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Meeting of the Parliament (Hybrid)

Tuesday 16 February 2021

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Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 16 February 2021

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Good afternoon, colleagues. As usual on a Tuesday, we begin with time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader is Father Michael Kane, from St Augustine's church in Coatbridge.

Father Michael Kane (St Augustine's RC Church, Coatbridge): Presiding Officer and members of Parliament, thank you for the opportunity to address you today. I am very conscious that I do so on Shrove Tuesday, the day before we begin our annual Lenten journey towards Easter. In the tradition of this day, I hope that you will be able to enjoy some pancakes later on.

For Christians, of course, tomorrow begins a time of profound spiritual importance. Sadly, this Ash Wednesday, we are unable to gather in our churches to mark the beginning of that journey. At least for the moment, our homes will be our domestic churches. From there, we will wear our ashes as an outward sign of the inward conversion that we hope to begin.

For the next 40 days or so, the lives of Christians around the world and here in Scotland will be marked by prayer, fasting and almsgiving. We do those things because we recognise that we are imperfect and have so much growing still to do. Lent urges us to uproot ourselves and move nearer to God and one another, and to heed with urgency the Lord's command to love. Lent calls us to embrace new priorities, offer small sacrifices and rededicate our lives in the service of others. My own prayer is that we can all try to unify under that very noble ambition: for each of us to grow in love and become, day by day, a better version of ourselves in the sight of Almighty God.

Here in our community, like in so many other places, the call to loving service has already taken root in many hearts, and it has brought welcome light and grace to this very challenging time. At my parish, St Augustine's in Coatbridge, we established a new project called stay connected way back in March last year to reach out in practical ways to those who were lonely, isolated or struggling through the pandemic. It very quickly became a lifeline for the elderly, who appreciated a friendly voice at the other end of a phone, and for families who were struggling with essential food supplies. Since then, our parish food bank,

which is called the people's pantry, and the stay connected project have delivered more than a million free items of food and essentials—a concrete example of love in action.

Perhaps Lent could be a time that challenges all of us to do more, to give more, to be more for others and to help to build a culture of hope, friendship and solidarity in our communities. May Lent give us eyes to see the poor and hungry and the lonely and struggling in our midst, and to offer them our love and support.

Thank you for listening.

Point of Order

14:04

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I hope very much to say something similar to the Equalities and Human Rights Committee on Thursday, but I wanted to take the first opportunity in parliamentary time to try to make things right. Last Thursday, during an exchange on children's rights with the Minister for Children and Young People, Maree Todd, I was captured on camera mouthing language that was neither parliamentary nor respectful. I apologise unreservedly to the minister. Each of us in the chamber should strive to reflect the better natures of the people whom we are sent here to serve. I am very sorry, and I will reflect on that.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Thank you very much, Mr Cole-Hamilton. That is a point of order for the committee, not for me, but your comments are noted.

Business Motion

14:05

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-24151, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, which sets out a revision to business.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revisions to the programme of business on Tuesday 16 February 2021—

after

followed by Ministerial statement: COVID-19

insert

followed by Ministerial Statement: Budget Update

delete

5.05 pm Decision Time

and insert

5.35 pm Decision Time

Motion agreed to.

Topical Question Time

14:05

Sexual Abuse in Scottish Football

1. Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the report of the independent review of sexual abuse in Scottish football. (S5T-02658)

The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Mairi Gougeon): The report provides appalling and harrowing testimonies of historical sexual abuse and it will be shocking for anyone who reads it, including those who follow Scottish football. I commend the courage of all the individuals who came forward to tell their stories. The independent review found that most of the people who suffered sexual abuse did not tell anyone else at the time and that on the rare occasions when it was reported to organisations or clubs little or no action was taken. That is tremendously distressing and has had a profound and long-lasting impact on those who were abused.

The review accepts that knowledge and practices were markedly different in the past than they are now and recognises the recent efforts of the Scottish Football Association and its members to put in place a child protection and wellbeing strategy. It makes clear that continuing culture change is imperative. That includes continuing to work closely with those affected to improve processes, thereby challenging distorted thinking about sexual conduct or violence and creating positive attitudes to mental health. We fully support those aims.

We also support the work of police and prosecutors in investigating allegations to bring perpetrators to justice. A number of individuals responsible have now been convicted and sentenced and there are also live criminal and civil proceedings still on-going. We encourage anyone who has experienced sexual abuse to come forward, if they feel comfortable doing so, to access the help available to them.

The safety and wellbeing of all children and young people is paramount, as is ensuring that victims of abuse are supported through the justice system and beyond. We will carefully—but with urgency—consider the report and we will continue to engage with the Scottish FA and other key partners to ensure that the findings are acted on.

Fulton MacGregor: I thank the minister for that detailed response. As she alluded to, the report is very detailed. It contains 97 recommendations, all of which are substantial. They include a proposed

raft of measures to improve and enhance safeguarding, wellbeing and protection policies and procedures at all levels of the game.

There are also specific recommendations. One is to consider setting up a fund to support and assist those affected. How important does the minister think it is that those recommendations are implemented by the football authorities, and will the Scottish Government offer support to implement them where appropriate?

Mairi Gougeon: What the member said is absolutely right. It is vital that those recommendations are implemented by football authorities. I am encouraged by the Scottish FA's initial response to the report.

I am sure that the individuals affected by this and their families would absolutely agree with that. They will be watching to ensure that robust and meaningful action is taken.

Given that the report is lengthy and there are a lot of complex and sensitive issues in it, we will consider it very carefully. However, I also want to highlight the urgency with which we will undertake that work.

I recognise that the nature of the issues raised means that they cut across a number of other areas. Therefore, I will discuss with my ministerial colleagues, as well as other partners, what more can be done to ensure that all possible steps are taken.

Fulton MacGregor: As the minister said, some of the testimonies recorded in the report are harrowing to say the least. They include that of Mr Malcolm Rodger, who is from my constituency. Those involved were children who were forced to experience the most horrific abuse while playing the game they loved. Most of us will never be able to imagine the permanent scarring that that will have caused to survivors.

Recommendation 1 of the report is that the clubs and organisations involved should offer an “unequivocal and unreserved” apology to those who have been affected. How important is it that those apologies are made sincerely, and that they are made directly where that is possible, so that the individuals who were abused can find at least some closure for the trauma that they were subjected to?

Mairi Gougeon: Fulton MacGregor is right. The testimonies in the report are harrowing.

The review makes it clear that all organisations and clubs that failed young people in the past should apologise. That is the least that the individuals and families who were impacted can expect. I welcome the comments by the Scottish FA chief executive, Ian Maxwell, who said:

"I reiterate my sincerest apology on behalf of Scottish football to all who have experienced abuse in our national game."

I know that some clubs have also now apologised in response to the report or have expressed regret about what happened.

The abuse that those young people were subjected to was abhorrent. I can only imagine the impact that it has had on them and on their families. Any clubs where young people suffered such abuse should apologise, and they should do so unreservedly.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): Does the minister agree that the Scottish Government investigation into historical sexual abuse in care settings and the compensation scheme that has emerged from that, although extremely welcome, is discriminatory against those who have suffered similar horrendous abuse in other settings such as sport and education, and that it may contravene the human rights of those in that situation? Does she agree that an investigation and compensation scheme should be expanded to include all those who have suffered such abuse in other settings?

Mairi Gougeon: The member raises a number of issues and I would be happy to respond to him in more detail.

There are many recommendations in the report that we are discussing. We are carefully considering many complex issues, some of which cut across other areas of Scottish Government responsibility. We will work urgently to respond and to take action.

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): I first called for a review of sexual abuse in Scottish football back in 2016. I am delighted that the long-awaited report has now been published. I pay tribute to all those who campaigned on the matter. Although I warmly welcome the SFA's report, we must now see it drive positive change throughout football.

What steps can be taken by the SFA or by the Scottish Government to ensure that football clubs take full responsibility for the abuse that happened on their watch, and that they are not allowed to escape that responsibility? Some may try to claim that the boys club connected to their club is not connected to them, or they may say that the club in which the abuse was committed went into liquidation and that it is no longer the responsibility of the existing club. Warm words are fine, but the clubs must take responsibility.

Mairi Gougeon: I reiterate that it is of paramount importance for the Scottish Government to ensure that every child can play football—or any other sport—in a safe and secure environment.

Football is now a very different environment. Strong progress has been made in recent years. However, the review demonstrates the terrible human cost of getting things wrong. I believe that the Scottish FA is determined to do all it can to address the issues in the report. As I said in my response to Fulton MacGregor, I am encouraged by the SFA's initial response. Some clubs have also made statements apologising for historical abuse.

As I said, we will work with the SFA and with other key organisations and partners to ensure that all necessary steps are taken. Given the complexity and sensitivity of the issues, and the need to carefully consider Martin Henry's long and detailed report, I cannot yet give a timescale for that work. We recognise that time has elapsed since the interim report was published and that urgency is now required. We are working on that.

Hotel Quarantine

2. **Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what arrangements are in place to ensure that passengers entering Scotland from non-red list countries via airports in England are quarantined in approved hotels. (S5T-02673)

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson): The Scottish Government's policy on international travel is based on expert advice from the scientific advisory group for emergencies on the need for a comprehensive approach. Although we recognise that a four-nations approach would be preferable, the partial approach adopted by the United Kingdom Government risks allowing new variants to enter the country. Currently, anyone who lands at an airport elsewhere in the UK from a non-red list country and then travels to Scotland will not go into a quarantine hotel.

We will continue to press the UK Government to adopt a more comprehensive approach and to require all international travellers to go into a quarantine hotel. The measures that we have introduced are designed to safeguard communities in Scotland, and I again urge UK ministers to work with us on that important task.

Colin Smyth: The cabinet secretary did not really address the specific question. There is a predictable loophole around passengers arriving in Scotland via English airports being asked to quarantine by the Scottish Government in managed hotels in England. When exactly did the cabinet secretary or other Scottish Government ministers make a formal request to the UK Government for that loophole to be closed?

In the absence of an agreement, the Scottish Government has said that it does not rule out

closing the Scotland-England border. Twenty-two roads and two railways cross the border, and every day thousands of people travel across it, mainly from the south of Scotland to the north of England and back for work, healthcare and education. Can the cabinet secretary therefore enlighten us as to the Government's thinking on how our already overstretched police can enforce the closure of the border to try to stop someone who landed at, say, Manchester airport without stopping everyone carrying out legitimate essential travel?

