and 34 million of lower secondary age are not enrolled in school.

Nearly two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults are women—a proportion that has remained stubbornly unchanged for the past 20 years, according to “The World's Women 2015” report. It is that lack of ready access to education that has prompted the global theme of the 16 days of activism campaign, whose slogan is

“From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World: Make Education Safe for All!”

Now is the time for all of us to join in advancing the right to education and challenging violence, discrimination and inequality in education at the intersection of gender, race or ethnicity, religion, real or perceived sexual orientation, socioeconomic status and the other identifiers.

Elaine Murray mentioned the colour orange. In ancient China, orange symbolised transformation and, in Buddhism, orange—or saffron—is the colour of illumination and the highest state of perfection. So, in orangeing the world, let us illuminate the world with education and transform it to its highest state of gender perfection. I hope that we can make some progress on that.

15:06

**Margaret McCulloch (Central Scotland) (Lab):** Today we mark the 16 days of activism that are about to begin and which will confront gender-based violence all around the world.

We are not only united in deploring such acts of violence, we are as one in aspiring to a better world: a world in which there is equality for all, a world in which women and girls can live free from violence, and a world in which attitudes and prejudices that fuel discrimination and gender-based violence are a thing of the past.

Twenty years ago, Governments from around the world met in Beijing and determined that they would

“advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of all humanity”.

They recognised that, for all the progress that there had been in advancing the rights and status of women around the globe, inequality persisted, with consequences for the wellbeing of all people. They reaffirmed their commitment to

“the equal rights and inherent human dignity of women and men”.

They restated their support for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on

the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. They also declared their conviction that

“women's rights are human rights”.

That was true then, it is true now, and nothing—nothing—that any abuser or aggressor can say or do can make it false. Today, together, let us reaffirm our support for the rights of women, for the rights of girls, for the rights of all humanity and for the cause of gender equality.

Twenty years since the Beijing declaration and the platform for action, we still live in an unequal world. A UN report on the progress that member states have been making found that there has been a strengthening in the law and in resolutions concerning violence against women and related areas, including human trafficking. However, global estimates show that 35 per cent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence perpetrated by their partner, or sexual violence perpetrated by someone who was not their partner. That is one in three women worldwide.

The report goes on to say:

“all regions have unacceptably high rates of violence against women”

and

“alarming, the majority of women who experience violence do not seek help or support.”

Victim-blaming attitudes are common and are a frequent barrier to ending domestic violence and violence against women more generally. Data that were collected across 37 developing countries suggested that 21 per cent of women believed that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she argues with him, and that 27 per cent of women believed that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she neglects their children. Even here in Europe, a survey that was conducted across 15 EU states found that 52 per cent of people felt that women's behaviour itself was a cause of violence. We still have some way to go.

We must challenge not only violence, but the prejudices that make it seem acceptable to so many people. We cannot delay. As a number of my colleagues have said, we have already waited long enough for the implementation of the equally safe strategy.

I join the Scottish Government in congratulating all the people and organisations across Scotland who work all year round to raise awareness and to tackle violence and discrimination. In my time as convener of the Equal Opportunities Committee, I have had the pleasure of meeting some of them, and I pay tribute to their work today.

The inroads that we have made in turning around some of society's most outdated and offensive views of women has not been down to the work of the Government alone: the leadership and perseverance among particular sections of civil society has not only informed the work of Government, but has been absolutely critical in changing attitudes in this country.

Finally, I want to address a particular kind of violence that I believe we can prevent, not only by shifting attitudes in communities both here and abroad but by having a robust enforcement framework: female genital mutilation. The Equal Opportunities Committee will be returning to the subject soon, but we have already heard that 120 million women and girls worldwide are living with the consequences of FGM. It is a practice that has no basis in religion. In many communities, though, particularly in 29 African countries where the practising population is high, FGM can be viewed as a way of protecting a girl's chastity before marriage or a woman's faithfulness afterwards. In communities where marriage is a prerequisite for social acceptance and economic security, women who resist FGM could face exclusion and vilification. There are women and girls who have ties to the practising communities who are at risk here in Europe. FGM is abuse—it is an act of extreme violence and it must not be tolerated.

Once again, I commend the good work of all those who champion the rights of women and girls in Scotland and around the globe. Twenty years on from the Beijing declaration, we still have a long way to go to achieve full equality, but I hope and believe that our shared sense of purpose will lead us to a better, gentler and more equal world.

15:12

**Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD):** I am sure that we all agree with the words of the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon who said:

“Violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable and never tolerable.”

Yet violence against women is still a truly global issue. It affects all communities, all races and people of all religions and none. According to the UN, one in three women worldwide has experienced physical or sexual violence in her lifetime. Worldwide, more than 700 million women who are alive today were married as children. Of those women, more than one in three—around 250 million—were married before they were 15.

It is a global problem, but as other members have said, it has manifestations on our own doorstep. Research shows that a staggering 43 per cent of women in the 28 European Union

member states have experienced some form of psychological violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. In the most recent girls' attitudes survey by Girlguiding UK, 59 per cent of girls aged 13 to 20 had experienced sexual harassment at school, college or work within the previous year. Those statistics are truly shocking, and progress towards the elimination of violence against women and girls is awfully slow.

The theme of this year's 16 days of activism is prevention. No one is born knowing how to discriminate—it is a behaviour that is learned. Unfortunately, it is also behaviour that is encouraged—by societies, by peers and sometimes even by family members. It is a widely acknowledged fact that the key to prevention is to start early, and to focus efforts on young children—girls and boys. The equally safe strategy recognises that. It says:

“Prevention challenges the notion that violence is inevitable or acceptable.”

It is important that we focus on boys because they are less likely to respect women and girls if they are not encouraged to treat them as equals. It is important to focus on girls because they are less likely to realise that they are experiencing abuse if they are used to being treated differently because they are female. The curriculum for excellence, with its focus on relationships, sexual health and parenting, will help to tackle some of the issues, but we need to increase the prevention messages.

A recent report by YWCA Scotland, “Status of Young Women in Scotland”, included a number of quotations from young women. One said:

““There are subtle differences for women. For example there was an attack in The Meadows [Edinburgh] and all the guidance and recommendations from the police etc. was aimed at girls, asking them to change their behaviour. It's this focus on the victim not the perpetrator, couched in 'it's for your own safety'.”

Another said:

“My brother is younger than me but he's allowed to stay out much later and to make his own way home. My parents say the different rules are for my own safety.”

“It's for your own safety”: six words that take the focus away from the perpetrator to the victim, or the potential victim; six words that tell girls that if something were to happen to them, it would be their own fault. Those societal attitudes are a problem and a major barrier to the work of prevention.

I note that “Equally Safe” says that one of the strategy's initial areas of focus will be primary prevention and, in particular,

“identifying additional ways of addressing the systematic inequality, attitudes and assumptions that give rise to violence and abusive behaviour, and scoping the costs

associated with this activity in time for the next Spending Review.”

I would be grateful for an update on that point from the minister in his closing speech.

A 2010 survey across 15 EU countries asked whether women’s provocative behaviour was a cause of domestic violence against women. On average, just over half agreed with that statement. The figure for the United Kingdom was 63 per cent. It is shameful that so many still believe that domestic violence is caused by the victim. Further research shows that across the EU one in four victims of sexual assault does not contact the police or any other organisation, because of feelings of shame and embarrassment. It should be the perpetrators who feel shame and embarrassment, but those are the attitudes that we are up against. Those are the attitudes that prevent progress on eliminating violence against girls and women.

The advent of the internet has made the challenges even greater. A recent UN report on combating online violence against women and girls said that an estimated 73 per cent of women have been exposed to some form of violence or abuse online. With increased information exchange comes a more interconnected world, but also true horrors. I will name but a few: online abuse, scores of vile images and videos of child abuse, online stalking and so-called revenge porn—an issue that Scotland hopes to tackle through the Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Bill. Unfortunately, the internet has allowed perpetrators of violence to find new ways to perpetrate their violence. New methods of violence require new solutions.

It is clear that a lot more still needs to be done, but I commend the work that is already being undertaken by the police, governments and local, national and international organisations.

15:17

**Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** I have chaired two justice committees—one in the first session of this Parliament and one now, in its fourth session—so I will focus on legislation that we have put through Parliament, although I am the last person to say that legislation is a cure-all. I note what the minister has said about trying to define domestic abuse in legislation and I wish her well in that. It will be difficult, but not impossible.

The Justice Committee in the first session introduced its own bill—now that is breaking news—which became the Protection from Abuse (Scotland) Act 2001. We did that because, at that time, someone could get an interdict against an abusive partner only under the Matrimonial Homes

(Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981. Therefore, they had to be married and in the matrimonial home. We wanted a power of arrest to be attached to all interdicts that involved any abuse, so we introduced that bill. We have moved on a lot since then, but that was a beginning.

Recent measures that have been brought before this session’s Justice Committee, such as the Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2014, have tried to do their bit by ensuring that witnesses—the main witness in a case is often the victim—have some protection in the judicial process from the minute when they speak to the police about what happened to the point of judgment and that witnesses are talked about and treated appropriately. They are vulnerable, so they should be taken through the court process in a fashion that they can understand. The language can often be bewildering.

If somebody has pled or there is a judgment, victims and witnesses should understand what that means. If there is an interim order for bail, they should know what that bail order means, because bail exists to protect them—I will come to that later. That legislation pertains to all victims and witnesses, but it is particularly relevant to people who are vulnerable because of domestic abuse, including rape and sexual assault.

In passing, I congratulate Chief Constable Sir Stephen House—we do not hear that often in the Parliament. He put at the top of the agenda bringing domestic abuse into focus and ensured that it became a priority that was delivered right down to grass-roots, front-line policemen. So it should be. Those officers are sensitive to the difficulties in dealing with such victims.

The Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015, which came before the Justice Committee, has been referred to. I will focus on the abuse of women in prostitution. It was important that we made it plain that trafficking may involve crossing continents, let alone countries, but trafficking can also mean trafficking from Scottish town to Scottish town—indeed, from flat to flat. Trafficking need not be international; it can be very local.

That act provides protection to those exploited women and young girls. Some of them do not know that they are being exploited because they come from such a devastating background that they do not realise what is happening to them. It is hellish where they come from, and what is happening is just slightly better. However, in our terms, we know fine that that is trafficking and exploitation. The act aims to make them feel secure in coming forward and to protect them once they have given evidence when serious organised crime might be involved, which it often is.

We are now taking evidence on the Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Bill. I make it plain that that is not about domestic abuse per se; it is about the aggravation of a crime that has taken place that involved a degree of domestic sexual abuse, which would bring a more severe penalty.

A separate issue has been raised before. In these days of Facebook, the internet, sexting and so on, much threatening behaviour and embarrassment comes from images on the internet—indeed, they may drive somebody to suicide. We are not sure whether dealing with images is sufficient; we will come to a view on that in due course. The bill is trying to make inroads into a difficult area in which the technology will—no doubt—be one step ahead of us. As someone on one of our panels said today, the ink will hardly be dry on the legislation before we will find that there is some other activity. However, we will try our best.

As I have always said, legislation is not the cure-all; in fact, we sometimes have too much of it. Legislation is just part of the prescription. Education at primary school is a huge part of the issue. Others have referred to a changing culture. We have now introduced Clare's law, which gives a degree of protection and gives the police discretion in finding out whether someone has a track record that a new partner should be aware of.