Michael Matheson: In relation to Mr Smith's first point, Jeane Freeman, the health secretary, the First Minister and I all engaged with UK ministers last week on the issue. We highlighted the need to make sure that robust action is taken in order to ensure that a comprehensive system of hotel quarantine is introduced across UK. We also highlighted that, in failing to do that and in following the red-list approach, which it is implementing, the UK Government risked leaving loopholes allowing people to circumvent the comprehensive system that we have introduced in Scotland. To date, I am still waiting for a formal response from the UK Government on that request, but we will continue to press it on the matter in order to try to address the loophole that its approach has created.

On Colin Smyth's second question, he will recognise the importance of ensuring that we listen to the expert clinical advice on the most effective way in which to deal with the risk of new variants being introduced into the country. No one should be in any doubt that the most effective way of doing that is through a comprehensive quarantine system. That is why we are looking at other options to address the issue if the UK Government does not move in the direction of that clinical advice. I assure Mr Smyth that we are looking at all options to ensure that we minimise the potential risk of the introduction of new variants of Covid-19 into Scotland, which could compromise our vaccination programme.

Colin Smyth: When the cabinet secretary announced the quarantine policy last week, he also said that there would be a managed isolation welfare fund for travellers who might struggle to meet the charges associated with quarantine—for example, for those for whom travel is essential on compassionate grounds. Can he tell us why that fund has not been set up and what families who face hardship should do when they need to travel on compassionate grounds?

Michael Matheson: The arrangements for the welfare fund are in the online portal that is used when someone books their managed quarantine facility. If they are unable to meet the associated costs, rather than pay in advance, they can

indicate that and their individual case is than assessed. The arrangements have therefore been put in place in the portal that has been created by the UK Government. However, if Colin Smyth has constituency cases that he is concerned about, he should feel free to send the details to me, and I will ensure that those individual cases are fully considered.

The Presiding Officer: Six members want to ask supplementaries. It will be impossible to get through them all, I am afraid.

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): I am glad to hear the cabinet secretary talk about individual cases. An elderly constituent of mine has been in the Canary Islands since last December. Through no fault of their own, flights have been repeatedly cancelled and they might overstay the 90-day residency rule for that part of Europe.

When my constituent eventually returns to Scotland, they will need to enter managed self-isolation in a hotel, which will be financially challenging. Can the cabinet secretary provide details of any hardship support or deferred payment schemes? Will those be exclusively for those who are on certain benefits, or will flexibility be shown?

Michael Matheson: When someone goes on to the online portal looking to book their managed quarantine facility, there is an option to highlight that they might not be able to meet the up-front costs and to indicate why that is the case.

Presently, the policy is linked to benefits. However, I am, again, more than happy to listen to any individual constituency cases that Bob Doris may have.

I very much regret that we are having to introduce such a quarantine scheme. I assure members that the measures that we are introducing, whose purpose is to make sure that our borders are as robust as possible and deal with the threat of new variants, will be in place only for as long as is required and that we will look to lift them at the earliest opportunity. However, I reiterate that, at the present time, no one should be undertaking international travel unless it is absolutely essential. I encourage anyone who is considering travelling to avoid doing so if it is not essential.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): I spoke this morning to a constituent who, along with her five-year-old daughter, is in Finland where her partner is receiving hyperbaric oxygen treatment following a severe brain injury. With school now about to restart for their five-year-old, the family wants to return to Scotland. However, they now face a 10-day period of hotel quarantine. In the circumstances, which includes coping with the

side effects of a brain injury, such as seizures, and caring for a five-year-old, my constituent believes hotel quarantine to be practically impossible. What dispensations to the quarantine regulations can be made for the family, given their uniquely challenging situation?

The Presiding Officer: I think that there was almost certainly too much howl around the audio feed for the cabinet secretary to hear that. Did you hear any of that question, Mr Matheson?

Michael Matheson: Yes, I think that I heard most of it, Presiding Officer.

I ask Mr Scott to write to me with the details. There are provisions in the exemptions for individuals who, for medical reasons, would be unable to stay in a managed quarantine facility. If he sends the details on to me, I will ensure that officials look into the issue for him.

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): On the issue of vulnerable people who may be unable to afford the quarantine fee, yesterday I was contacted by the British Red Cross, which is concerned about the lack of guidance for people travelling to Scotland to reunite with loved ones on refugee family reunion visas, including unaccompanied refugee children. I note the cabinet secretary's comments about the portal, but the British Red Cross would like to know when full and clearer guidance on the managed isolation welfare fund will be published.

Michael Matheson: I believe that the information that the British Red Cross is looking for was provided to it earlier today. It included the information that it may require about those who hold refugee status and the exemptions in the existing regime for dealing with such issues.

The Presiding Officer: I apologise to the three members whom I was unable to call. I am conscious that we have a statement on Covid-19 from the First Minister coming up. It might be that they can rephrase their question in a way that can be put to the First Minister after her statement.

Covid-19

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a statement from the First Minister on Covid-19. The First Minister will take questions at the end of her statement.

14:24

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I will update Parliament on the Cabinet's review of the current lockdown restrictions, which took place this morning. I confirm at the outset that, with one limited exception, I will not be announcing any immediate changes to the current lockdown restrictions. The core requirement to stay at home will remain in place until at least the beginning of March, and possibly for a period beyond that, although not for any longer than is absolutely necessary.

However, I confirm that the phased and gradual return to school, which I said we were hopeful about when I updated Parliament two weeks ago, will go ahead from Monday, as planned. I will say more about that, and about the importance of carefully implementing and monitoring that change, later.

In addition, I will give an assessment of the current state of the pandemic. I will also signal when and how we hope to give an indication of the criteria for beginning our exit from lockdown, and the order in which we will aim to do so, when the time is right.

First, though, I will briefly recap today's statistics. The total number of positive cases that were reported yesterday was 773, which represents 6 per cent of all the tests that were carried out, and means that the overall number of cases is now 193,148. Currently, 1,383 people are in hospital, which is 45 fewer than yesterday, and 100 people are in intensive care, which is two fewer than yesterday.

I regret to report, however, that over the past 24 hours another 49 deaths have been registered of patients who first tested positive over the previous 28 days. The total number of deaths under that daily measurement is now 6,764. Once again, I send my condolences to all those who have lost a loved one during the pandemic.

I now turn to an update on the vaccination programme. As at 8.30 this morning, 1,288,004 people in Scotland had received their first dose of the vaccine, which is an increase of 32,814 since yesterday. That means that we have now given a first dose to 28 per cent of the adult population. We have also met our mid-February target to offer the first dose of the vaccine to everyone over 70 and to everyone with extreme clinical vulnerability.

There will be some overlap between those groups, but in total they represent groups 1 to 4 on the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's priority list.

That is extremely good news. However, expressing it in the way that I have just done actually understates the scale of the achievement. Vaccination has not simply been offered to everyone in those categories; almost everyone in those groups has had the first dose of the vaccine. Uptake rates have been exceptional; we have administered first doses to virtually all residents in older people's care homes, and to more than 90 per cent of residents in all care homes. Virtually all over-80-year-olds living in the community have received the first dose, as have 94 per cent of those in the 70 to 79-year-old age group. In addition, although it was not part of the mid-February target, we have also now vaccinated 58 per cent of 65 to 69-year-olds, who form the JCVI's priority group 5.

It is important to be clear that there are, in any large-scale programme, bound to be some hiccups. To anyone watching who is aged over 70 or who has extreme clinical vulnerability but who has not yet heard about their vaccination, I say that it might be that their letter has gone astray or that some other administrative problem has occurred. I ask them to get in touch with their general practitioner, call the helpline or, as a last resort, to email me. The address for that is firstminister@gov.scot.

Overall, however, progress so far in the vaccination programme has been outstanding. I thank everyone who has been involved in planning and delivering the programme, and all those who have come forward to be vaccinated. However, I urge people to remember that even if they have now had a first dose of the vaccine, they must still follow all the lockdown rules. The protection from the first dose does not kick in for two or three weeks and, even then, we do not yet know exactly what impact vaccination will have on transmission of the virus.

However, we are very hopeful that vaccination will, in the weeks ahead, start to have a significant impact in reducing the number of people who die from Covid. In fact, we think that it is already having an effect in care homes, where vaccines started being administered in the first half of December. At the end of December, more than a third of all Covid deaths—34 per cent, to be precise—were in care homes. However, in the most recent figures, the proportion had fallen to 18 per cent.

As I have said before, we are in a race between the virus and the vaccine. We have much more reason now than we had just a few weeks ago to

be hopeful that we can—and, ultimately, will—win that race, if we are prepared to stick with it.

In the past few weeks, as the figures that I have just reported show, we have been speeding up our vaccination programme. At the same time, we have been slowing down the virus. Lockdown has been working. In the first week of January, an average of more than 2,300 new cases a day were being recorded in Scotland. The most recent figure is 810 cases. There has been a significant and sustained fall.

As a result of that—again, we can see this in the figures that we have been reporting in recent days—we are now seeing fewer Covid patients in hospital and fewer patients requiring intensive care treatment, although it is important to be clear that our health service remains under very severe pressure. Test positivity has also declined significantly—from around 11 per cent at the start of January to around 6 per cent now.

Together with the progress on vaccination, that is all extremely good news, but of course—as always—it has to be seen in context. Case numbers have been falling because we have been in lockdown and, even after six weeks of that lockdown, they have only just returned to the levels that were being recorded back in early December.

In addition, we think that we are seeing some signs that the number of cases is falling more slowly now than it was a few weeks ago. A key factor is likely to be that the new and more infectious variant of the virus is accounting for an increasing proportion of all new cases: as of now, the new variant is responsible for more than 80 per cent of all the new cases that are being identified.

Of course, we already know from our experience last autumn and in December just how easily the virus can run away from us when there is already a high baseline of transmission within the community. That all means that the situation that we are in just now, although it is better and significantly improved, is still very fragile.

I know that that is frustrating and I know that it can seem counterintuitive. Over the past few weeks, the sacrifices that everyone has continued to make have helped to bring about the good progress. The news has all been very encouraging. However, our room for manoeuvre remains limited. Even a slight easing of restrictions now could cause cases to start rising quite rapidly again.