The legislation that we have now is not working. We heard evidence today from a young woman who, despite all kinds of orders—harassment, bail and stalking orders—lives a life that she described as "survival". She expects to see her ex-husband prowling nearby in a very threatening manner at any moment in any day. The Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Bill may help.

I and, I am sure, the committee have concerns that bail orders are regularly breached and that apparently only fines are imposed. On paper, the bail order might say not to approach Miss X, but Miss X will have been through hell for years with the person through the civil courts and the criminal courts. The breach of the bail order about not approaching her will be a major thing in her life that involves her entire family in providing unpaid security protection, as it were, for her. The failure of that approach is so serious that we should pick up on it.

I caution members—particularly, if she will forgive me, Nanette Milne—about suggesting that politicians should meddle with judicial independence. Even if we disagree with a decision—it might or might not have a good basis—we will not have heard all the evidence. I would always want to respect the lines that are drawn between politicians and the judiciary.

I have concerns about that case, and perhaps in general where bail is being breached and the orders that we have provided to protect women are not strong enough, but it must not be for us to tell the judges what to do. If what they must do is not in statute, we must make sure that through their judicial training they learn to see the value of their judgments and the weight that must be put on them. That is a small cautionary note, but I am glad that the debate has been consensual.

15:25

**Fiona McLeod (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** I found preparing for the debate interesting. As most members know, I like to look at the evidence and to bring before the chamber a lot of facts and figures. In the end, all that I could do today was come up with many thoughts that I have on the subject.

It is more than 40 years since I became involved in party politics. As a 16-year-old, 41 years ago, I identified as a nationalist, a socialist and a feminist. Reflecting on that and thinking about today's debate, I came to the debate an hour and a half ago quite pessimistic. Why, after all those years, are we still living in a society and a world in which there is violence against and abuse of women?

We have heard the stats from the minister and from many members and we are having the debate. An hour and a half ago, I wondered why, 40 years on, we are still having to have the debate. Having listened to the speeches so far, I am feeling more positive than I was at the beginning of the debate. I still do not think that I have the answers and I am still not sure that society has the answers. For me, there is still a question to ask.

Violence against and abuse of women is a question not of violence per se but of inequality. As long as we have gender inequality, we will have a power imbalance in our society. That is not just our society here in Scotland but, as we have heard from other members, societies around the world.

I fear that that power imbalance will always lead to an acceptance—or if not an acceptance, at least a debate about acceptable levels—of violence against women. Nanette Milne talked about the survey that Girlguiding Scotland carried out. That reminded me that in my first term in Parliament, 16 years ago, I was at a meeting—I know that there are members in the chamber who were with me then—at which we heard the results of research into young men's attitudes towards young women and whether violence and sexual coercion are acceptable.

All those years ago, we sat there and were horrified when we heard the results of that research. It found that 20 per cent of young men said that it was acceptable to coerce a partner into having a sexual relationship and that something like 40 per cent of young men thought that it was acceptable to give her a wee slap if she was out of line. We have heard those facts and figures again from more recent research. That is where my pessimism comes in.

The minister and other members have talked about zero tolerance of domestic abuse. From its first days in 1999, the Parliament has taken a strong stand about that, which it should rightly be proud of. We talk about zero tolerance and the minister talked about the stigma that men who are involved in domestic abuse now feel. I am not sure that that stigma is felt across all our society.

Elaine Murray talked about media images of young women. While our media present such images, how can people who are violent towards or who in any way abuse young women understand the stigma and shame that such behaviour brings?

Over breakfast this morning, I was reading the Sunday papers—that takes me until Tuesday. I was having a wee read of the agony aunt column in the back of the *Observer* magazine—it was breakfast time and my brain was not ready to engage in hard stuff. My goodness, let me quote what Mariella Frostrup said:

“Only this week I sat in a women’s networking event as a roomful of mature working women, from their 20s to their 50s, complained about the level of misogyny they have to deal with”

at work. She went on:

“I was shocked at how much a fabric of these women’s lives sexist abuse appeared to be and how many of them, otherwise able, robust and independent, felt intimidated about bringing it up with their HR department ... to be dealt with appropriately. The politics of the playground—bawdy humour, jostling for attention and elevated testosterone levels—appear still to be rife in the workplace”.

I think that we can all accept that such behaviour is still rife in the workplace, but I take exception to the phrase “politics of the playground”, because such behaviour is not acceptable at any age or in any situation. As Alison McInnes said, we must educate our young people at the earliest stage.

When we talk about zero tolerance, we should include zero tolerance of the attitude that requires little girls to wear pink and little boys to wear blue. Did members see how much time “Reporting Scotland” spent last night on the Scotland football team’s away strip, just because it is pink? The item took up six minutes of a national news programme, because people think that pink is for girls and not for our national football team.

The news item reminded me of a day when I was at Glasgow airport, after being re-elected to the Parliament in 2011. I was waiting to pick up my husband when my son, who was a young teenager at the time, said, “Oh mum, come and see this; you’ll love this.” Tesco was selling dummies for little children: the ones for little boys were blue and said, “My little hero”, and the ones for little girls were pink and said, “Little flirt”. “Little flirt” on a dummy for a baby? Being me, I got all angry and wrote to Tesco. I got an apology and Tesco said that it would never use that supplier again.

This is about zero tolerance right from the beginning. It is about saying that there is no gender inequality and about bringing up young children to believe that we are all equal and that we are all equally due respect.

As well as zero tolerance of violence against women, there should be zero tolerance of violence towards children. If we can smack our kids, what message are we giving them? Are we saying that when they get older they can just give their girlfriend or wife a wee tap?

I had loads more to say, but I will finish by telling members that I went to see the new film in the series “The Hunger Games” the other night—I wonder whether other members have been to see it yet. The audience was full of young women, which was quite an experience. I explain that I always go to the pictures with my young adult son, so I am not often in an audience of young women. The character Katniss Everdeen is a heroine for all those 13 and 14-year-old women. It was brilliant that, before the film started, there was an advert about getting young women into jobs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. That was amazing. Let us hope that it has an effect.

Stewart Stevenson talked about changing men’s minds, which is something that we must do. My generation of feminists talked about empowering young women, but we must never forget that we must not alienate and disempower young men so that they think that they can secure their rights only by using physical strength and violence.

I could have given lots of examples from my constituency, but I must finish. I came to the debate feeling fairly pessimistic and wondering whether the fight will ever end—and there are only four months to go in this parliamentary session. However, having listened to the debate, I see that although the fight has not ended, we will keep taking the battle out to the public, to make something happen.

15:34

**Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab):** As Fiona McLeod reminded us, great

progress has been made in the years of the Scottish Parliament on our response to violence against women. That was reinforced for me yesterday when I looked back at a debate that I took part in in the Westminster Parliament in July 1993. In it, I criticised the Scottish Office—as it was at the time—for a campaign that tried to persuade women to change their behaviour rather than challenging men.

Over the past 16 years of this Parliament, we have had a lot of cross-party consensus on the issue and there has been a lot of continuity of policy between the previous Administration and the current one. Throughout, there has been gender-based analysis of the issue, recognition that the problem is a very serious one that is prevalent and has been hidden away for too long, acceptance that it is overwhelmingly perpetuated by men and experienced by women and an awareness that it is rooted in persistent gender inequalities and that, therefore, action on violence against women must include action on a lot of other issues such as unequal pay, gender segregation, the objectification of women and so on.

I welcome “Equally Safe: Scotland’s strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls”, which was published in June 2014, and the four workstreams that have flowed from it—albeit belatedly, but let us not worry about that today. The capacity and capability workstream is really interesting and important because it addresses how we improve capacity and capability across statutory services such as health, education, housing, social work and so on. That is an issue that people have tried to address over the years.

I will give an interesting example. I am really impressed by a great campaign by the nursing society of Glasgow Caledonian University. I think that its blog will go live tomorrow, which is the first day of its 16-day campaign. It has been doing a lot of work, led by Louisa Power, the aim of which is to empower the next generation of nurses to support a vulnerable group of patients that they come across frequently in their day-to-day work and to have courageous conversations and confront the issue in order to help those patients, who are overwhelmingly women. I congratulate the nursing society on that work, which is a model for other initiatives that could take place across the public sector.

Another important workstream is on primary prevention, which has been discussed in many of the debates on the subject over the years, including the one in 1993 at Westminster. In that debate, I praised the Zero Tolerance campaign, and indeed I initiated a debate on its twentieth

anniversary. It led the way, but there are lots of other examples.

Christina McKelvie and I, as co-conveners of the cross-party group on men’s violence against women and children, will be hosting an interesting event next week, which members are welcome to attend if they can get to Parliament at 6 pm on Friday 4 December. Rape Crisis Scotland has been doing work on prevention and, crucially, working with young people and involving them. Interested as I am in all the work that we will see then, members will understand that I am particularly interested in four short films that have been made by students at Leith academy, in which they raise issues of consent, sexual violence and so on. Involving young people in preventative work is another important aspect.

The third workstream, which Christine Grahame talked about at length, is justice. That is on our agenda in Parliament through consideration of the Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Bill. We know about the revenge porn issue, and I pay tribute to Christina McKelvie for her work on that, and about the statutory aggravation where domestic abuse is a component of the offence, which Christine Grahame spoke about. In addition, a non-harassment order will be allowed if someone is mentally unfit to stand trial. I think that I discussed that issue in the corresponding debate last year, mentioning the very high-profile individual who highlighted the problem in relation to her experiences.

Still to come—there is some disappointment that it is not in the bill, although we understand the reasons for that—is a specific offence of domestic abuse, which the overwhelming majority of people who responded to the consultation wanted because domestic abuse often involves a pattern of abusive and coercive behaviour, and that is not necessary reflected in any of the disposals that are available. I imagine that that important new offence will be legislated for early in the next session of Parliament.

It is right to pay tribute, as other members have done, to all the groups that have led in this field. I will quote a couple of sentences, on another couple of issues, from a statement by Engender, Rape Crisis Scotland, Scottish Women’s Aid, the Scottish Women’s Convention, White Ribbon Scotland, the Women’s Support Project and Zero Tolerance, which are all national organisations. In their statement welcoming “Equally Safe”, they say:

“It is also important that the strategy explicitly acknowledges the impact of violence on all women and girls in Scotland and the different risk factors that may affect diverse groups of women and girls and their experiences of and vulnerability to violence. We look forward to the detail of this in the forthcoming action plan. In particular, we feel that refugee and asylum seeking

women, and women with insecure immigration status more broadly, should be explicitly recognised in strategic work to tackle and prevent violence against women and girls in Scotland.”

The issue of refugees is obviously topical at the moment, and the response to refugees needs to be gendered as well, not least because of the sexual violence that may have been experienced by some if not many of them. There is also the persistent issue of those whose immigration status means that they have no recourse to public funds. I am told that local authorities and, indeed, the Scottish Government are taking a hard line on that. I know that there may be legal reasons for that, but let us allow some of our great national and local organisations that work with women who are suffering violence to give some support to those women.

There are also many local groups. I pay tribute to Edinburgh Women’s Aid, the Edinburgh Women’s Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre and Shakti Women’s Aid. They provide local services that include refuge provision. With the demise of the supporting people money, funding is under pressure and another issue needs to be raised. Edinburgh Women’s Aid and Shakti currently have an 18-month contract with the council, after which the service will be put out to tender. I was most concerned to hear that, and I am glad that Scottish Women’s Aid is developing guidance on that with COSLA. They are making it clear that tendering for those services is inappropriate and is not required by European legislation. I hope that that is taken on board by the council in Edinburgh and elsewhere.