Even if the older and more vulnerable people in the population now have additional protection through the vaccine, we know that more virus circulating in the community would still put huge pressure on the national health service. It would

also cause many more people to fall ill. That includes younger people, and we know that they can be vulnerable to what is called long Covid. In addition—this is, perhaps, the key point—we know that when community transmission is high and rising, the risk of the virus mutating and new variants emerging is at its most acute.

That all means that, notwithstanding the good progress that we have made, we need, for a period yet, to continue to be extremely cautious. We need to continue to work hard to drive infection rates down as low as possible and then to keep them low.

Of course, all that being said, we know that we cannot continue in lockdown indefinitely, so we need to balance all the different factors and plan a gradual phased return to as much normality as possible, as quickly as possible. That is what the Government is now focused very much on doing.

However, as we do that, there are two things that are important to stress. First, we must be driven much more by data than by dates. I know that that is difficult, given how desperate we all are to get back to something that is closer to normality, but if we open up too quickly to meet arbitrary dates, we risk setting our progress back. Indeed, because of the new and more infectious variant, our exit from lockdown is likely to be even more cautious than it was last summer.

Secondly, 100 per cent normality is unlikely to be possible for a while yet. In a world where we cannot do everything immediately, we will need to decide what matters most to us. That is why people will hear me and other ministers talk increasingly about trade-offs. I will offer two immediate examples to help to illustrate that.

As I will discuss shortly, we are deliberately choosing to use the very limited headroom that we have right now to get at least some children back to school, because children's education and wellbeing is such an overriding priority. However, being able to get children back to education might mean the rest of us living with some other restrictions for longer. That is a trade-off that we need to be willing to make, at this stage.

Also, if we want to return as much normality in life as we can within Scotland, the need to live for a longer period with significant restrictions on our ability to travel overseas is likely to be inescapable.

"What matters most?" is a question that we will have to ask ourselves often in the weeks ahead, and it will be important for me and the Government to be very up front about the choices that we face.

I am talking today in general terms, but I can confirm that the Scottish Government is currently preparing a revised strategic framework, which will

set out in much more detail when and how we might gradually emerge from the lockdown. We hope to publish the new framework next week, probably at this time, following discussions with the other parties in Parliament and with business organisations, trade unions, third sector bodies and others.

The framework will aim to set out how we will use and balance all the tools at our disposal—restrictions and advice, vaccination, test and protect, and travel restrictions—to restore, on a phased basis, greater normality to our everyday lives. It will set out as far as possible the conditions that we think need to be met, in terms of the data, for us to start lifting restrictions, and it will detail the broad order of priority for reopening, including what a return to a geographic levels approach might look like in due course.

Again, I emphasise that if we want to keep moving in the right direction and avoid setbacks, caution will be necessary, which is why the framework will also try to be clear about what we do not think will be possible for a while longer. To give just one example of that, we are likely to advise against booking Easter holidays, either overseas or within Scotland, as it is highly unlikely that we will have been able to fully open hotels or self-catering accommodation by then. For the summer, although it is still highly unlikely that overseas holidays will be possible or advisable, staycations might be, but that will depend on the data nearer the time.

Given the risks that are posed by new variants of the virus, it is hard for me to overstate the necessity of being careful, cautious and gradual as we exit the lockdown if we want to avoid another lockdown later this year. That means, for now, all of us continuing to abide by the stay-at-home requirement. Indeed, doing that for a further period is essential to permit the headroom that is necessary for the change that I am about to confirm.

In terms of the order in which we exit lockdown, the Government has always made it clear that education should be the top priority. Two weeks ago, I announced our preliminary decision that pre-school children, pupils in primary 1 to 3 and a limited number of senior phase students who need access to school for essential practical work would return from Monday 22 February. I also said that, from the same date, we hoped to enable a limited increase in the provision for vulnerable children—specifically, those with the most significant additional support needs—where schools believe that that is essential.

I am pleased to confirm today that, in keeping with the advice of our expert group, that first phase of the reopening of schools will go ahead as planned on Monday. We will need to monitor the

impact of the change carefully before taking any further decisions, but I hope that in two weeks' time, we will be able to set out the second phase of school reopening. However, to give as much clarity as possible at this stage, particularly for parents, I point out that the need to properly assess the impact of the limited reopening means that, at this stage, we think it unlikely that there will be any further return to school before 15 March.

As we consider those issues, we are of course doing everything that we can to ensure that schools are as safe as possible for children and for the education workforce. As senior phase pupils, teachers and school staff start to return, we will be making at-home lateral flow tests available to them twice a week, as part of a wider package of in-school mitigations. Comprehensive testing guidance has now been issued to schools and local authorities and, as of yesterday, more than 2,200 schools had received deliveries of test kits.

We are also working with Young Scot to provide online information and support for senior phase pupils who want to take part in the testing programme. In addition, senior secondary pupils will be required to observe 2m physical distancing while in school and on school transport in the period immediately after the return. We are also publishing today updated school safety guidance, developed with the education recovery group, which sets out a range of additional safety mitigations. To help implement them, we will provide local authorities and schools with an additional £40 million, as part of a wider £100 million package to accelerate school recovery. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance will confirm the details of that investment later this afternoon.

The final point that I want to make about schools, before setting out a more general message about the phased reopening, is that the national qualifications 2021 group will soon publish further details on how qualifications will be awarded this year in a way that fairly reflects people's experience of remote learning. We have decided that all teachers and lecturers involved in awarding national qualifications this year will receive a one-off payment of £400, which will be paid to part-time teachers on a pro rata basis. Two days will be set aside for teachers to work on assessments this year. Further details concerning the payment and the assessment support days will be provided shortly.

The steps that I have set out are clearly of great importance, but there is a more general and overriding message that I need to set out and emphasise today. The success of that limited reopening and the prospect of getting, we hope, more pupils back into school later in March very much depends on all of us continuing to abide by the wider restrictions. The evidence suggests that

the key risk in reopening schools is not transmission of the virus within schools; instead, the risk comes from the increased contact that the reopening might spark among the wider adult population. The risk is that schools going back might lead to parents socialising more, at the school gates for example, or returning to the workplace rather than working from home. I know how difficult it is, but I am asking parents and employers to make sure that that does not happen. If you are an employer, please understand that employees who were working from home while their children were being home schooled should still work from home next week, even if their children are back at school. It is, of course, a legal obligation for all employers to support employees to work from home as far as is possible.

In addition, if you are a parent whose children will soon be going back to primary school, I can only imagine what a relief that will be, but please do not use it as an opportunity to meet up with other parents or friends. The hard but really inescapable fact is this: if the return to school leads to more contacts between adults over the next few weeks, transmission of the virus will quickly rise again. That will jeopardise our ability to sustain even this limited return and make it much less likely that we can get more pupils back soon. It would also set back our progress more generally.

For now—I cannot emphasise this point strongly enough—please treat Monday's important milestone as a return to education for children only and not as a return to greater normality for the rest of us. If we all do that, I am hopeful that this return to school will be consistent with continued progress in suppressing the virus. If that proves to be the case, I am optimistic that we will soon be able to set out the next phase in the journey back to school for more young people. Although I cannot set out an indicative date for that today, I hope to be in a position to do so in two weeks' time.

As I said earlier, between now and the next review date in two weeks' time, we will publish the new strategic framework, plotting a gradual route back to greater normality, we hope, for all of us. The framework will continue to prioritise education, followed by greater family contact and the phased reopening of the economy, probably with non-essential retail starting to open first. It will be clear on the trade-offs, not least the continued travel restrictions that will be necessary to make more normality within our own borders possible.

For now, though, the most important priority, if any of that is to be attainable in the weeks ahead, is to continue to firmly suppress the virus. That means sticking to the current lockdown rules. I

know that, by acknowledging how hard those rules are, I do not make them any easier for anybody. I desperately wish that I could be firmer now about exactly when and how we will exit lockdown in the weeks ahead, but I am acutely aware that moving too quickly or getting the balance wrong will cause cases to rise again. That would mean more people ill and in hospital, more pressure on the national health service and the prospect of more, not fewer, restrictions as we have to start all over again in getting the virus back under control.

The fact is that a cautious approach, however frustrating it is for all of us, will be more successful and sustainable. Please continue to stick to the letter and the spirit of the rules. Stay at home, except for essential purposes. Do not meet people from other households indoors. Follow the FACTS advice when you are out. Work from home whenever you can. If you are an employer, support your employees to work from home. By doing all of that, especially as children start to go back to school, we will continue to protect each other, our communities and the NHS. It will allow us, we hope, to keep the virus under control while we vaccinate more and more people, and make our way, slowly but surely and steadily, to better and brighter days ahead. I urge everyone to continue to stick with it and stick together. Stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives.

The Presiding Officer: The First Minister will now take questions.

Ruth Davidson (Edinburgh Central) (Con): I thank the First Minister for advance notice of her statement. We have come to the chamber many times to call for the pace of the vaccine roll-out to pick up; we are delighted that it has happened. Scotland and the United Kingdom now lead the whole of Europe and much of the rest of the world in delivering the vaccine as quickly and efficiently as possible. Front-line health staff, volunteers, retired returners and our armed forces deserve the highest praise for all their heroic efforts. Although the road ahead will be rocky as vaccine supplies face hold-ups everywhere, the light at the end of the tunnel is getting brighter.

Our schools are seeing a similar ray of light, with confirmation today that they can start to reopen again safely in the near future. We have called for a schools catch-up plan, built around a national tutoring service to stop the growth of the attainment gap, to be published as soon as possible, and we hope that the Scottish National Party will take that proposal on board.

To get us closer to normality, we need to get all key workers vaccinated as soon as possible. The Scottish Government has not yet confirmed details of phase 2, but it would be helpful if we could begin to understand more of its thinking on the matter. JCVI guidance on the next phase states:

“Vaccination of those at increased risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2 due to their occupation could also be a priority in the next phase. This could include first responders, the military, those involved in the justice system, teachers, transport workers, and public servants essential to the pandemic response.”

Has the First Minister reached a decision on whether any of those groups, or any other group of key workers, is to be prioritised as part of the roll-out of phase 2 of the vaccination programme and, if not, when will that decision be made?

The First Minister: As I have done regularly in recent days, I record again my thanks to everybody who is involved in the planning and delivery of the vaccine programme. The progress would be exceptional at any time but, given the severe weather that Scotland encountered this past week, it has been beyond exceptional. I will never be able to convey my appreciation sufficiently to everybody who is involved.

It is important to point out that, as well as the fact that we have such large numbers of people vaccinated—28 per cent of the adult population already—in the most vulnerable groups, what is most significant is our uptake rates, which stand favourable comparison to anything in any other part of the UK. I hope that the protection that has been given to older people in care homes and to the oldest and most vulnerable in the community will allow us to soon see a significant reduction in the impact in the form of serious illness and death from the virus. As I said earlier, we are already seeing that impact materialise in care homes. We should not underestimate just how important that point is.

The unknown question—at least one of them—is how much impact vaccination will have on transmission. Does vaccination stop us getting or passing on the virus? The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport and I had another discussion yesterday afternoon with Astra-Zeneca, and the early data on the matter is encouraging and positive—certainly in relation to the variant that is circulating in the UK. We need more data to be absolutely sure about that.

On the second point, on schools, I said that we would make additional funding available to schools to accelerate a school recovery programme, and both the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, with regard to money, and the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills will set out more details shortly.

I re-emphasise my point. If the gradual, phased return to school is to be as successful as we want it to be and if it is to lead to a more substantial return, the rest of us have to shoulder our responsibility to ensure that, at this stage, the return is limited to children going back to school and does not trigger a wider return to greater

normality, because that would set us all back considerably.

Ruth Davidson has said that the Scottish Government has not set out the next phase of the vaccination programme yet. I do not think that any Government in the UK has set out the detail of that phase yet. We are all not just considering provisional advice from the JCVI but waiting to see whether it has more considered advice on the order that we prioritise vaccination of the rest of the population after we have done everybody over 50 and everybody with underlying health conditions.

We will set that programme out as quickly as possible. All Governments take care to take and follow the expert advice so that we get the programme as right as possible. We will focus on the completion of the JCVI priority groups now and give an indication of the order of priority for the rest of the population over the course of the next few weeks.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I thank the First Minister for an advance copy of her statement. I, too, wish to pass on my condolences to those who have lost loved ones to Covid.

First, I thank all those who have been involved in delivering vaccinations. They have done a tremendous job and deserve our gratitude. The First Minister will be aware, though, that both NHS England and NHS Wales have said that they will complete the vaccinations of the JCVI target list—that is, all those over 50 and the clinically vulnerable—by the end of April but that here in Scotland we will not have completed those groups until the end of May. Will she explain why there is a month's difference, and will she commit to also completing those vaccinations by the end of April?

Secondly, the First Minister will be aware of the concerns—*[Interruption.]* If John Swinney would care to stop muttering, Presiding Officer, I might be able to progress with my question. The First Minister will be aware of the concerns about supply, which have resulted in the partial closure of vaccination centres such as Ravenscraig, which is down to weekends only; Port Glasgow and Greenock, which are down from seven to two days a week; and Paisley and Renfrew, where reduced hours are reported. When will the supply issues be resolved? Will the Government be able to ramp up vaccinations again so that we can catch up on the backlog, and will she guarantee that everyone who is due their second dose of the vaccine will get that within the 12-week timeframe?

The First Minister: On that last point, the answer is yes. That is partly why we have indicated a slight slowing in the pace of vaccination over the next couple of weeks. I will come on to that in more detail.

On the vaccination of the remainder of the JCVI priority groups, we are all working to pretty much the same timetable. We have said that we will do it by early May—I think that I have said that on repeated occasions, and we are being a little cautious on that because of the continued uncertainties about supply. However, given the pace that we have set, in which, for the past week or so—or perhaps for slightly longer—Scotland has been recording a daily vaccination rate that is the fastest not just in the UK but in the whole of Europe. Although we monitor that literally daily, that success gives me great confidence that, if we have the supplies that we need, we will be able to vaccinate quickly and—I hope—not just meet those targets but even exceed them.

Jackie Baillie asked me whether I was aware of the concerns about supply. Actually, it is the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport and I who have alerted people over the past few days to concerns about supply. We are being transparent about the issues that we are grappling with. I will set out briefly what they are. We are dealing with three factors that come together. First—and this is really good news—we have vaccinated more than 75,000 extra people compared with the deployment plan that we published a few weeks ago, because uptake rates have been so high. At this stage, we have vaccinated more people than we thought we would.

Secondly, Pfizer has not reduced the overall number of doses that we will get, but it has rephased the delivery of those. We know that, over the next couple of weeks, we will get slightly less in supply than we originally thought.

Thirdly, as I have already alluded to, we are now at the stage of the programme at which we have to start keeping back some doses in order to start vaccinating people with their second doses.

That combination of factors means that, for a couple of weeks, we think, instead of doing the 60,000 vaccinations a day that we were doing over the past week, we will be doing in the region of 30,000 a day. That means that some vaccination centres, although they have not closed, will go from seven days a week to five days, just to manage that reduction. As soon as the supplies start coming through, which is the bit that we are just not in control of, because we do not manufacture the vaccine, that will ramp up again and we will be hitting the pace that we were hitting last week, which I remind everybody was the fastest of any vaccination programme anywhere in Europe.

There are big challenges in this, and we are trying to be open about them while making sure that we vaccinate people as quickly as possible. The people across the country who have been delivering that deserve our grateful thanks,

because they have been doing a fabulous job, and it is to their credit that I can say, for the third time in this answer, that we have had the fastest programme in the whole of Europe.

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): I extend my thanks to all those involved in delivering the vaccination programme in Scotland.

The roll-out of regular testing for school staff and senior pupils, as proposed in a Green motion that was agreed by the Parliament last year, is very welcome. However, as we advance through the first phase of priority vaccinations, the Scottish Government needs to be making decisions about the next phase. Given that the First Minister has said that getting all children back to school is her top priority, and notwithstanding that she said in her answer to Ms Davidson's question that the JCVI will decide, can she confirm whether teachers and all school staff will be prioritised? Can she outline what else is being done to ensure that schools are as safe as possible? For example, will funds be made available to improve ventilation in classrooms? That measure has been shown to reduce transmission.

The First Minister: Any teacher or member of the education workforce who is in one of the initial priority groups will be getting vaccinated right now. That is important because of what we know about the vaccine. We do not yet know that it reduces transmission, but we do know that it reduces illness and death. The priority has been vaccinating most quickly those who are most clinically at risk, and that includes teachers and anybody in any profession who is in one of those groups because of their age or clinical vulnerability. After that, we need to ensure that we take account of all the clinical and expert advice that we get.

I am sure that Alison Johnstone did not mean to dismiss the role of the JCVI but, to give people an understanding, I think that in other parts of the UK—certainly in England—the Government is statutorily bound to follow the JCVI. That is not the case here. However, the Government has never in the lifetime of the Parliament gone against the JCVI's advice on immunisation and vaccination. That is extremely weighty, so it would be wrong for us not to pay attention to it or not to give due time for the JCVI to give any advice that it wanted to give.

As we go through the rest of the current priority list, that consideration is under way, and we will set that out as quickly as possible. It may be—I cannot say this for sure right now—that occupations will have more priority in the next phase, regardless of clinical risk, given that the first phase has focused so much on clinical vulnerability.

On wider mitigations in schools, testing is very important. The availability of lateral flow devices is allowing us to do that. The guidance that I have talked about in addition to the 2m distancing for senior phase pupils sets out some of the other steps that will be in place. As I said in my opening statement—the Cabinet Secretary for Finance will talk more about this in her statement later this afternoon—we are making significant additional funding available to local councils and schools. If changes to ventilation in individual schools are required, for example, we are making money available to do exactly that.

Let me be very clear. We want children back to school, but we will not compromise the safety of children or those who work in our schools.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): The First Minister was silent on care home visiting in her statement, even though she indicated, when we discussed it in the chamber last week, that it could be allowed soon. Conditions are increasingly safe. Almost all residents were vaccinated weeks ago, and the vaccine has been found to be as effective in real life as it was in clinical trials. In her statement, the First Minister highlighted the reducing impact of the virus on care homes. The toll of separation on families and their loved ones is heavy, and it grows every single day. When will families be allowed to get together? When will care home visiting start?

The First Minister: As I have said before, that is of the utmost importance. Willie Rennie said that conditions are increasingly safe. That is a lot more glib than I would ever be—certainly on the basis of the advice that I have access to. We cannot afford to make assumptions about the safety of the most vulnerable people in the most vulnerable settings. We think that, with vaccination and other mitigations, they can be a lot safer, but we still need to be cautious.

In my statement—I will go into more detail about this when we publish the strategic framework next week—I said that we will set out the order of priority for reopening, with education the top priority. I cannot remember the exact phrase that I used, but I talked about increased family contact as the next priority. Care home visiting is very much part of that.

As I said last week, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport is working on revised guidance right now. I think that she has a meeting with providers of care homes this week—she is telling me that it is some time tomorrow—in order to try to finalise that guidance. I hope that I will be able to say more about that next Tuesday, if not before then, and that we will have greater normality back, but we must continue to be cautious.

The toll that the virus has taken on our care homes is significant and it will be subject to scrutiny—rightly and properly—for some time to come. We think that we have substantially reduced the toll during the second wave, and vaccination is helping us to do more of that, but we cannot throw caution to the wind when we are dealing with the people in our society who are the most vulnerable to the virus.

Shona Robison (Dundee City East) (SNP): We all want to see a safe return to nurseries and schools, and we understand the importance of that for education and overall wellbeing. I support the approach that has been set out today.

The First Minister will be aware of the various studies that have shown that the learning of those who come from more deprived communities has suffered disproportionately as a result of Covid-19. Will she say a bit more about what actions the Government is taking to ensure that those vulnerable groups receive the extra support that they need and deserve?

The First Minister: That is one the most important questions in the whole of the situation that we are grappling with right now. As we did prior to the pandemic, we are targeting additional support for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. As we have said previously, we have supplied devices to support digital learning at home, and provided support for home-school link workers to maintain regular contact with children. We have also supported the delivery of summer learning and support programmes, including family support workers, provision of food, and additional learning materials. We are also investing, and have invested during the past few years, in the Scottish attainment challenge, which includes money that councils have been able to use to deal with the poverty-related impacts of Covid.