My time is just about up, so my final point is on an issue that has come up on more than one occasion in the cross-party group. We would like the UK Government, in the first instance, and perhaps the Scottish Government to sign up to the Istanbul convention. Various members have drawn attention to the fact that violence against women is an international problem, and the Istanbul convention is a European convention that we should sign up to. There is also the wider international agenda that was highlighted by the Beijing declaration, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, and there is an international campaign during the 16 days, the theme of which this year is the relationship between militarism and the right to education in situations of violent conflict. Christina McKelvie spoke eloquently about that. We are part of a great international movement because, tragically, violence against women is a big international problem.

Without patting ourselves on the back too much, we should acknowledge that the Scottish Parliament has made progress, but let us concentrate on what remains to be done.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am afraid that I have been so generous with time that I now have to ask members to keep their speeches to seven minutes or thereby, please.

15:43

**Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** The UN webpage entitled “UNiTE to End Violence Against Women” tells us that, every year, millions of women and girls worldwide suffer from violence, whether that be domestic violence, rape, FGM, dowry-related killing, trafficking, sexual violence or sexual violence in a conflict situation. It also graphically shows us what that means for women in the world today, citing World Bank data that a woman aged between 15 and 44 is more at risk from rape or domestic violence than from cancer, car accidents, war or malaria.

It has been a great pleasure to listen to the speeches from members who are experts in the field. I recognise the work that both Christina McKelvie and Malcolm Chisholm have done in the cross-party group on men’s violence against women and children and in the cross-party group on human trafficking.

Prior to being elected as a councillor in 2007, I had little or no understanding of the complexity and prevalence of violence against women. As a councillor, I was a member of the community justice authority and, as such, I was on a very steep learning curve. I remember discussing with police officers the pilot project to proactively visit known domestic abusers and offenders before old firm matches, and I learned about the spikes in domestic abuse around those big matches. Strathclyde Police reported that on such occasions there were up to 138 per cent more domestic violence incidents than on “ordinary” weekends. I hope that the official report will record my use of the term “ordinary”, because I use it very carefully.

The need for that successful intervention by Strathclyde Police brought home to me how dangerously “ordinary”, normal, predictable and recognised domestic abuse can become in our society. There is never an excuse or a cause for domestic violence, and it is never acceptable or “ordinary” for it to happen in our society. That is why I recognise Zero Tolerance’s campaign in this area. As Ban Ki-moon said:

“Violence against women is always a violation of human rights; it is always a crime; and it is always unacceptable.”

It was also during my time as a councillor, in 2009, that a conference was held in Lanarkshire on tackling domestic abuse. The keynote speaker was Evan Stark, who I am sure will be much more familiar to the experts on the subject in the chamber and those who have worked on it for some time. His book, “Coercive Control: How Men



Entrap Women in Personal Life”, is considered to be one of the most important research and policy reference tools in this area. His words on the subject are very strong. He talks about cases in which he believes that the pattern of violence is complemented by an extended pattern of intimidation, isolation and control. He says:

“what we’re really dealing with, although the analogy’s by no means perfect, is a kind of domestic terrorism. A kind of domestic hostage taking in which the victim has no outside to escape to because the supposed safe place, the relationship, the home, the family network, has been identified as the point of imprisonment and entrapment.”

I think that his work has significantly extended our understanding and knowledge of this area, and I look forward to introduction of the bill that might address some of those issues in the future.

As has been said, any kind of violence is a crime against our society—it is a crime against our humanity, if you like. However, I want to concentrate on the effect that domestic violence has on children.

In 2006, the United Nations Children’s Fund produced the report “Behind Closed Doors: The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children”, which explains that

“some of the biggest victims of domestic violence are the smallest”.

The report shows that children who are exposed to violence in the home may suffer a range of severe and lasting effects. It says:

“Children who live with and are aware of violence in the home face many challenges and risks that can last throughout their lives. There is increased risk of children becoming victims of abuse themselves.”

It goes on to say:

“There is significant risk of ever-increasing harm to the child’s physical, emotional and social development. Infants and small children who are exposed to violence in the home experience so much added emotional stress that it can harm the development of their brains and impair cognitive and sensory growth ... At an early age, a child’s brain is becoming ‘hard-wired’ for later physical and emotional functioning. Exposure to domestic violence threatens that development.”

The report highlights the fact that studies suggest that social development is also damaged, and that children lose their ability to feel empathy for others. They feel socially isolated, it can be difficult for them to make friends and they can be socially confused about what is acceptable behaviour. Shockingly, the report also says:

“The single best predictor of children becoming either perpetrators or victims of domestic violence later in life is whether or not they grow up in a home where there is domestic violence.”

So, it is absolutely imperative that we as a society look at and tackle those problems.

The Government’s strategy is an ambitious one. The “Equally Safe” document states:

“Equally Safe is Scotland’s strategy to tackle all forms of violence against women and girls: domestic abuse, rape and sexual assault; sexual harassment and intimidation at work and in public; stalking; commercial sexual exploitation such as prostitution, pornography and human trafficking; dowry-related violence; ... FGM ... forced marriage; and so-called ‘honour’ based violence.”

That is a big and ambitious challenge.

I finish with a quote from someone who has inspired me in my life and who perhaps lived some of the problems that we have been discussing this afternoon, Maya Angelou, who said:

“History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.”

15:50

**Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab):** I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the debate. I am pleased that there is general support for the Government motion, as amended by my colleague Elaine Murray. Equally, I support the Government’s publication, in conjunction with COSLA, of “Equally Safe: Scotland’s strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls”. I am pleased that the thrust behind the strategy is reflected in that document.

There is much to reflect on with regard to the shifts that have occurred in our society over the past three decades. As members have mentioned, there have been incidents across that timeframe that lead one to be depressed. However, we need to face the facts if we are to move forward and see real change in how our society deals with girls and women. Domestic abuse is, above all, largely about the exercise of power and control by men in their relationships with women in our society. The upside is that at least today there is acknowledgement that domestic violence is wrong and that violence against women is a violation of human rights—I think that any right-minded person in our society reflects that view.

However, the statistics that the Government produces annually make for fairly devastating reading because the number of domestic abuse incidents reported in Scotland seems to climb year by year; in 2005-06, 45,300 incidents were reported and the current figure is just short of 60,000. It is often reflected that the rise in the number of reports is due to complainers having confidence and being willing to come forward, and we get some comfort from that view. However, the sheer size of the annual number of people who come forward to report is disheartening, and the experience of the victims who survive those assaults is debilitating in the extreme and lasts beyond the incident itself.

Earlier in the debate, there was mention of the impact of old firm games. At one time, we recognised that there was a rise in the number of reports of domestic abuse on the days of old firm games. However, the fact that the old firm no longer meets regularly seems not to have had an impact on the annual numbers reported.

Within those annual numbers, it is grave to reflect on the fact that for women in the age range 16 to 21 who suffer domestic abuse and violence the figure is already in the region of 2,000 at 16 and rises quickly to 4,000 a year and then to 6,000 a year at 21. For women between 22 and 35, 6,000, 7,000 and 8,000 women a year are recorded as being the victims of domestic abuse. Even in the age range 41 to 50, 6,000-plus women a year still report domestic abuse.

In any terms, those are terrible figures to reflect on. However, when one looks at the incidence of domestic abuse across a year, one can see, almost as if there is an annual target to be met, consistent figures of 8 and 9 per cent per month being reported to the police.

We should not shy away from this issue and I am pleased to see that there is no suggestion in any part of the chamber that we should do so. It is a serious issue that impacts on every family in this country in some form, within their own domestic arrangements or through their relatives or friends, and we need to continue to meet it head on.

There are a number of issues that are not within the control of this Parliament or the Government. The fashion industry has much to contribute to changing attitudes and cultures. As was mentioned earlier, the objectification of women as a commodity for sale is something that we need to address week by week and month by month. It is not old fashioned to speak up when we see women being treated as commodities and used as fashion horses. In the entertainment and music industry, too, women can be objectified to the extent that they have no real personality as an individual and as a person with rights. Lap dancing and the use of photographs in our newspapers, whether illicit or commercial, have an impact on young men's attitudes to women.

I watched an episode of "The X Factor" only last week in which a man sang a pop record and, for some reason, behind him dancing on the stage were a host of women who had to be dressed in swimming costumes and high heels. The logic and culture of that passes me by. I will not go into the internet material that has already been mentioned, or revenge porn and sexting.

We need to ensure that there is respect for women within families. Girls' access to physical education in schools—for the development of their minds as well as their bodies—and their

opportunity to have their own space within the sports environment are limited. That needs to be addressed in order that they understand that they have their own presence and power within relationships.

I welcome the changes in the domestic abuse courts, but they need more resource and investment. The development of Rape Crisis, Women's Aid and women's refuges has been positive. The police have moved on light years in the past two decades in their attitude to domestic abuse through their task force and vulnerable persons database.

The Law Society of Scotland currently has a female president and its next president will also be female. I mention that because a huge percentage of women in the law profession are successful. Other professions should follow suit. I would like to see women comprising 50 per cent of all our professions within my lifetime, not in another millennium's time.

15:58

**Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):** On Friday I will visit Grampian Women's Aid, which is having an open day as part of the 16 days campaign and which has recently relocated to an office in my constituency that was previously occupied by Home-Start Aberdeen. I look forward to discussing with Grampian Women's Aid the work that it does locally. Ahead of today's debate it advised me that it is working with 390 women and 250 children—a figure that has doubled since last year. It attributes that to increased awareness, which has led to more women getting in touch. I suspect that that is replicated in other parts of Scotland and it indicates that the focus that the Scottish Government and the First Minister are placing on tackling the scourge of domestic abuse is having an impact, in that more women are seeking the support and help that they require.

However, there are still barriers in the way of those women being able to make contact. Grampian Women's Aid notes:

"a high percentage of women that approach the service ... don't have recourse to public funds. ... Welfare Reform has had a big impact on women who have experienced domestic abuse. Women experiencing domestic abuse face considerable barriers when trying to leave an abusive partner, including financial abuse. They are denied access to independent income, are prevented from working and are encumbered with debt. Access to financial support, provided by the social security system is therefore crucial in supporting women to be able to leave an abuser. The cumulative impact of reforms to the welfare system have acted to ... reduce women's financial autonomy, resulting in ... insecurity for women and their children."

We also have to consider the fact that women and their children are often forced to leave the security of their home environment, although the

home might not be secure because abuse is taking place there. They no longer have a fixed abode and find themselves having to rely on homelessness services to find somewhere else to stay. That can be a difficult time for them.

I welcome the introduction of Clare's law. The pilot took place in Aberdeen and Ayrshire but the scheme has now been rolled out across Scotland. Evidence from the pilot projects showed that it is an extremely important change to the law around the support of women who were at risk of domestic abuse from partners who had a history of abuse.

Nanette Milne talked about one domestic abuse incident taking place every nine minutes in Scotland. I figured that Stewart Stevenson would have done the sum, so I decided to check and that equates to 17 to 18 incidents of domestic abuse taking place in Scotland during today's debate. It is quite a sobering thought that more people will have been abused during the time of the debate than members of the Parliament will have spoken. That should give us cause for reflection.

I speak in the debate as the father of a young daughter. I look at the world that we occupy and the one that we are creating and wonder what lies ahead for her. I also think about what I want to see changed. Newspapers and magazines on newsagents' shelves will, on the one hand, lambast a woman for her appearance by saying that she is carrying too much weight and has let her figure go, while on the other hand, they carry stories and opinion pieces that say that women who dress in a provocative fashion or carry themselves in a certain way are opening themselves up to abuse and assault. Those are the kind of mixed messages that are coming out of every outlet at women and girls in our society.