Those are important issues that will not go away as we start to come out of the Covid situation. They will require attention and investment for some time to come.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): The limited return of school pupils is welcome, but questions remain. The current approach suggests that cohorts of pupils will return in three-week blocks. Adding in the Easter holidays, it could yet be some months before pupils are back in class, which would mean the loss of an entire term of classroom learning. Will the new social distancing measures that have been announced for school transport and the school estate be practically feasible to introduce and enforce? Many on the ground think that they will not. Can the First Minister guarantee that every school seeing a return of pupils on Monday will have a comprehensive testing regime in place?

The First Minister: First, I caution against the assumption—although I am not saying that it is an unreasonable assumption, based on what I have said—that it will be cohorts in three-week blocks and that it will take a long time. I am certainly not standing here today and ruling that out, because I cannot. Equally, however, if the data allows it, we will try to get children back to school much more quickly than that. I know that it is difficult to avoid sometimes, but we should stop making fixed assumptions. We will do everything that we can to see that return to school happen as quickly as possible.

Although children are not physically in school, they are learning remotely. We know that that has an impact on their education and their wider wellbeing. I am sure that not every parent would agree with this, but certainly many of those who have contacted me have said that the provision of remote learning has improved significantly from what happened with the school closures during the first lockdown. We continue to work with councils and make provision for them to continue to support that.

Similarly, every reasonable step will be taken to make sure that school buildings are as safe as possible for children as they return. In that context, I am assured that every school to which senior phase pupils return next week has testing provision in place. As I said in my statement, more than 2,000 schools have had test kits delivered, and there is guidance about how they should be used and how their impact will be monitored. That is an important step forward, and we continue to work with those across education to take whatever additional steps are necessary.

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): Given the increased transmissibility of the new variant of the virus, will the First Minister confirm that, in reviewing the strategic framework, the metrics that are used to determine what level any part of the country falls within might require to be adjusted, and is she in a position to indicate at this point what any such adjusted metrics might look like?

The First Minister: That is an important question. Before I come to it, the Deputy First Minister told me when I sat down after answering the previous question that some schools had their test supplies disrupted last week because of the weather, but steps are under way to make sure that they get those supplies as quickly as possible. That does not change the information that I gave earlier.

On Annabelle Ewing's point, we are obviously thinking very carefully about that and we will suggest a number of metrics in the strategic framework next week that will guide the different phases of lifting lockdown. I anticipate that that

would initially be on a national basis, apart from those islands that are in a different position already. We hope that at some point we would move back to a more regional basis, with areas in different levels depending on the prevalence of the virus, and we will also start to set out what metrics would guide that.

One of the most difficult metrics for us to determine at the moment—it might take longer than the next week to do so—is, to be crude about it, what percentage of the population needs to be vaccinated in order to start easing restrictions. One of the reasons why that is difficult right now is that we do not yet know exactly what impact the vaccine has on the transmission of the virus. That is an area of uncertainty. We are spending a lot of time with clinical advisers trying to understand that and see how definitive we can be around that metric. It may take a bit longer than the next week to get to a settled point on that.

People will remember the metrics and indicators used in the previous version of the strategic framework that guided the decisions on levels. We are looking to amend those to take much more account of the World Health Organization advice on those matters. That is what we will set out, among other things, in the document that we will publish next week.

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): In her statement, the First Minister invited people to email her, and I do not want to put anyone off doing that. However, I wrote to her at the start of the year about the closure of places of worship, explaining the importance of communal worship for spiritual, social and psychological benefits, and I have received no response as yet. With schools beginning to return and Lent starting tomorrow, will the First Minister give some reassurance to Scotland's Christians that she will prioritise churches in her strategic framework so that they can be among the first places to reopen? We hope that that might be in time to celebrate Easter.

The First Minister: We will try to get places of worship back to normality. They are not closed, but the ability to worship normally and freely is restricted. I deeply regret that, as I know that everybody does, and we want to get that back to normality as quickly as possible. I do not want to pre-empt what we will set out in the strategic framework next week, but members will see a priority given to getting places of worship open again, given the importance that we attach to that. We will continue to do that as quickly as possible. I know that many people feel strongly about it and I understand that, but nobody in the Government, including me, wants anywhere to be operating less than normally for any longer than is necessary. It is easier for people to bear that with some settings than with others. We know how difficult it is with

schools and care homes, and it is difficult for places of worship as well.

As we get the virus suppressed and continue to make progress with vaccination, that is what I mean when I say that we will have to make choices about what matters most to us. Sometimes those will be difficult choices, but the more we can build a consensus about the things that really matter—I would include places of worship in that—the more we can come out of this lockdown in a sensible and sustainable way and, I hope, avoid the need for another one later in the year.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): Will the First Minister expand on how the phased reopening of schools that she outlined in her statement reflects the need to balance the harms associated with keeping children out of school with the latest clinical and scientific advice? How will the Scottish Government continue to support childcare providers who have experienced financial pressure due to the pandemic and the restrictions placed on them?

The First Minister: We have given financial support to childcare providers, and we will continue to look favourably at that as far as we can. We made some additional support available to childminders—just last week or the week before, I think—in recognition of the particular difficulties that they are facing.

The balance that we are trying to strike is not an easy one, and the judgments are often quite fine. We recognise the harm that is being done to young people of all ages as a result of being outside school, away from their friends and the normal experiences of growing up, so we want to introduce normality there as much as possible.

We think that school environments, with the right mitigations in place, are safe, and that is why I emphasised in my statement the following point. We know that the risks around school opening—those risks are real, in terms of the impact that they can have on wider community transmission—come not so much from transmission inside schools as from the contacts that go around school opening, and parents feeling that they are able to go back to the workplace or socialise more because their children are in school. That is what will make school opening unsustainable if we do not all make a concerted effort to make sure that it does not happen, which is why I will keep repeating this to parents and other adults out there: please, please do not take Monday's milestone in education as a return to normality, because if we do that, there is a real risk that we will go backwards rather than continue to move forward.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I have a constituent in Auchterarder who is currently working as an aerospace engineer with Bristow in Nigeria and is due back home on leave in March. Under the rules in England, he would not need to quarantine when he flies home, because Nigeria is not on the red list and aerospace engineers are exempt. In Scotland, however, he would face quarantine, with the heavy costs that are involved, and he would not be exempt. How will the First Minister address that situation?

The First Minister: I am happy to look at any individual case but, although it is difficult for people, particularly if they are in the kind of situation that Liz Smith has outlined, those rules are in place in Scotland for a reason. The biggest risk—certainly one of the biggest risks—that we face in the next few months, which would set us all back and put us back in lockdown, is the importation of new variants into the country. They might circulate more quickly and might be more severe, and crucially—as we fear could be the case with the South African variant—they might beat the vaccine or at least reduce its efficacy, so we must be vigilant and stringent in trying to avoid that.

I wish that there was a common UK-wide position in this area, and I hope that there will be in the future. Nevertheless, I, along with my colleagues, have a responsibility to ensure that we do everything in our power to avoid the importation of new variants of the virus to Scotland, and that is what we will continue to do.

We will continue to be as flexible as we can be, both with exemptions for good reasons and in considering individual cases that may involve unique circumstances. However, the more exemptions to the rules we allow, and the more individual circumstances we cater for, the leakier a system like this becomes, and the more chance there is that, a few months from now, we will be back in lockdown because a new variant is beating the vaccine and circulating faster, and we need to get it under control. We have to do everything that we can to guard against that.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): The First Minister responded to a question on wider preparations for testing of senior students and teachers. Can she give any update on testing and vaccinating more police officers?

The First Minister: My answer is the same; the answer does not vary depending on which occupational group I am talking about. Right now, police officers, if they have underlying health conditions or are in one of the older age cohorts—that is perhaps less likely, although ultimately it includes everybody over 50—will be included in the initial JCVI priority list. We have not yet come to final decisions about whether there will be an

order of priority in the rest of the population after that, or whether we will just vaccinate the rest of the population as they come. We are waiting to see whether there is any more detailed expert advice, but we will take those decisions as soon as possible.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): Teachers have performed an outstanding job in delivering learning by virtual means. However, I know that the First Minister will agree with me that today's announcement is welcome because it should be the beginning of the end of those arrangements, which were made necessary because of Covid.

Given the desire to get back to face-to-face learning, does she share my alarm, and that of parents and students at James Gillespie's high school in my constituency, at the school's proposal that blended learning be continued through the next academic year for secondary 6 pupils, not because of Covid or social distancing requirements but because of a lack of physical space in the school buildings? It is being proposed that 40 per cent of teaching will be provided online for S6 next year. I do not expect the First Minister to be able to comment on the detail of that but, given the announcement today, can she confirm that blended learning should be limited to dealing with the pandemic and should not continue any longer than strictly necessary? Does she agree that virtual and blended learning cannot be allowed to become the new normal for any school students, let alone those in S6 at Gillespie's next year?

The First Minister: I would agree with much, if not all, of the sentiment in that question. I might not be able to go as far as the member would like on some of the detail, because I cannot see that far into the future regarding the control of the virus, unfortunately—I wish that I could.

I certainly do not want blended learning to become the new normal. As far as I am concerned, it is necessary right now because of Covid, and we should not have it in place any longer than is necessary, but we need to have it in place for as long as it is necessary to help with the suppression of the virus.

I have been clear that it is the priority of the Government to get children back to in-person, face-to-face learning on a full-time basis as soon as possible, just as we did quite successfully last August for an extended period.

As for what the phasing of that looks like beyond 22 February, I hope that I can give more of an indication of that when I am standing here two weeks from now, but I cannot be definitive about that now. However, I certainly do not want blended

learning to be necessary for any longer than the virus absolutely necessitates.

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): Can the First Minister clarify when general patients who are in hospital over the medium-to-long term will get their vaccine?

The First Minister: There was a story about this matter in some of the media yesterday. It is down to clinical judgment. I do not have the vaccine green book in front of me, but I was reading the extract on this point yesterday, so I am talking from memory to an extent: the general position is that patients should be vaccinated before they are discharged from hospital. When exactly that happens within their stay in hospital will be down to clinical judgment.

There will be some circumstances in which the clinical judgment is that, while a patient is still in the acute phase of their illness, it would not make sense to vaccinate in case any side effects from the vaccination confused the symptoms of their illness. In those circumstances, the clinical judgment would be to wait until the person was better and closer to discharge. The general position is that any patient in those circumstances should be vaccinated before they are discharged from hospital.