I look at a society in which the people who take offence at rape jokes are somehow considered to be the ones who have a problem rather than those who think that it is okay to make jokes that are centred around rape. I also look at the effects that such jokes can have on those who have been victims of rape. Many such people have not disclosed the fact that they have been raped and can find themselves in an audience full of people who are laughing at the concept of rape.

I noted Elaine Murray's comments about *ZOO* magazine no longer existing. Danny Dyer from "EastEnders" wrote a column in *ZOO* magazine in which he advised a reader that he should cut his ex-girlfriend's face so that nobody else would want to date her. That kind of thing is being put out there.

I fear that we are creating a society that is becoming desensitised to such issues and does not see them for the horrors that they are. We are

talking as much about changing people's mindset as about removing such things from existence.

I support the campaign to end page 3 images. I support efforts to remove things like the *Daily Mail* website's sidebar of shame, which regularly sexualises girls who are way under the age of consent and regularly puts out other mixed messages. I support removing rape jokes from comedy acts and television shows. I support removing the idea that we should idolise singers and artists who objectify women in their lyrics. The point is that those things will always find a home and an audience as long as there are people who think that way. Until such time as we tackle head on the projection of such images and the pervading attitude that all this is acceptable, we will not be able to get to the heart of the matter.

I welcome the approach that is being taken to legislate in these areas, but this is as much about us taking a stand against those who do and say the things that we should object to. That will be just as important in the fight to prevent violence against women.

16:05

**Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** I welcome this debate to mark the international day for the elimination of violence against women and the next 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. I thank the Voluntary Action Fund and the Equality and Human Rights Commission for their briefings. As the debate has gone on, members have clearly emphasised that this is not a party-political issue but one on which there is broad consensus.

Christina McKelvie mentioned that this important international campaign originated from the first women's global leadership institute, which was co-ordinated by the center for women's global leadership in 1991. During the next 16 days, we have time to get together, to take action and raise awareness to end violence against women and girls around the world. This year is the 24th year of the campaign, which has involved thousands—almost 5,500 organisations have been involved, along with policymakers, Governments, UN agencies and countless individuals from more than 180 countries across the globe.

I am really pleased that we here in Parliament are helping to raise that awareness because the campaign has brought attention to issues of racism and sexism, and cultures of violence and homophobia; it has called for the implementation of human rights obligations, including the right to health and reproductive rights, and an end to militarism and gender-based violence.

I welcome the specific focus this year of the 16 days campaign on

“the relationship between militarism and the right to education in situations of violent conflict, in relative peace, and a variety of education settings, while continuing to make the links with militarism, as an encompassing patriarchal system of discrimination and inequality based on our relationships to power.”

It is absolutely clear that at the moment globally, militarism is having a significant impact, leading to a lack of education for millions.

In a previous debate in the chamber, I noted that Kofi Annan, the former UN secretary general, had said:

“Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation, and it is perhaps the most pervasive ... As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace”.

When we hear from the Voluntary Action Fund, amongst others, that this year in Scotland, 59,882 incidents of domestic abuse were reported to the police, and that in 79 per cent of those situations, women were the victims and men the perpetrators, it is clear that this form of violence is very pervasive indeed.

In 1979, the UN general assembly adopted the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It is often described as an international bill of rights for women and its aims have never been more pertinent. It calls for the realisation of equality between women and men through ensuring women’s equal access to and equal opportunities in political and public life, including the right to vote and the right to stand for election as well as access to education, health and employment.

On the right to education, there was global condemnation and revulsion after the attempted murder of Malala Yousafzai, who was targeted because, as Christina McKelvie mentioned, she was campaigning for a basic human right—the right to education—for girls in her home country of Pakistan. Such has been the impact of her bravery, her campaigning and her determination that she has raised awareness of inequality in access to education across the globe.

Clearly education benefits us all but sometimes it is taken for granted. However, its impacts can be transformative. When a girl in a developing country receives seven or more years of education, she marries four years later and has two fewer children. Each extra year of secondary education increases her wages by 15 to 20 per cent. It is clear that educating girls empowers girls. Education helps girls become active citizens and it helps break the cycle of poverty that traps so many women. Improving education for girls has to be central to any strategy that seeks to eliminate poverty.

We know that the right to education is a basic human right but it is not guaranteed. From the

dreadful situation that refugees are facing at the moment, we can see that education is affected by political and economic upheaval, poverty, climate change and war. We know that, globally, 38 million people are displaced in their own countries and there are more than 16 million refugees. It is therefore not surprising that 31 million girls are not at school at primary level and are missing out on education, and 34 million girls are missing out on lower secondary level education. What a loss of potential, opportunity and talent. It really is incredible that that is the situation in the 21st century.

Here at home, too, women become trapped by violence. Mark McDonald pointed out the impact that financial circumstances can have on the options for women, who can feel trapped in an abusive situation with nowhere to escape to. It is widely recognised that United Kingdom Government cuts have had a disproportionately negative impact on women. House of Commons library research showed that 74 per cent of the £14.9 billion-worth of cuts to 2012 to benefits, tax credits, pay and pensions came from women’s income. It is no wonder that women feel insecure.

That insecurity makes women and girls particularly vulnerable. We will all have read the stories this weekend of the abuse of Muslim women following the appalling terrorist atrocities in Paris. Many of the incidents that have been reported show that women who wear the hijab are receiving increased abuse and threats. We need a zero-tolerance approach to that extremely serious situation.

We need to make sure that our refugees exist, are funded well and that housing is available for those who need it. We need to make sure that our women’s agencies are fully funded. I thank those who have been involved in working for gender equality in years past and I look forward to working with colleagues and those agencies in the years ahead.

16:12

**Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** I welcome the Government’s acceptance of the Labour amendment, which gives us the opportunity at 5 o’clock to speak from the chamber with a single voice that leaves no ambiguity as to our shared view on the subject. Violence against women does not simply endanger women, although it clearly does so; it demeans men, who are the primary source of that violence.

Laws are one way in which we can tackle the problem, and there are areas where we need to legislate. I welcome the Government’s actions in bringing forward new laws, but the fear of

prosecution in those who perpetrate violence against women is likely to have a substantially lesser influence in leading to change than the other kind of measures that we need. Gathering evidence is a difficult task for the justice system to undertake, particularly when a lot of the violence is psychological as much as physical and when much of it takes place out of sight of witnesses. There is nothing much that we can do to address that issue.

The change that will make the greatest difference will not be a legislative change, necessary though that is in certain areas; it will come when we find ways to change men's minds. Alison McInnes is correct that focusing on female victims feeds a reinforcement, through females seeing themselves as potential victims and, more importantly in relation to men, by showing to men that females are victims, inferior and something to be dominated. There are dangers in a gender-based approach to risk management in relation to that kind of violence. Males' stereotypes of women can be reinforced if we do not take great care.

There are wider societal benefits from tackling male attitudes and behaviours that lead to the abuse of women and girls. A man who uses what he perceives as his relative power in fact demonstrates his weakness. A strong man or woman is one who is able to share their power—to stand back and let someone else have the space to be themselves. The man who has to enforce his will on women and use his power to abuse them is weak.

Using power to abuse women sets a pattern of behaviour among men that is likely to lead to such men also abusing people of different races, sexual orientation, faith and political views, and it perhaps even means—I have no evidence but I instinctively feel that it is likely to be the case—that they are more likely to be cruel to animals. That is because the disposition—the mental set—of people who perpetrate violence against women is likely to lead them into behaviours that go beyond that. Therefore, there is a much wider benefit if we can change men's minds.

The question is how we change men because, if we do not do that, we do not deliver much. First, and quite obviously, we must help the next generations of men grow up with different attitudes. I see some progress in that regard.

Recently, my four-year-old goddaughter, following a visit to Our Dynamic Earth, explained to me how the universe started. It was really quite a good scientific explanation from a four-year-old. She asked me, "Which comes first, the chicken or the egg?" and we debated that. Of course, she also asked how the universe came into being when there was nothing there. It was terrific that she was getting engaged in pursuits that, 20 years

ago, were thought to be essentially male pursuits. When I saw her again a week ago, we did a little scientific experiment together that involved dissolving crystals of salt in water. We saw them disappear and then we boiled the water off and saw the salt reappear. I gather that she went along to nursery school two days later and explained that to all her fellow pupils.

There is a wider issue about equalising our attitudes to people in society that are quite independent of their gender. However, men are today's problem.

We want to challenge attitudes and beliefs, which is extremely difficult. The psychological phenomenon that is called confirmation bias—the unconscious filtering out of information that is at odds with our established beliefs and learned behaviours—is a substantial barrier to change. If we are to persuade people to change their attitudes and thinking, we need to engage intensively. Much of that work must be one to one, and we can do that only with the people whose behaviours most severely affect other people in society. That is a limited approach and likely to be costly, so the alternative approach that we must take is to focus on corralling and restricting the unacceptable behaviours. That means shifting wide community attitudes.

I am an optimist by nature. I think that we might reach the tipping point on the matter in the relatively near future, similar to the one that we reached with drink driving. When I first started drinking, drinking and driving was basically just one of the things that happened—nobody bothered about it that much—but now it is viewed very differently in society. We must get to that position on violence against women.

I do not want the equality that could flow from women adopting the male behaviours that we have spent the afternoon criticising. The society that I want and that I hope we all want is based on mutual respect, changing behaviours and safety for all citizens in Scotland and throughout the world.

16:19

**Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** Tomorrow, 25 November, marks the international day for the elimination of violence against women.

This date was designated by a resolution of the United Nations in 1999. It might interest members to know that it was no arbitrary date plucked from the international calendar, and many women's rights groups used that date prior to the resolution of the United Nations.

It is on that day 55 years ago that three sisters were brutally murdered for standing up to an

oppressive regime in the Dominican Republic. The murder of the Mirabal sisters has become symbolic of female resistance and, in particular, resistance against violence towards women. Sadly, the Mirabal sisters were not the first women murdered for standing up against an oppressive regime, nor will they be the last.

We must be aware that women, and men, across the world are still fighting today to create gender-equal societies. When we remember the price women from all walks of life and from all corners of the globe have paid to try to deliver equality, we must also be reminded that the struggle is on-going.

Today, we discuss the 16 days of activism campaign that runs from tomorrow until 10 December—human rights day. The purpose of this campaign, which is also launched by the United Nations, is to raise public awareness of violence against women and girls, and to increase the political will and the resources available in order to prevent and end such violence.

I put it to the chamber today that we use the debate not only, and very importantly, to raise the issue in Parliament and discuss the topic, but to take that further step to form a united political desire, across all parties, to do all that is within our powers to eradicate violence against women and girls.

On that note, I would like to express support for the Scottish Government's campaign on the back of "Equally Safe", Scotland's strategy on preventing and eradicating all forms of violence against women and girls. However, I would like to reiterate concerns over the delay in the implementation and funding of the strategy. Government delays in implementing a strategy of this level of importance are unacceptable. I was pleased to hear the minister, in her opening remarks, talk about some progress that has been made recently, and I hope that that momentum will be continued.

The cross-party support for the strategy shows a united political front for tackling violence against women, and we cannot let bureaucracy stand in the way of such progress. There is no place for gender-based violence in 21st-century Scotland, and we must work alongside all nations on earth to ensure that there is no place for gender-based violence anywhere on this planet.