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I am sure that we are all aware of the impact of the restrictions on mental health. People of all ages have been left isolated from their friends, family and support groups. Has any additional support been provided during this lockdown, given that a recent study showed a rise in suicidal thoughts among young people?

The First Minister: We have provided additional support at various stages throughout the pandemic so far. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance may have more to say about further support for mental health later this afternoon or in the course of budget considerations over the next couple of weeks.

We are all acutely aware of the impact on mental health, from a milder impact right through to very severe impacts. As with so many implications of the pandemic, there will be a need to give due support to people for that for some time to come.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I welcome the return to school of P1 to P3 pupils across Scotland, including in my constituency. Composite classes, which have a maximum of 25 pupils, are not uncommon there. Given that class limit, will the First Minister confirm that, in a P3/P4 composite class, only P3 pupils will return while their P4 classmates will remain at home, or will there be flexibility?

The First Minister: Where P3/P4 composite classes are in place, P3 children should be taught in school from Monday and remote learning should continue for P4 children, except in exceptional circumstances. That will all be confirmed today in guidance relating to the phased reopening of schools. I know that making those arrangements for P3/P4 composite classes will be challenging, but we encourage schools and local authorities to use sensible flexibility in how they deploy staff and deliver learning. Ultimately, though, we have to consider the question in the context of the pandemic. Routinely allowing exceptions for some P4 children would increase the number of children in school, which might start to send mixed messages about which children are returning to school and might compromise the safe and sustainable phased reopening that we are seeking to achieve.

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): Ravenscraig sports centre has the capacity to vaccinate 2,000 people a day, but reports state that it is open only at weekends due to a lack of demand. Its unused capacity could be used to vaccinate the entire North Lanarkshire education workforce in just three days, ahead of schools reopening; to vaccinate retail workers; or to start vaccinating other priority groups. How will the Scottish Government ensure that vital capacity is not lying unused?

The First Minister: People just need to look at the performance of our vaccination teams over the past couple of weeks to know that we are not leaving capacity "lying unused" if we have the vaccines to vaccinate people. We cannot do what Mark Griffin has set out for reasons that are beyond our control. Vaccine supply is controlled by the pharmaceutical companies that manufacture the vaccines, and we do not have enough supply to do what Mark Griffin has set out while getting through the priority JCVI groups and starting to give second doses.

The key constraint that we will face for the next couple of weeks will not be our capacity or our ability to vaccinate quickly; it will simply be the number of vaccine doses that we have at our disposal. As soon as the supply ramps up, the operation will ramp up again. In recent days, I have been trying to set that out very clearly for people, so that everybody understands the challenges that we are confronting. One of the reasons that the health secretary and I spoke to AstraZeneca yesterday was to get as much clarity as possible on its expectations of forward supply, so that we can factor that in.

Our performance speaks for itself. The key constraining factor that we face right now is supply. We hope that that will not constrain us for more than a couple of weeks and that supplies will

then start to improve again. That is certainly our expectation, but we can go only as fast as the total number of doses that are available to us allows us to go.

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): Travel to and from Scotland for our merchant navy crews is vital for their continued essential work and employment contracts. Can the First Minister confirm that the Scottish Government will continue to comply with the arrangements that are currently in place, which have been agreed between the UK Government, the UK Chamber of Shipping and officer and crew unions? The arrangements cover quarantine procedures when people return on leave to the UK, often from extended tours of duties, particularly during the current Covid pandemic.

The First Minister: Off the top of my head, I know of no reason why we would change those arrangements, but I will double-check whether there is anything that I am not immediately aware of and confirm that with Maurice Corry. Essential work—what he has outlined is, of course, included in that category—is permitted.

I appreciate that people want—for very good reasons—to make the case for exemptions, but let us not lose sight of the fact that we should all be seeking to get the message across to people that, unless it is essential, they should not travel. The more we get that message across, the less worried we will be about some exemptions for genuinely essential purposes. If there is any reason for the position to change, I will get back to Maurice Corry, but I am not aware of any such reason at the moment.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): There is huge disparity in online teaching by schools. Some children are being taught via Teams and others have online access only. Some children are not adapting very well to the situation. Does the First Minister think that there is a case for a more national approach to ensure that there is some basic uniformity in what children receive? Will she encourage more one-to-one tuition when that is safe and possible? Many children have struggled through the pandemic and will need one-to-one tuition to get them back on track.

The First Minister: There is always a difficult balance to strike. If we had tried to impose national uniformity, I suspect that lots of members would have said that schools know their young people best and that we should allow schools greater flexibility. I do not say that to criticise; it is just a fact of life.

Schools do know their young people best, and it is important to trust teachers' professional judgment in how they provide their teaching. We know that, while some children are out of school,

we need to continue to ensure that the remote learning offer is what it needs to be. Of course, e-Sgoil has provision for tutoring and additional support, which is really important.

All of that brings us back to the central point that we want to get children back into in-person, full-time schooling as quickly as possible. That means that the rest of us all need to agree to live with these tough restrictions for a little while longer, so that we can create the headroom in the fight against the virus to make that possible.

Elaine Smith: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Earlier, in response to my question, the First Minister said that places of worship “are not closed.” However, the regulations state very clearly that they are closed for communal worship and private prayer and are allowed to open only for very small funerals and weddings. Therefore, will the First Minister take this opportunity to correct the record, as is allowed by our rules, because many people will be confused by the earlier assertion—[*Interruption.*] I think that we all know that it is absolutely essential to be clear about the regulations that are in place. The importance of that cannot be overemphasised.

The Presiding Officer: That is not a point of order, but it is a helpful point of correction that I am sure the First Minister will—[*Interruption.*] The member has made a point about the information that was given, and I am sure that the First Minister will pay attention to it. I will give the First Minister a chance to respond, if she wishes to do so.

The First Minister: Thank you, Presiding Officer. I would not normally do this, but it is a really important point for many people across the country. Any careful listening to Elaine Smith's reading of the regulations and to what I said would show that there is no inconsistency.

Places of worship are not closed, but they are able to open only for very limited purposes. It is because I know how difficult and distressing that is for many people that I am so intent on all of us trying to get into a better position as quickly as possible. I would not want anyone to think that there is glibness or an inability to understand how serious the issue is. It does nobody any good for us to quibble over the precise wording when, in fact, we both articulated the decision correctly, although perhaps we put the emphasis in different places.

Budget Update

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Lewis Macdonald): The next item of business is a statement by Kate Forbes on a budget update. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

15:28

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance (Kate Forbes): My objectives in this budget statement are to give as much early clarity to businesses, public bodies and communities as I can and to be as transparent as possible.

This is a budget for the nation. It reflects the challenges that face each family and business. However, to deliver certainty, the Parliament must pass the budget. I have met every party, individually and collectively, to help reach an agreement on the 2021-22 Scottish budget. We are still in the throes of a national emergency, and it is important that the Parliament works together to respond to it.

In advance of final allocations in the spring budget revision on 25 February, I can confirm that further 2020-21 non-recurring Covid support will be made available.

There will be £275 million for local government for support that is needed due to pressures from Covid, including in relation to lost income. Councils will have the freedom and flexibility to decide how that money is deployed to support the range of Covid-related pressures that they face, ensuring continuity for the critical services that they provide

There will be £40 million for local government to support the on-going deployment of safety mitigations in our schools. That builds on the £50 million that we previously committed and provides certainty to local government as we proceed with the phased reopening of schools and early learning and childcare settings.

There will be £60 million for further and higher education, which includes £40 million of resource funding to help colleges and universities maintain research activity, protect jobs and help students, and £20 million of additional capital to boost research and knowledge exchange.

There will be £25 million to tackle poverty and inequality. Taken together with projected underspends on wider measures, that will enable us to make two key investments. First, there will be a further £100 Covid hardship payment for children and young people who receive free school meals on the basis of low income. The funding offered will also be extended to children

who receive free lunches in early learning and childcare settings.

We know, however, that families with children are not the only people who are struggling financially. Therefore, we will increase by an additional £20 million the funding that is available to councils to tackle financial insecurity in their local areas.

Last but not least, there will be £5.7 million to relieve Covid pressures on forestry.

The United Kingdom Government confirmed this week that we will be provided with a further £873 million in resource, £236 million in capital and £41 million in financial transactions for the financial year 2020-21. Those sums are on top of the previously guaranteed £8.6 billion. That is welcome. Due to our being at a late stage in the financial year, that money can and will be carried over into 2021-22.

The following funding proposals are subject to parliamentary approval of the budget and will be taken forward in the event that our 2021-22 budget assumption of an additional £500 million of Covid consequential is realised and that requisite funds are available via the Scotland reserve. The fact that the funding is likely to be non-recurring constrains what it can be used for.

When I presented the budget last month, I made it clear that, if resources allowed, I would extend 100 per cent non-domestic rates relief for properties in the retail, hospitality, leisure and aviation sectors to cover all of 2021-22. I am now in a position to provide businesses with that certainty. That meets the number 1 ask of the business community and demonstrates our commitment to supporting the economy. So that resources can be targeted at those who need them most, we are working with councils to ensure that the application process will be live before bills are issued.

In addition to extending 100 per cent rates relief for those sectors, we will continue to give newspaper publishing 100 per cent non-domestic rates relief in 2021-22, with careful consideration of the conditions set out by the National Union of Journalists. We will also defer the removal of charitable rates relief from mainstream independent schools to 1 April 2022.

The impacts of Covid will continue beyond this academic year and we must continue to support a longer-term programme to enable children to catch up on missed education. Therefore, we will provide a further £60 million to support and accelerate that process. That money will be available for purposes that include ensuring that schools have sufficient teaching and support staff to meet the needs of children and young people across Scotland.

We are aware of the financial impact that the pandemic has had on households and want to provide support during this time. I confirm that we will invest an additional £100 million in 2021-22 to help low-income households. We will announce more details of that investment after it has been fully discussed with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

I want to ensure that the UK Government does not claw back any of the support that we provide, for example through reduced benefit payments, and will therefore ask UK ministers to help us help people in hardship during this difficult time.

We know that the mental health impacts of the pandemic will be significant and that the past year has been tough for those with pre-existing mental health conditions. I am today announcing £120 million for a mental health recovery and renewal fund, which takes our total spend on mental health in 2021-22 to in excess of £1.2 billion.

The fund will ensure the delivery of our mental health transition and recovery plan. It includes a headline focus on improving specialist child and adolescent mental health services, addressing long waits and clearing waiting list backlogs. Nearly £10 million will be allocated to speed up waiting lists for adults for psychological therapies. We also recognise the need to focus on supporting people at the earliest possible stage, so we will invest in enhanced community support. We will also provide significant additional support for mental health in primary care settings.

Over the summer period, national health service boards developed new processes for admissions for elective surgery, in line with infection control measures, and in September 2020, elective surgery activity was at around 65 per cent of the level in the previous year. Today, I am also announcing a further £60 million of investment in waiting times recovery to enable NHS boards to start to address the pandemic-induced backlog, remobilise our services and improve access to hospital-based services.

Moving on to capital, I was unable to go as far as I would have liked in supporting the provision of affordable housing, due to cuts in our capital funding from the United Kingdom Government. However, I can now confirm that I will allocate a further £100 million grant and £20 million in financial transactions for affordable housing next year. That means that we will now invest more than £3.5 billion in housing over the next five years, with more than £3.4 billion of that delivering more social and affordable homes in communities across Scotland.

To support a green recovery and help us meet our climate ambitions, I am also allocating today an additional £45 million of capital to heat

decarbonisation, energy efficiency and fuel poverty for 2021-22, bringing the total for heat and energy efficiency in the budget to more than £258 million of capital.

I have two further points to make. To support a sustainable economic recovery, I am now proposing an additional £50 million in capital for town centres and 20-minute neighbourhoods. That will bring this year's investment for the place-based investment programme to £105 million and will support regeneration in local communities.

We know that the tourism sector has suffered deeply due to the pandemic, and we want to support its strong return so that, when the time is right, we can all enjoy the world-class offerings that Scotland has to offer. I am therefore pleased to be able to provide a further £10 million in capital funding specifically for tourism infrastructure in our rural communities next year. That is separate from the doubling of the rural tourism infrastructure fund, as already published in the budget.

Finally, I am also proposing an additional £32 million for local bridges maintenance, on which we will set out further detail shortly, to rebuild and maintain key lifeline bridges such as the Great Bernera bridge, which has been raised with me by Alasdair Allan and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar on several occasions.

In the interests of transparency, I have set out the additional funding at my disposal for next year's budget and how I wish to deploy it to support our national recovery. I am sure that each party in the chamber will recognise something in my statement today that it has called for. I will continue to work with all parties in the chamber to help deliver a budget for the nation that is fit for these times.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary will now take questions on the issues raised in her statement. I intend to allow around 20 minutes for questions, after which we will move on to the next item of business.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of her statement. As she outlined, we have seen additional funding of £1.1 billion coming from the United Kingdom this week, which demonstrates how the broad shoulders of the UK are helping to support Scottish public services, businesses and individuals in these difficult times.

I welcome the various announcements today—in particular, the extension of 100 per cent rates relief for businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors for the next 12 months, and the extension of rates relief to newspapers. The Scottish Conservatives have been calling for both those issues to be addressed.

I also welcome the additional funds for education, although I fear that they might fall short of what is required, if we are to close the attainment gap and redress some of the damage that has been done over the past year.

Today, I want to ask the finance secretary about business support. Every day I am, like most MSPs, contacted by businesses that are fearful about the future and are running out of cash fast because they are not eligible for existing support funds, which is perhaps because they are still legally permitted to trade, but nevertheless have lost a large amount of their business. Those businesses are being pointed towards the local council discretionary fund, but the payments that are available to them from that source fall far short of recompensing them for the losses that they have suffered, and of giving them the resources that they need in order to survive. Will the finance secretary look again at how direct business support can be provided to businesses that are teetering on the edge and are falling through the gaps in the existing support and funds that are available?

Kate Forbes: The fact that I am updating the budget just two weeks after publishing the Budget (Scotland) (No 5) Bill illustrates the difficulty of setting a budget while waiting on dribs and drabs of funding from the UK Government, so I gently push back on the notion of the “broad shoulders” of the union. However, I repeat my gratitude for the funding to help us to respond to the pandemic.

I am also appreciative of Murdo Fraser’s welcoming of my statement. As he said, the Tories have publicly asked me to extend non-domestic rates relief, to defer non-domestic rates for independent schools and to increase funding for housing and local government. All that, of course, has been delivered and done in today’s statement. Our having comprehensively met the Conservatives’ asks, all eyes will now be on them. I hope that they will consider passing on that good will to the businesses and households of Scotland by enabling passage of the Budget (Scotland) (No 5) Bill, which provides for on-going support and clarity, which are what the nation needs, right now.

On business support, I agree that we need to keep the support continually under review; that is what I do. The discretionary fund is, of course, by its very nature, discretionary, so it is up to local authorities to decide what they distribute, at what quantum, at what value and how.

On the funding that is available, 94 per cent of business support is live. The grant schemes—bar one—are up and running, and the sectoral schemes are specifically designed to fill gaps in the furlough scheme, the self-employment income support scheme and the strategic fund. We will keep that under review, but we can say quite

categorically that we are trying to reach as many as possible of those who have been excluded. I am always willing to go further, where that is possible.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I, too, thank the cabinet secretary for the advance copy of her statement. I whole-heartedly welcome the extension of non-domestic rates relief for many businesses for all of the next financial year—that was a key ask in Labour’s budget priorities—which provides certainty for businesses in the period ahead.

However, the eligibility criteria for business support are too tight and not all the existing money is being spent. For example, 57 per cent of the coronavirus restrictions fund was allocated, but 4,000 applications were rejected. Will the cabinet secretary urgently review the criteria for business support funds, so that more businesses get help?

I also welcome the additional funding for health services, particularly the funding for mental health. However, it falls well short of what is required. In England and Wales, mental health spending is more than 11 per cent of the overall health budget; by comparison, in Scotland it is about 8 per cent of the health budget.

In the light of the increased demand for mental health services for people with existing conditions, never mind those with new mental health problems, will the cabinet secretary commit to a greater percentage share of NHS funding being allocated to such services, as the Royal College of Psychiatrists has called for?

Kate Forbes: I appreciate the member’s welcoming of a number of points in the budget. Of course, if businesses are to enjoy non-domestic rates relief we will need to get the budget through Parliament. I therefore hope that Scottish Labour will consider very carefully how it can enable that process, so that clarity and certainty can be provided to the very businesses on whose behalf Jackie Baillie has just asked those questions.

We have set out three main ways in which businesses can obtain support. The main one is the strategic framework business fund, which paid out approximately £250 million in January.

Secondly, by establishing sectoral schemes we have tried to reach those who have been excluded from other forms of support. I am always open to reviewing such schemes but, of course, every new one requires additional support—particularly from local government, which distributes it—so it is important that we target it well.

Lastly, the discretionary fund, which has now been quadrupled to £120 million, specifically endeavours to fill all the remaining gaps. Where eligibility criteria can be changed or tweaked, we

will do so. However, it is important that we continue to get funding to those who have not yet had any, rather than build on what has already been provided.

Jackie Baillie referred to the additional funding for mental health services, which I heard her welcome. She knows that, if she believes that those services should have a greater percentage share, I am open to hearing all and any proposals. However, Labour will need to prioritise its proposals on matters that currently range from the pay gap to local government, and now mental health. However, I will be more than happy to work with her on those.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I am grateful for advance sight of the cabinet secretary's statement. In particular, I welcome the additional funding for energy efficiency, which will ensure that a green recovery can be carried out in a way that will save people money in their household budgets.

However, there is a need to go further on achieving such savings much sooner—especially given that there have been fewer than half as many applications for the Scottish child payment as there are eligible children. Is the cabinet secretary continuing to examine other ways in which we can expand eligibility for universal benefits, such as free bus travel and free school meals?

Kate Forbes: I have appreciated the constructive and on-going discussions that we have had with Patrick Harvie and the Scottish Greens on where the budget could go further. My statement certainly reflects a number of points that he has made. Budget negotiations are normally conducted behind closed doors, but I think that it is important to update Parliament on these matters. I look forward to continued discussions with the Greens on their priorities, particularly on anti-poverty and energy efficiency measures.

I say unequivocally that I am absolutely happy to continue our discussions on universal benefits, including free bus travel. Patrick Harvie will know that the relevant instrument has already been laid to give effect to the proposal that was made in last year's budget negotiations to secure free bus travel for under-19s. I want to continue to negotiate and to work constructively on where we might go further.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I am pleased that the finance secretary has returned to the chamber to make a further statement, following the allocation of additional resources from the UK Treasury.

The cabinet secretary knows that Scottish Liberal Democrats will negotiate on the budget proposals and will work constructively and

seriously to reach an agreement. We must cut waiting times for mental health services and improve their delivery, which is why members will debate that very subject tomorrow. The new funding for mental health services that she has announced today will help to meet that challenge.

We also welcome the additional allocations for business, newspapers, the NHS, energy efficiency and our hard-pressed councils and education services. However, will the cabinet secretary say whether the amount of council funding that she has just announced matches the shortfall that COSLA identified?

Kate Forbes: I thank Willie Rennie for his commitment to working constructively. He asked for three matters to be addressed in the budget bill, and all three have been reflected in the statement that I have just made. They are: an additional £100 million for mental health services, more money for education to help young people, and further support for business.

On his specific question on local government, I say that the £275 million that I have announced has no strings attached: it is entirely for local authorities to determine how they will spend it.

The caveat that I would make is that it is non-recurring funding; it is to help with Covid-related pressures. In terms of working with local government, I am sure that local government—a bit like the Scottish Government—can always identify additional pressures and additional ways that it would like to help communities and households. However, I think that it was already a fair settlement and a substantial increase of £275 million will really help and will go a long way.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you very much. Can I encourage succinct questions and answers to allow as many questioners in as possible?

Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP): I welcome the announcement of an additional £100 million for low-income households, which I know many of my constituents in Renfrewshire South stand to benefit from. However, I am concerned that there is a risk of a clawback from the Treasury via the benefits system. Will the cabinet secretary urge the UK Government to make sure that all that money goes into the pockets of those who need it most and is not clawed back via the benefits system?

Kate Forbes: We have previously received reassurances from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and the Department for Work and Pensions with regard to the exceptional steps that have been taken to support people who have been impacted by Covid this year. On that basis, I understand that the funding that is provided through the Covid spring hardship payment and

through support offered by local authorities to tackle financial insecurity will not be taken into account for benefit or tax purposes—a point that is also covered by the fiscal framework. As we develop proposals for the £100 million of support next year, we ask the UK Government to extend those reassurances to ensure that the money is not given with one hand and then taken away by the other. We will engage with our counterparts in the UK Government to seek that assurance.