It is staggering that, globally, one in three women and girls experiences some form of physical or sexual violence at some point in her life. That figure is not reserved to some distant notion of women living in gender-repressive nations. It could be women we encounter in our everyday lives—grandmothers, mothers and daughters. It is women beaten behind closed

doors by family members in their own homes. It is women harassed on the street for the way that they dress. It is women assaulted at work by the hands of their employers. It is women who receive death threats and intimidation on the internet.

We still live in a world where violence against women is commonplace and campaigning against such violence will not stop until what is currently the commonplace becomes the obsolete. This is why collaborative international work with an agreed agenda is essential.

I welcome the newly launched sustainable development agenda, which has replaced the millennium development goals. In this post millennium development goals world, it is important that we do not lose sight of the original aims set out in those goals.

I am glad that the new sustainable development agenda has goals that, for the first time, include specific targets and indicators on ending violence against women. I highlight the importance today of working on the sustainable development goals as a key method of reducing inequality and, in particular, violence against women.

I call on the Scottish Government to consider the implementation of further legislation to ensure that Scotland meets all the targets that are set out in the goals. We must join up existing legislation and ensure that Scotland provides a firm legislative framework that tackles violence against women in all its forms and does not allow anything to slip through the cracks.

The UN resolution that I mentioned earlier agreed the international day for the elimination of violence against women and recognised that violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of their full advancement. It also recognised that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into subordinate positions compared with men. That historically unequal power has dissipated somewhat in many western nations over the past century, and I believe that the key to that shift towards a more equal society has been driven largely through education.

We are privileged in the west with our enviable educational facilities. One of the main problems throughout the world is a lack of access to education and, in particular, a lack of access to education for women and girls. That is why campaigns such as a world at school, which was set up by the Office of Gordon and Sarah Brown, are essential to raise awareness of the challenges that many children face in obtaining education. Around 31 million girls are denied their right to an

education. That cannot continue. It is no surprise then that, this year, 16 days of activism campaigners have called not only for an end to gender-based violence but for an end to violations of the right to an education.

While poor access to education for women helps to drive inequality, poor education for men helps to reinforce patriarchal notions of male superiority over women. It is essential, then, that men around the globe are challenged and educated on their attitudes to and treatment of women. We must challenge stigmatisation where it is evident, and we must work with societies and cultures from every walk of life in order to broaden horizons and challenge concepts of male dominance. The issue of violence towards women is not unique to any one nation or culture. To varying degrees, differing attitudes are prevalent in every nation on earth. Tackling that violation of human rights requires a global solution.

I am proud today to speak in support of the 16 days of activism campaign. Since its inception in 1991, it has seen involvement from around 5,500 organisations, policy makers, UN agencies and countless individuals from more than 180 countries. I appreciate the symbolism of connecting the international day for the elimination of violence against women with human rights day. We must all be aware that any violence towards women is not just a women's issue; it is a violation of human rights. It is shameful that, in 2015, we must still campaign on violence against women.

I have the utmost respect for the dedication of the campaigners who work tirelessly to put an end to such violence. I would also express solidarity with every woman and man who is working to challenge the status quo and push for a gender equal world in which violence to women is no longer an issue.

16:26

**Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP):** I, too, am pleased to speak in the debate after so many serious and affecting contributions from throughout the chamber.

I start with a quote from article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, penned in 1948. It says:

"Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms ..., without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."

On paper, rights for men and women are equal. However, nearly 70 years on from UDHR, and 20 years on from the fourth world conference on women in Beijing, where Hillary Clinton gave her famous "Women's rights are human rights" speech, it is clear that the reality on the ground

does not match the rhetoric. Although it can be easy to think of that as a problem for developing countries, it is true across the globe.

Some of the figures close to home are stark. For example, domestic abuse is still a huge problem here in Scotland, affecting an estimated one in six women in our society. Last year, nearly 60,000 incidents of domestic abuse were recorded by Police Scotland—that is one incident recorded every 10 minutes. What we must bear in mind is that those are likely to be conservative figures, as many domestic violence incidents go unreported.

The importance of eradicating violence against women is summed up by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who said:

"Violence against women continues to persist as one of the most heinous, systematic and prevalent human rights abuses in the world. It is a threat to all women, and an obstacle to all our efforts for development, peace and gender equality in all societies."

What lies at the heart of violence against women, in all societies, is gender inequality. Systematic exclusion from all levels of the decision-making process has led to the continued subordination of women as a consequence of stereotypes and traditional practices. As other members have said, in order to eradicate violence against women, we must first eradicate that inequality.

I am proud that the work that the Scottish Government is doing is aimed at tackling all forms of violence against women and effecting systemic change that will overcome historical inequalities.

For example, "Equally Safe" is the strategy through which the Government aims to provide a framework to create a Scotland where women feel safe and equal. The strategy recognises that men and boys also experience violence, but it aims to highlight that simply being female can lead to discrimination and disadvantage. As other members have said, the framework encompasses the full spectrum of violence against women and girls, including domestic abuse, rape, commercial sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. The national health service, local authorities and the criminal justice system are all called upon to align their work with the goal of creating a country where women live free from violence and the attitudes that perpetuate it.

The review of the justice system that has been brought about under the strategy has led to reform of the law relating to sexual offences through the Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Bill. The bill is very important, as it will not only strengthen the power of the police and the courts to take action against perpetrators of abuse, harassment and sexual offences, but create a

specific offence that will allow us to tackle the rise of so-called revenge porn.

The Government has announced that £20 million will be invested in a range of measures to tackle gender-based violence, with £2.4 million allocated to the Scottish Court Service to ensure that domestic violence cases are heard more quickly, and £1.85 million awarded to Rape Crisis Scotland, which is particularly welcome as it will allow it to expand its advocacy services over the next three years. The funding will see rape crisis services in Orkney and Shetland for the first time, which highlights the fact that the issue affects women who live in every corner of the country. Women who live in rural areas historically have not been afforded the same access to services as those who live in more urban parts of the country. Patriarchal culture exists in every community and can make it difficult for women to speak out and report incidents of violence, because of fear of repercussions.

If we are to tackle the issue across society, we require long term social, cultural and attitudinal change. Measures taken by the Government, such as appointing a gender-balanced cabinet, expanding childcare and campaigning for gender equality in the boardroom will all contribute to that change in attitude.

I will repeat Alison Johnstone's point: violence against women can also be economic. It is worth repeating that welfare reforms are having such a disproportionate effect on women. That will be debated in the Parliament this week, when we consider the Welfare Reform Committee's report on the topic. The Fawcett Society reported that 74 per cent of the money that has been saved through benefit and tax changes since 2010 has been taken from women.

Globally, the economic crisis that began in 2008 has had devastating consequences for women. During times of economic pressures, more women and girls—in our country and in low-income countries—are likely to suffer as a result of having less work. They are also more likely to be taken out of school, and they are first to lose out when there is less food for the family and in terms of access to medicine. Often they are in such precarious positions that they enter into prostitution, which of course puts them at more risk of violence and exploitation.

It is worth remembering that we are behind on the millennium development goals because of the global recession. The goals are particularly important to women, which is why I appreciate the global aspect of this debate on violence against women.

16:34

**Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):**

On behalf of my party, I very much welcome the consensual tone in the chamber. I acknowledge the work that the Government is doing. Whether it is doing it fast enough is another story, but I very much welcome the progress that is being and will be made.

There have been too many good speeches to mention. Elaine Murray, Christine Grahame and Malcolm Chisholm made excellent contributions, but I make a special mention of Alison McInnes, who deservedly won an award at the Scottish politician of the year awards last week. Well done, Alison. [*Applause.*] We are all very proud of her.

Members of all parties clearly recognise that, although significant progress has been made in overcoming the scourge of violence against women, we still have a way to go. I think that we can all agree on that.

As others have said, violence against women manifests itself in many different ways. It manifests itself in physical, sexual and psychological ways. As Christine Grahame mentioned, cyber abuse is becoming more common. There is stalking, sexual harassment and intimidation, as well as forced marriages and honour-based violence.

The impact of domestic abuse and domestic violence reaches far beyond the confines of the home. The 16 days of activism campaign, which begins this week, has given some startling statistics about how domestic violence affects women in the workplace. Some 58 per cent of abused women miss at least three days of work a month; 56 per cent of abused women arrive late for work five times a month; and 96 per cent of domestic abuse survivors say that their abuse has affected their ability to work. I know that money does not come into it, but the campaign has given figures that show that domestic violence costs UK businesses around £2 billion a year in absenteeism, lost productivity and turnover.

Something that is so complex requires a multifaceted and co-ordinated response from law makers, those on the front line, the third sector and other individuals and agencies. Their combined efforts have helped victims to deal with the fallout of the violence that they have been subjected to and ensured that those women are not defined by their ordeals and that the perpetrators have felt the full force of the law. We can all try to be vigilant in the workplace and elsewhere, to recognise the signs of abuse, and to offer much-needed support, whether the victim is male or female.

I am pleased that, as we improve ways of detecting and dealing with domestic abuse, the



focus is increasingly shifting to prevention. Several members have mentioned Clare's law, which gives members of the public the right to ask the police when they suspect that their partner could pose a risk to their safety and often that of their children. Nanette Milne mentioned the pilots in Aberdeenshire and Ayrshire.

We need to be mindful that, although 79 per cent of incidents of domestic abuse had a female victim and a male perpetrator last year, 18 per cent of victims were male. That is an increase of 11 per cent in the past decade. According to the 16 days of activism campaign, 25 per cent of women and 16 per cent of men will experience domestic abuse during their adult lifetime. I found that statistic quite startling.

Domestic violence against women and men in same-sex couples should also be acknowledged. In the past year alone, 7 per cent of women and 5 per cent of men have experienced domestic violence. Those are deeply worrying statistics. As Graeme Pearson said, many people are reluctant to come forward, although I think that that is changing. I remember the days when the police would be called and would say, "It's just a domestic. Sort it out yourselves." Unfortunately, that led to the behaviour continuing. There are many more people out there who are suffering in silence and are perhaps almost too loyal for their own good.

I have mentioned some figures. As I came into the chamber, I picked up a booklet with Scottish Government statistics. I was shocked—I raised this matter when the minister was speaking—that for incidents of domestic abuse per 100,000 population recorded by the police, the Scottish average was 1,120, but there are areas such as Dundee, which had 1,703 such incidents, or 700 above the Scottish average, and other areas such as Stirling, which had about half that number, at 857 incidents. Where there is a particular problem, I hope that the Government will ensure that it understands why, work with the agencies concerned and ensure that resources are allocated accordingly. The worrying statistics on domestic abuse that were published last month by Police Scotland showed that, while the number of people reporting incidents is on the rise, only 54 per cent of the incidents recorded by the police resulted in a prosecution last year.

Finally, I want to pick up on what Stewart Stevenson was saying and to thank him for that. We rightly focus on the victims, but unless we get the perpetrators to address their unacceptable, heinous behaviour, there will simply be a repetition of the crime. I welcome the fact that Stewart Stevenson raised that issue—the victims need help, but the perpetrators need help also. As Stewart Stevenson said, the alternative to not

helping them is to accept that they will go on repeating their violence.

16:41

**Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** I welcome the debate and believe that it has been a very good one. There is general agreement that violence against women is caused by gender inequality—an imbalance of power leading to an abuse of power.

Violence against women takes many forms. In individuals it can include psychological, coercive control, financial control, isolation leading to control of movement, and physical violence. However it is societal as well, through the commodification, exploitation and portrayal of women. Graeme Pearson mentioned "The X Factor", which is a family programme but it influences the attitudes of young men towards women.

Gendered attitudes are ingrained early on. Fiona McLeod talked about dummies for baby boys and girls. I think that we have all had difficulties when we look for things to buy for young girls and boys—we find that they are gendered at a very early age. That does not help gender inequality. The statistics are horrifying, and more so when you take into account that physical violence is often the very tip of the iceberg. Emotional control and the like are much more prevalent and they are more difficult to quantify and to prosecute.

If we want to eliminate violence against women, we need true equality: equality in pay, in the home and in every walk of life. If there is no power imbalance then power cannot be abused. Stewart Stevenson and Graeme Pearson talked about men being the perpetrators of violence against women. That is right and we need to tackle the attitudes that men have towards women.

Many speakers talked about how relationship education in schools is inadequate, and about young people getting their sex education from pornography. As Elaine Murray said, young people are not learning about respect and consent in sex education. I recommend the Thames Valley Police video that compares consent to a cup of tea. It is really powerful and brings home a lot of those views. I think that it is available on Facebook—it is probably popping up on a Facebook close to everybody. Watch it, and recommend it to schools and young people to whom you are speaking.

Alison McInnes talked about the rules for girls, and the societal attitudes that blame women for violence against them. They blame them for their behaviour and for their alcohol intake, and try to teach them how to avoid being attacked rather than dealing with the attackers.

Our society talks about women's dress all the time. There is talk about women who wear miniskirts; there is also talk about women who wear the hijab. Every form of women's dress seems to be open to criticism and debate, but the same thing does not apply to what men wear. What a woman is wearing is not an excuse for abusing her.

Nanette Milne and Fiona McLeod talked about the Girlguiding Scotland attitudes survey. It is frightening to hear the attitudes that are expressed not only by some young men but by some young women. It strikes me that this is a new phenomenon and that every generation and culture finds a new and imaginative way to control women, especially their sexuality. That is something that we must be careful about. Year on year we debate violence against women, but we must be aware that year on year there are new ways of being violent towards women. We need to attack the new forms of abuse as well as the historical causes.

As many members said, violence against women is not a women's problem but a problem with men. We need to tackle that, with men. We need to teach them how to behave, and we need to teach them about respect, consent and equality. That is really important.

Scottish Labour supports the Scottish Government and COSLA's equally safe strategy. It is right that we debate it, and we want to re-emphasise our unity in that regard. However, it would be remiss of us not to express concerns that we have about the strategy's implementation.

We have concerns about the delay in implementing funding for the strategy. Voluntary organisations—indeed, some statutory organisations, too—need to know where their funding is coming from. They need to know about the leadership and funding of the strategy. They need security and to know that they will continue to be supported. Last year, Scottish Women's Aid groups were given their funding allocations only a couple of weeks before the end of the financial year. That is not right. People who are fighting violence against women should be able to focus on the work that they are doing rather than having to focus on their jobs.

Malcolm Chisholm mentioned tendering. It is not appropriate that support services for women who suffer violence are put out to tender, because the issue is not only the service but the ethos of the organisation that provides it and the organisation's knowledge and understanding of the issues.

Elaine Murray talked about the delay in setting up the equally safe joint strategic board, which was set up a whole 17 months after the publication of "Equally Safe". Why was there such a delay?

What is the new date for an interim report? If the board is to decide where funding priorities lie, we need the report sooner rather than later.

An issue that has not been mentioned is contact, which is often used by an abusive partner to continue the abuse. An abusive partner will grill the children for information about where they live and then use the information to continue to pester and abuse their former partner. An abusive partner will cancel or change arrangements, to continue to exercise control over their ex-partner. Other countries recognise the damage that such behaviour does to children. Can we address the matter and ensure that the courts do not give access until they are convinced that it will not be used to continue the abuse?

We also need a quick and easy means of suspending access when abuse occurs, to give time for the abuse to be investigated before access is revoked. Too often, I hear from mothers who have to send their children to stay with fathers who continue to abuse them—and, in some cases, the children—and who are powerless to prevent access, because they would be in contempt of court if they tried to do so. That is a horrendous situation to be in, and we must address the issue quickly.

We would like comprehensive implementation of the equally safe strategy and new laws to tackle all forms of violence against women. The Scottish Government has introduced a lot of legislation, which we have talked about in this debate, on matters such as FGM, forced marriage and lap dancing. There was the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Bill, which built on a proposal from Jenny Marra. It is unfortunate that the bill did not deal with demand in relation to sexual exploitation, which is something that the Government needs to address.

In the context of equally safe, we have the Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Bill. The bill has been watered down and is very much limited to revenge porn. Its aims in that regard are worthy, but it is not the comprehensive bill that we were promised. The Government has talked about going out to consultation again on coercive control. We need to know when that consultation will take place and when a bill will be introduced, because that is really important in dealing with domestic abuse.

I believe that the Parliament can unite around "Equally Safe", but we think that it is only right that we point out our disappointment about the delays in its implementation—the delay in setting up the joint strategic board to implement the funding and the delay in meaningful legislation being introduced. The many voluntary organisations that work in the area need to know where their funding is coming from and indeed the direction of travel.

The Scottish Government has our full support in implementing “Equally Safe”; we simply ask that it be given priority.

16:50

**The Minister for Local Government and Community Empowerment (Marco Biagi):** It is a privilege to add my voice to the many other voices that have united today in their condemnation of violence against women. I do so cautiously, in the full awareness that it is a voice that is an octave or so lower than many, although not all, of the voices that preceded it. On an issue that is so interlinked with the fundamental inequalities between genders, it is easy to hesitate for a moment. As a man speaking on the issue, do I just disempower women further?

We heard in the debate, and I hope that all members will agree, that men have a critical role in this. Just as everybody has to be empowered to speak up, men have to be encouraged to speak out and challenge the unacceptable attitudes and behaviours of other men. All men have mothers, sisters, nieces or other female relatives, but it would be a stark society where respect for women came only because of family. Is our common humanity not enough? Respect for other human beings says that this is violence and cruelty and it is unacceptable.

The Scottish Government wants all lives to be free of violence and discrimination, whether they are the lives of people who live here in Scotland or the lives of the 35 per cent of women and girls around the world who experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. Tomorrow is the international day for the elimination of violence against women, and today’s debate has had an international flavour—for example, Malcolm Chisholm cited the Istanbul convention. It is for the UK Government to be the state party to that, but we certainly believe that it sets a standard on international consideration of the issues.

As a minister of our Government here in Scotland, I am proud of our record on challenging and tackling violence against women. Labour’s amendment calls for funding, and I am glad to say that we already have a strong record on that, with £11.8 million in 2015-16 and a further £20 million announced by the First Minister in March.

Some of the things that that funding pays for are specific support for children, which Clare Adamson highlighted as an issue; strategic funding to Scottish Women’s Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland, with the 14 rape crisis centres and new services in Orkney and Shetland; specialist advocacy; work with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender and ethnic minority communities; a national helpline; a network of almost 2,000 young mentors in

secondary schools; a specialist domestic abuse court; training for NHS staff to enable them to spot abuse; a £3 million fund for local projects; the Scottish Refugee Council’s work on female genital mutilation; and much more. We as a country have a record that we can be proud of in taking action.

I pay tribute to the Equal Opportunities Committee’s work on addressing female genital mutilation, which Margaret McCulloch highlighted. Early in 2016, our multi-agency team will publish an action plan on the topic. That is part of the equally safe plan to take forward the nine recommendations that were made in the UK report on tackling FGM.

It is important to make the point that, although equally safe is a new strategy, it builds on work that has been on-going. I draw a distinction between the governance of equally safe and the meetings that that involves and the action that is being delivered. There are four workstreams. Malcolm Chisholm recognised the work that the one on capacity and capability does, but we should also recognise that that workstream emerged from an existing group of the Scottish joint council.

In considering the four workstreams, I note that everybody talked about the one on prevention. Those involved met in October; they are from many of the groups that are working in the field. That workstream is about tackling attitudes in society and finding ways to turn around some of the things that have been highlighted, such as the sexualised images of women that jump off every supermarket shelf, on which Elaine Murray quoted Cara Hilton. Graeme Pearson summed it up eloquently when he spoke of women being treated as commodities or “fashion horses”.

On cultural representations of women, I thank Fiona McLeod for giving me an excuse to link two of my favourite things in the world: equal rights and science fiction. She cited “The Hunger Games” as one cultural representation. Sci-fi provides as good an example as any, and that is a particularly good example, because the actress Jennifer Lawrence is an A-lister who does not mince words with the media about the people who have mentioned her weight.

Fiona McLeod was encouraged by the adverts before the film that she saw but, when I went to see “Mamma Mia”, the adverts made broad generalisations and assumptions about who would be in the audience. It is important to note that such representations can turn attitudes around; the skewed demographic of such a film is itself a manifestation of the syndrome that says that pink is for girls and blue is for boys, which we want to get away from.

If, as Elaine Murray pointed out, young people are at risk of using pornography as their first contact with sexual issues, that underscores the need for wider action, including the work that is being done to update and improve our relationships, sexual health and parenthood education in schools.

Alison McInnes mentioned the wider societal issue of the language that follows violent incidents. I have a message for the perpetrators of such incidents: violence against women is unacceptable. It is unacceptable in an argument; it is unacceptable based on someone's dress; it is unacceptable based on the justifications that, as we have heard, some people use about children; and it is unacceptable in the Meadows at night. It is just unacceptable. That should not need to be said. That we live in a society in which it needs to be said says a lot.

Fortunately, in the chamber, that needs to be said only to make a point. No one in this assembly of the nation's legislators would say anything else. Therefore, like Fiona McLeod, I take optimism from the debate, because what we are debating is not what the problem is but how we can best eradicate it, and that is a good place to be in to deliver change.

Our debate closes as 16 days of activities begin, with countless organisations up and down the country championing and supporting the programme of work. All of them deserve our recognition and thanks, which we have expressed across the chamber today. Organisations such as Scottish Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland are making a huge difference in challenging violence and driving the agenda. Around Scotland, local women's aid organisations and rape crisis centres are making a difference to women and children who are at risk of, or who are experiencing, violence and abuse. Zero Tolerance is contributing to tackling outdated attitudes and gender stereotypes, while bodies such as Engender and Close the Gap are helping to advance gender equality every hour of every day. I have also been impressed by how often the research that Girlguiding Scotland undertook has been quoted; it has informed the debate in a way that has been incredibly helpful for all of us.

As a Government, we are showing strong leadership and matching that with record levels of funding and a strengthening of the law. We are working in partnership and, since the First Minister's election just over a year ago, we have seen a narrative of increased sophistication. As my ministerial colleague said earlier, the prevention and eradication of violence against women and girls is at the heart of the First Minister's personal and political agenda.

We must be progressive in tackling gender inequality, because women do not enjoy equality with men in today's society. Our aim is to eliminate the gender pay gap, end segregation in employment, encourage more women into senior positions and, through the partnership for change, encourage a 50:50 gender balance on boards by 2020. I am engaging with local government on the on-going scandal of equal pay, which was ably highlighted by Christina McKelvie—47 years on from Dagenham and 45 years on from the Equal Pay Act 1970. We are also increasing opportunities for political representation and we have a gender-balanced Cabinet. Scotland is one of only a few countries to have that.

All those areas make a significant contribution to achieving the objectives in "Equally Safe" on primary prevention, which, as I said, every member who has spoken seems to have put at the heart of their speech. That approach will always be underpinned by a gender analysis, which has drawn favourable comment internationally and has placed Scotland as a leader in the field. The Government's commitment is strong and enduring, and today we have repeated with one voice the Parliament's message that we must work together to ensure that women and girls in Scotland are free from violence.

## Decision Time

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** There are two questions to be put as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that amendment S4M-14930.1, in the name of Elaine Murray, which seeks to amend motion S4M-14930, in the name of Margaret Burgess, on violence against women, be agreed to.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The second question is, that motion S4M-14930, in the name of Margaret Burgess, on violence against women, as amended, be agreed to.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to.*

That the Parliament welcomes International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 24 November 2015, marking the start of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence; commends the ongoing contribution of people and organisations across Scotland and the wider world toward raising awareness and changing the outdated attitudes that still persist in society in relation to gender-based violence; reaffirms the cross-party support for Equally Safe, Scotland's strategy on preventing and eradicating all forms of violence against women and girls; acknowledges the inaugural meeting of the Equally Safe Joint Strategic Board, co-chaired by the Scottish Government and COSLA, on 11 November and the need for continued strategic funding for projects and organisations and for further legislation to tackle all forms of gender-based violence in Scotland; notes that, on the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the agreement of the new Sustainable Development Goals, women and girls across the world continue to experience violence and abuse, and calls on everyone in Scotland to play their part in creating a strong and flourishing country where all individuals are equally safe and respected, and where women and girls live free from all forms of violence and abuse and the attitudes that help perpetuate it.

## World Toilet Day 2015

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):**

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-14471, in the name of Iain Gray, on world toilet day 2015—we can't wait. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

*Motion debated,*

That the Parliament welcomes World Toilet Day 2015, which aims to raise awareness of the need for proper sanitation and toilets and their importance to health, dignity, security and social and economic development across the world; notes with deep dismay reports that 2.5 billion people do not have access to proper sanitation or toilets, that in 45 countries fewer than half the population have access to adequate sanitation and that 2,000 children die each day from diarrhoea caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation; notes that Equality, Dignity and the Link Between Gender-Based Violence and Sanitation is this year's theme for World Toilet Day, aiming to highlight the threat of sexual violence that women and girls face due to loss of privacy and the inadequacy of toilet facilities to manage menstrual hygiene, as well as inequalities in usability for disabled and older people; congratulates Grace Warnock, a 10-year-old Prestonpans Primary School pupil, on her Grace's Sign campaign to secure better door signs for accessible toilets in Scotland to raise awareness that they are not only for wheelchair users; welcomes what it considers the significant progress that Grace has already made with her campaign, including coming up with her own new design for door signs to show that they are also for people who are not visibly disabled and working with Independent Living in Scotland and Scottish Disability Equality Forum to engage with local authorities on improving the signage at their accessible toilets, and notes the call for action and urgency expressed in World Toilet Day's tag line, We Can't Wait, and the call for action now to meet the goal agreed at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in September to "achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations" by 2030.

17:02

**Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab):** It does seem appropriate for us to have a debate marking world toilet day here in the city, famously, of "Gardyloo!" Although sanitation in this city started to improve a long time ago in the 18th century with the building of the new town and the understanding that municipal hygiene could save lives, 250 years later that is a message that is still to be heard by far too many, and still be acted on on behalf of many more.

For people in developed countries such as ours, flushing a toilet and turning on a tap are taken for granted. Toilets are the topic of the easiest and crassest of jokes, and the organisers of world toilet day are not blind to the comic potential of their endeavours, as their use of the slogan, "World toilet day 2015—we can't wait", shows.

However, the hard truth is that more than 650 million people in the world do not have access to clean water, and more than 2.3 billion do not have access to a safe, private toilet. Diarrhoea is one of the three most common killers of young children globally, along with pneumonia and malaria. Every year, around 60 million children are born into homes without access to sanitation. Around 315,000 children under five die every year from diarrhoea caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation—that is almost 900 children a day. It is clear that they can't wait.

The worst thing about that is that this is a problem can be solved. Almost 60 per cent of those deaths could be prevented by clean water, sanitation and good hygiene, including hand washing with soap.

In September, the United Nations adopted new global goals on sustainable development. The entire world came together to agree a path to a fairer, more sustainable world—one in which extreme poverty has been eliminated and, no matter where someone is, they have enough food to eat, clean water to drink, a safe, private place to relieve themselves, and soap and water to wash with.

Goal 6 promises adequate, equitable access to water, sanitation and hygiene for everyone everywhere by 2030. There is a bonus to be had from that, because for every £1 invested in sanitation there is a return of around £4; health is improved; fewer days are lost to illness; and girls in particular stay on at school longer and complete their education. World toilet day is not a joke but important, and I am glad to be the one to have us mark it for—I think—the first time.

We do not always get toilets right here in Scotland either. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to my young constituent, Grace Warnock of Prestonpans, who is in the public gallery this evening. Ten-year-old Grace has Crohn's disease, but happily she is currently in remission. She previously had to use accessible disabled toilets when she was out and about because that enabled her to quickly access a toilet when she needed to and because such toilets have washing facilities to hand and enough space for her mum to help her.

Being able to use an accessible toilet affords Grace support and dignity when she needs it most. That should be straightforward enough, but Grace's experience of using accessible toilets has sometimes not been positive. That is due in part to many people thinking that, if someone is not a wheelchair user or does not have another visible disability, they should not be using an accessible toilet. Grace responded by coming up with a great idea to help raise public understanding; she simply designed a new door sign to highlight the fact that

not everyone who needs to use an accessible toilet uses a wheelchair or has a visible disability.

Grace also wrote to me, and I was able to arrange meetings for her with the independent living in Scotland project and the Scottish Disability Equality Forum, both of which have taken up her campaign. Grace and her campaign featured in *The Big Issue*, and she found a company willing to realise her design professionally. We now have commitments from South Lanarkshire Council, my and Grace's home council of East Lothian and enjoyleisure, which runs our local leisure facilities, which have all agreed to trial Grace's sign for real in their buildings.

Frankly, that is not bad for a 10-year-old, although it is worth saying that Grace clearly gets her flair for campaigning, not to say her unstoppable determination, from her mum, Judith, who has been with her every step of the way. They are a formidable team, and they are not going to be satisfied until Grace's sign goes up on accessible toilets all over Scotland.

I must admit that, when I started this, I thought that there would be some body that we could find that had responsibility for this kind of signage and that, if we could win it over, the campaign would have won. However, it seems that there is no such body, so Grace and her mum are having to fight this pretty much one toilet door at a time. Grace was asked by the United Nations to help raise awareness of world toilet day and, indeed, its themes—so appropriate to her campaign—of equality and dignity. She decided to do so by collecting funny pictures of toilets from friends and family on her "Grace's Sign" Facebook page, and members can see them there.

If the minister would like to do something very practical to mark world toilet day, here is my suggestion: agree to adopt Grace's sign and use the Scottish Government's offices to promote it throughout the public sector in Scotland. A little more dignity for all those who need accessible toilets: that is surely not too much to ask.

17:09

**Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):** I congratulate Iain Gray on bringing the debate to the chamber this evening. He made the important point that although there might be a bit of behind-the-hand sniggering about the concept of debating toilets, it is important to remember first and foremost that there are many nations in the world where, as he rightly pointed out, the use of a toilet is hazardous to health and often extremely dangerous just in terms of accessing the toilet in the first place.

Iain Gray made some important points. I was interested to hear the example of his constituent because I have been in a similar situation with my son who, because he is not toilet trained, needs more space than a toilet cubicle often provides in order that he can use the toilet. He gets sensory overload from the sound of hand dryers, so it is extremely important that we can use an accessible toilet, because we know that we will be the only ones in there and we will not have to worry about somebody setting off a hand-dryer, which could trigger an autistic meltdown. When we emerge from such toilets holding the hand of our son who is walking freely, we are often met with sceptical looks because, as Iain Gray said, people associate the concept of accessible toilets with wheelchair users.

If Iain Gray wants to forward to me information regarding Grace Warnock's campaign and her sign, I would be more than happy to receive it and to see whether I can do anything through my work with organisations including the National Autistic Society Scotland and in my constituency to promote this opportunity to change signage. The work that Grace is doing is commendable, but the more shoulders we put to the wheel, the more chance there is of making change. I would be happy to receive that information from Iain Gray and to have a conversation with him about it at some point.

I have been heavily involved in the changing places toilets campaign alongside the Profound and Multiple Impairment Service—PAMIS—which is leading the campaign in Scotland, and the changing places consortium, which is promoting the campaign. The issue first came to my attention when I shadowed Stephanie Chalmers, who is a carer from Turriff in Aberdeenshire whose son Connor requires hoist equipment in order to use the toilet. That experience outlined to me just how difficult it is for Stephanie and Connor to enjoy what most of us classify as a normal day out. It often requires military planning to know exactly where they can access a toilet facility that is suitable for Connor's needs and to make sure that they are somewhere in the vicinity of that facility so that they can access it if the need arises. That is why I have been so impressed by the work that has been done, which has been driven by the changing places consortium and PAMIS and ably backed by the Scottish Government's learning disability strategy, "The keys to life". The target within that strategy has not just been met; it has been smashed, and work is continuing to promote changing places toilets.

One of the things that has been highlighted to me is the idea that such facilities can exist only in large venues. To some extent, that is true, so we need to see more large venues adopt changing places toilets. I know that Jenny Marra, who is

about to speak, has called for such toilets at the Scottish exhibition and conference centre, and I have backed that call. I have written to football clubs in Scotland to encourage them to incorporate changing places facilities. I wrote last season to all the top-flight teams and the top three teams in the championship, which at that time were Hearts, Hibs and Rangers, but I received only three replies to the 15 letters that I sent—from Celtic, Dundee United and Aberdeen. I passed those replies on to PAMIS and I know that it has been trying to engage with the clubs concerned.

We do not have a single changing places toilet in Scotland's airports. That needs to change. Until such time as we get such facilities in sporting venues, music venues and airports, many people will still feel that they are being denied the dignity that is afforded to the rest of us when we go to a venue, go on holiday or go for a day out.

I commend Iain Gray for bringing the debate to the chamber and for allowing us the opportunity to outline some very important points that relate to it.

17:13

**Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I congratulate Iain Gray on securing this important debate and using it to highlight what is undoubtedly an important issue for many Scots. I also congratulate his young constituent on her assiduous campaigning on and commitment to the issue.

I was very interested to hear Mark McDonald's speech. He is right—I want to use my time in this debate to talk about the changing places campaign. As Mr McDonald outlined, PAMIS has done a wealth of work supporting families who have children, brothers or sisters with profound and multiple learning disabilities. For them, days out, concerts or visits to a sports stadium are not the same. As Mark McDonald said, such operations must be assiduously planned around the available facilities. They need bigger toilet facilities that have hoists, more space and many extra features that changing places toilets provide. I understand that those toilets cost about £100,000 each to install; the Scottish Parliament has one that can be used by visitors to the building.

It is particularly important for people who need such toilets to be able to plan a day out just as every other family can, and to have the basic sanitation facilities that they need, as Iain Gray said. However, there are also issues in terms of accessible tourism. Parliament is committed on a cross-party basis to improving Scotland's reputation for accessible tourism. How can tourism in Scotland be fully accessible if basic facilities such as proper toilets and changing places toilets

do not exist in our cultural, social and sporting venues?

I was pleased to hear Mark McDonald say that he has written to a number of sports clubs in Scotland. I fully commend him for that work. I have written to SSE Hydro and the SECC to ask whether they will install changing places toilets. An incredible number of acts are coming to perform at the Hydro, but it is not accessible to many families because they cannot take their loved ones to the toilet.

**Mark McDonald:** I agree entirely with Jenny Marra. Does she also accept and acknowledge that it is not just that families are prevented from going to such places but that when they do go, they often have to change their loved one on a toilet floor that can be dirty and wet? If nothing else, that is deeply undignified.

**Jenny Marra:** Mark McDonald is absolutely right. He and I have seen videos and heard families talk about such experiences. It would make for a much more dignified and civilised day out if such facilities were available.

I was pleased to hear that a changing places toilet has been installed at Murrayfield and that PAMIS has been doing a lot of work and campaigning on the issue. I ask the minister to express his commitment to the changing places campaign in his summing up.

I finish my contribution by paying tribute to Loretto Lambe who died recently. She spearheaded the campaign on behalf of PAMIS, but was sadly taken from us a few weeks ago. Her contribution to the campaign and families mean that she will be sorely missed.

17:17

**Cameron Buchanan (Lothian) (Con):** When I first read the motion, I thought that it was a bit of a joke, or rather, a bummer. Indeed, I am not sure that it is not but it is also deadly serious, as we have heard from Mark McDonald, Jenny Marra and Iain Gray. I will have to be careful not to fill this speech with double entendre or more obvious toilet terms.

I find these world days, world weeks or world awareness weeks rather ridiculous because they seem to happen all the time. In this case, however, I have read the motion and I understand exactly what it is trying to achieve. Basically, it is about improving sanitation worldwide. At one point, I thought that it might be to do with the protest against City of Edinburgh Council closing the public toilets, but it is not.

Access to clean and safe sanitation, including toilets, is fundamentally important to human health, safety and dignity. It is therefore entirely

right that the sustainable development goals prioritise access to safe sanitation for all. However, Governments declaring something to be a goal does not mean that it will happen and Government initiatives are the only way to make it happen. The changing places toilets are an example of that, and I will be interested to hear what the minister says on that. I have come across them, but when I was in another venue with another person, it was very undignified.

As the older United Nations development goals showed, much progress is brought about by economic development so, although it is worth promoting sustainable development goals, it is vital to put in place policies to help developing countries' economies to trade freely. The United Kingdom Government has been at the forefront of international efforts to help sanitation projects in poor countries in which the inadequacy of toilet facilities is most marked. During the previous parliamentary session, the UK Government helped to provide more than 51 million people with access to water, sanitation and improved hygiene. That included supplying clean water and latrines to 340,000 people in Haiti with the help of local volunteers, reinforced by a public health education campaign to spread the word to 125,000 people in the area.

Of course, making a lasting difference in clean sanitation will take more than building some toilets. I read that Bathgate has recently been named as Scotland's first toilet-twinning town. There were even schemes in India where people were paid to use toilets, because the existing public toilets had been left unused for a variety of reasons. I think that this should really have been called world sanitation day rather than world toilet day, because it is about ensuring the availability and the sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, wherever they are.

Taking this closer to home, in France there is a proliferation of toilets that have been modernised from the old pissoirs that we used to see in the streets. There are those famous pictures of men coming out buttoning their trousers. The French have a rather progressive—or should I say more open—attitude towards these matters and they now have toilets that people pay €1 to use, which automatically clean everything in sight, including possibly people's bottoms if they are not quick enough.

Taking a more serious line, it is basic sanitation that needs improving, not just toilets, as we can see from the lack of access in some places around the world. It is an issue that needs thought and money to be spent on it. The debate is about more than toilets; it is about sanitation in general. I think that going to the toilet is a bit like death—when you gotta go, you gotta go.



17:21

**Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab):** I thank Iain Gray for securing today's debate and for recognising the importance of the issue to the public. Access to toilets is something that the majority of us in Scotland take for granted but proper sanitation has a major impact on people's health, dignity and safety. That is especially true for girls and women around the world.

I was surprised to learn that 2.5 billion people do not have access to proper sanitation or toilets and that in 45 countries fewer than half the population have access to adequate sanitation. When preparing this speech, I took a look at the World Bank statistics on those countries and I was surprised to see India on that list. According to the data, only 40 per cent of the population has access to improved sanitation facilities. Another country on the list is Malawi, with 41 per cent access.

Improved sanitation is often a neglected area of investment when resources are scarce. It is generally seen as a result of economic growth, not as something that can enable growth. Countries with large and growing populations, such as India, have many challenges in improving sanitation, especially in rural areas. I have spent significant amounts of time in rural areas of India and Pakistan and I have seen for myself the impact that improved sanitation has on communities.

It is not just a matter of building sanitation facilities; we also need to encourage people to use the toilets and educate people on hygiene issues such as washing their hands properly, which has already been mentioned. We are basically asking people to break the habit of a lifetime and that is not easy.

The focus on gender equality is very important. In the absence of proper facilities, when seeking privacy, women might decide to go to the toilet in the early morning hours or in the dark evenings. If women and girls are forced to manage their needs in the open, such as by the roadside after dark or in a field at dawn, they are particularly vulnerable to violence.

On another note, I congratulate Iain Gray's constituent, Grace Warnock, on her campaign for better signs for accessible toilets. At a time when many local authorities are no longer providing public toilets, it is important that we provide accessible facilities for those in need. Many businesses display signs stating that facilities are for paying customers or for customers only. However, that causes problems for people who may not be visibly disabled but who need the toilet more frequently than others. I suggest that, in future, when businesses provide facilities, they should be open to all.

I congratulate Grace Warnock on her initiative and I wish her every success in it. I hope that the minister will take on board her suggestions, which were supported so validly by Iain Gray. I hope that we can change things for the people of Scotland and display to the rest of the world how the Scottish nation can, once again, lead on the issue.

17:25

**The Minister for Sport, Health Improvement and Mental Health (Jamie Hepburn):** I join members in congratulating Iain Gray on securing this debate to mark world toilet day 2015. I reiterate the point that others have made that there was potential for cynical commentary on the fact that we are holding this debate—indeed, there might still be. That would be a matter of regret, because the issue is important, as members' thoughtful speeches have demonstrated.

Each speaker has in their own way raised awareness of the need for access to proper sanitation and the important contribution that that makes to gender equality, health, dignity, security, and social and economic development across the world. Many of us here in Scotland take that access for granted, although members have rightly raised issues about the domestic scene, which I will respond to in a few moments.

I will first reiterate the point that Iain Gray made about the sustainable development goals, which were agreed in September this year and which include the critical target of ensuring access to water and sanitation for all. I am sure that we all whole-heartedly support that goal. Around 2.5 billion people do not have access to adequate and safe sanitation. That is a global shame, and it presents a challenge that we must step up to and meet. World toilet day raises the issue and highlights the need for action today—action that cannot wait.

The global context is that water scarcity affects more than 40 per cent of people around the world, which is an alarming figure that is projected to increase with the rise of global temperatures as a consequence of climate change. Although much progress has been made—around 2.1 billion people have gained access to improved water sanitation since 1990—far too many, as I have set out, still do not have safe water or adequate sanitation.

That manifests itself in many negative ways. Every two minutes, a child dies of diseases that are related to diarrhoea and that could be prevented by improved water, sanitation and hygiene. In 2014, 159 million children worldwide were stunted due to malnutrition. One of the main causes is water-related disease such as diarrhoea that prevents the proper absorption of nutrients

from food. Some countries lose as much as 7 per cent of their gross domestic product as a result of inadequate sanitation leading to water-related diseases that cause missed days at work due to illness or people caring for sick relatives. Every year, children take 443 million sick days because of water-related diseases, which means that they are missing out on their much-needed education. The problem is a major one that impacts on every continent. It is a problem for us all and it is therefore incumbent on us all to respond.

If we are to ensure universal access to safe and affordable drinking water by 2030, we will have to invest in adequate infrastructure, provide sanitation facilities and encourage hygiene at every level. The Government is proud to be active in this area of global concern. Through our Scotland the hydro nation programme and our international development activity, we can try to make a difference.

We recognise that Scotland has much knowledge and expertise to offer the world in a range of key water resource management areas. Therefore, one focus of our hydro nation strategy in the years ahead will be on where Scotland can add value and contribute to solving global water issues. The sustainable development goal on water and sanitation will help to provide the global political context for our activity, as we work hard to deliver on our vision of Scotland as the world's first hydro nation—a nation that manages its water environment to the best advantage and employs its knowledge and expertise effectively at home and internationally.

So far, the climate justice fund has been supported by hydro nation funds of £6 million and has delivered 11 water adaptation projects in Malawi, Tanzania, Rwanda and Zambia. Scottish Water has been a long-term supporter of WaterAid and has raised money and taken part in practical work and will continue to do so. Earlier this year in May, we hosted the 15th International Water Resources Association congress in Edinburgh, at which in the region of 1,000 delegates discussed ground-breaking research and the key global issues relating to water and sanitation.

We will continue to deliver practical projects on the ground and host and participate in the global discussions on water and sanitation issues. We will work with Governments such as the Government of Malawi to ensure that we support work that is appropriate for each country, has the engagement of local communities and makes a difference on the ground. For example, we have provided funding of just over £390,000 to support a project that aims to improve the health and wellbeing of impoverished families in Bihar in India. It aims to deliver health and hygiene workshops and will provide loans to clients to

enable the installation of toilets, water systems and biogas stoves.

Of course, there is a domestic angle to the debate as well, and I will respond to some of the issues that were raised. The PAMIS changing places campaign was cited by Jenny Marra and Mark McDonald. As he will recall, I have met Mr McDonald to discuss the issues that the campaign has raised. As he mentioned, changing places toilets are recognised in “The keys to life”, the Scottish learning disability strategy, as an essential part of community facilities. Indeed, they are the key to community inclusion for people with complex needs.

There are now 120 accessible changing place toilets in Scotland. That is significant progress, but we still have further to go. In response to Jenny Marra's point, I re-emphasise my support for the campaign and the further roll-out of facilities. We need to ensure a better geographic distribution of changing place facilities, and I accept that we need to work with some of the locations that can expect a high number of visitors to ensure that more of them have such facilities, too.

I welcome Grace Warnock to the public gallery. I congratulate her on her outstanding and imaginative awareness-raising campaign to secure better door signs for accessible toilets in Scotland. I am sure that Mr Gray is proud to be her MSP and rightly so. She has reminded us of the important fact that some conditions are hidden from view and, therefore, that accessible toilets are not only for people who use wheelchairs.

Mr Gray wrote to my colleague Maureen Watt about that matter, although Margaret Burgess responded. That facilitated a meeting for Grace with Heather Fiskin, the project manager of the independent living in Scotland project. That has now moved forward, so that there is some work under way in South Lanarkshire, as Mr Gray mentioned. He also mentioned the work that is under way in East Lothian.

Mr Gray also made a request of me as the minister to consider how the Scottish Government can further promote accessible signage. I am certainly happy to examine the experience in South Lanarkshire to find out what lessons can be learned from that. Even before we reach that stage, I am also happy to find out what further steps we can take. I will consider the matter and come back to Mr Gray on it so that he can keep Grace up to date on the progress, because her campaign has undeniably made significant progress.

I congratulate Iain Gray on securing the debate. I join him in welcoming the significant progress that Grace Warnock has already made with her campaign. I note the vital importance of providing

adequate and equitable access to sanitation in  
Scotland and around the globe.

*Meeting closed at 17:33.*



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

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