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): The cabinet secretary has just announced funds for tourism recovery. That is welcome, but any benefit will be hampered by the Scottish National Party's plans for heavy-handed new regulations on short-term lets. The Scottish Guest House and B&B Alliance has said that the plans are the

“final straw in what has been the most depressing of years”.

Does the cabinet secretary recognise that the best way to help Scotland's bed and breakfast sector recover is to scrap plans to introduce these cumbersome regulations?

Kate Forbes: I am not sure that that is related to the capital that I have just announced but, on the specific point, the member will know that Kevin Stewart has announced a working group with sector representatives to look at the concerns that have been raised and to actively work on solutions, including amending legislation where that is required.

However, I will make two further points. First, the funding for tourism infrastructure reflects the challenges that have been faced by a number of local communities, particularly in rural areas, that were overwhelmed in some cases by campers and camper vans, and the capital will go a long way to ensuring that there is sufficient infrastructure in place. Secondly, I would have expected Maurice Golden to welcome the fact that we have just launched funding for B and Bs that pay council tax. They will get the equivalent of the strategic framework business fund, which I am not sure is replicated to the same extent elsewhere in the UK.

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): As we all know, children's education has been significantly impacted as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, so can the cabinet secretary provide any further detail at this stage on how the very welcome additional funding that she has announced will be used to help children in my Cowdenbeath constituency—and, indeed, children across Scotland—catch up with their missed education?

Kate Forbes: I think that the funding will certainly help Annabelle Ewing's Cowdenbeath constituents. Clearly, the impact on young people has been substantial. The £60 million of funding will support local authorities and schools to take

action, including on issues such as learning loss, and health and wellbeing. As I set out in my statement, the funding will be available for purposes that include ensuring that all levels of teaching and support staff in schools can continue to meet the needs of children, including those in Cowdenbeath. We will work alongside local government to ensure that the investment delivers maximum impact and we will update Parliament on the detail in due course.

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): Today's additional money for councils does not address the additional Covid spend and the loss of income reported to us by COSLA, nor the fact that councils have already been hit by £937 million of cuts to non-core services over the past few years—services that will be crucial to community and economic recovery from Covid. Will the Scottish Government use its underspend and UK consequential to deliver the investment that is needed and will it make sure that the council tax freeze on offer is baked into next year's budget?

Kate Forbes: I am unaware of the underspend that Sarah Boyack is referring to, but the funding that I have announced will contribute significantly to meeting the challenges that local government is facing. Certainly, from the figures that we have seen for loss of income, the funding will go a long way. A few weeks ago, when I announced the budget, I indicated that there would be an increase in the funding for loss of income. The funding that has been announced today more than doubles the funding that is available for loss of income, so it will go a long way.

For many local authorities, next year's budget is more challenging, because of the on-going impact of the pandemic. We will work with COSLA to ensure that we understand the impact and provide funding where it is required.

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): I welcome the cabinet secretary's responsiveness to the arguments that I have, perhaps rather unsubtly, been making about the need to replace the bridge to Bernera, which is an island off an island. Can she provide information on the likely timescales for when we will get further details on the funding for bridges more generally, which she has mentioned?

Kate Forbes: I will update Parliament as soon as possible with the specifics. Alasdair Allan has been active in raising concerns about that bridge, and I have met Comhairle nan Eilean Siar on the matter. I hope that the fund will provide essential support for maintaining lifeline services such as that bridge in the Western Isles and bridges elsewhere.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): On 9 December, the Parliament voted by a majority—

with 59 votes in favour—for free school meals for primary pupils to commence in the new financial year. Will the cabinet secretary confirm that the Government is respecting that decision? Now that the funding is available, will today's announcement deliver that measure, in line with the Parliament's wishes?

Kate Forbes: I always think that it is fascinating that the Tories here can vote for free school meals when the Tories south of the border vote against them.

I refer the member to two particular funds in the funding that I have announced today. One is to provide additional support to families who are in need, while maintaining our commitment to free school meals. Secondly, there is support to help young people with regard to education, which is also a Tory ask.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): I was pleased to hear that the finance secretary will invest £100 million in low-income households in the year ahead, including in my Greenock and Inverclyde constituency. Can she provide further detail on whether that support is intended to apply more widely than to low-income families who are also being helped through an additional hardship payment?

Kate Forbes: Stuart McMillan has regularly raised concerns on behalf of his constituency about low-income families and the impact of deprivation with Covid on top of it. We anticipate that we will use the council tax reduction scheme to identify individuals who could benefit from the additional support, and we will work closely with local authorities and COSLA to deliver that support. As with all these things, I will provide the specific details in due course, but I hope that that goes some way to helping Stuart McMillan to answer questions from his constituents in light of the huge impacts of the economic crisis and the health pandemic.

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): I note the increase of £45 million of capital for heat decarbonisation, energy efficiency and fuel poverty. Although today's announcement is a welcome and good step, will the cabinet secretary consider extending the specific energy efficiency budget to £244 million in order to make significant inroads into fuel poverty, bring local jobs across Scotland and lower our emissions, as Scottish Labour and a number of non-governmental organisations and charities called for in the budget?

Kate Forbes: That is another request from Labour to add to its long list of requests for changes in the budget. I am of course open to many requests from Labour, but they all need to be costed and then prioritised.

We recognise that energy efficiency is a way of not only reaching our statutory fuel poverty and climate change targets but revitalising the economy. We have already committed to allocating £1.6 billion of capital to heat and energy efficiency over the next five years. The additional £45 million will go a long way to help with next year's budget and ensure that there is sufficient capital in place to deliver on schemes, including energy efficient Scotland and the low-carbon infrastructure transition programme.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): Additional consequential funding is always welcome. However, does the cabinet secretary agree that this Parliament should not have to find out about consequentials weeks or even months after the UK Government's associated policy decisions have been made? Does she therefore agree that it is now urgent that further fiscal flexibilities are provided to Scotland to enable us to respond more effectively to this crisis?

Kate Forbes: The principle there is sound. In developing and building this budget, I was quite clear that I did not have all the information available to me. We built a budget that was fair to households and businesses and ensured our response to the on-going pandemic. However, the fact that I am standing here a matter of weeks after that process and in advance of stage 1 of the Budget (Scotland) (No 5) Bill demonstrates that getting information in dribs and drabs does the people of Scotland no service, never mind this Parliament and this Government. I am always grateful for additional money, because it can help us to meet some of the needs that are out there. Some additional flexibilities that had cross-party support would go a long way in helping us to smooth over some of those risks, but in the absence of any flexibilities, we just have to deal with the situation as we find it.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes questions on the statement. My apologies to late bidders whose questions could not be called due to lack of time.

Adult Social Care (Independent Review)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-24134, in the name of Jeane Freeman, on the independent review of adult social care. There is no time in hand. Accordingly, members must be very strict with themselves so that I do not have to be strict with them. That is a happy marriage.

16:02

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): The independent review of social care gives us a clear road map for the future of care provision in Scotland. Central to its proposition is that we see—and deliver on—adult social care as an investment that we make collectively in ourselves and in each other. It is a shift in thinking that underpins future funding, commissioning, regulation and, critically, delivery. We believe in the recommendations in the report and, in the elections in May, we will ask the people of Scotland to back the creation of a national care service—a service on a par with our national health service.

The foundation for delivering on the recommendations is the adult social care workforce. They must be recognised, offered opportunities to develop skills and expertise and rewarded for the significant value that they bring every day to the important job that they do. I will come to the specifics of that shortly.

The backdrop to the review is clear, in the terrible loss of life from the Covid-19 pandemic. I know that I speak for everyone in the chamber when I offer my condolences to everyone who has lost a loved one to the virus—whether a care home resident, a staff member or someone who was in their own home.

Before I turn to the detail, I place on record my personal thanks to the chair of the independent review, Derek Feeley, and his advisory panel of experts, and to everyone who gave them evidence and feedback. It is a testament to everyone involved in the process that a thorough and comprehensive review was delivered swiftly, with strong engagement with those who have lived experience of adult social care, representative organisations, providers of social care in the public, private and third sectors, and trade unions.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): The cabinet secretary said that the report produces a plan for a system that is equivalent to the NHS. Can she elaborate on that?

Jeane Freeman: In essence, the report tells us that, in everything that we do in its delivery and how we treat its workforce, we need to accord adult social care the same value as we accord our NHS.

The review's report has been widely welcomed. It recommends that we change the narrative of social care, put human rights at its heart and move from a competitive market to one of collaboration and ethical approaches to commissioning and procurement. It recommends that we put an end to charging for non-residential care, as well as a revised funding structure for free personal and nursing care.

Crucially, the report calls for the "creation of a national care service"

to drive delivery of consistent, high-quality social care support and put adult social care on the same footing as our NHS. To support the introduction of those changes, the report suggests that we need "a new social covenant" for adult social care to ensure that it reflects our values and, as a society, our commitment to each other.

We need to build on the strong foundations that we currently have in the system. Legislation is in place to underpin self-directed support—the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016—and we have our commitment in legislation to integrate health and social care. Although many people already receive good-quality care and support, that experience needs to be consistent across the country, and that is not the case now.

We need to redesign parts of the system. That process will include legislating for a national care service with reformed integration joint boards focusing on prevention, early intervention, de-institutionalisation and, at its heart, the involvement of the people who use services, unpaid carers and the workforce. The central role of IJBs will help to ensure that local representation will be vital in the shaping of services.

The national care service would also introduce "a national improvement programme for social care",

which would initially address three key areas:

"the experience and implementation of self-directed support ... the safety and quality of care provided in care homes"

and the improvement of

"commissioning and procurement processes",

to embed fair work principles and inform reformed regulation, inspection and improvement.

Although there is widespread support for the review's recommendations, there are also concerns. Let me touch on two that are among the most important. The first is the understandable concern that the Convention of Scottish Local

Authorities expressed on the issue of accountability. I understand that concern and I know that local government is a critical partner in taking forward the radical change for which the review rightly calls.

Yesterday, I had the first of what will be a number of meetings with COSLA to learn more about the concerns that it has and begin to work through how we might jointly work through them. Local government has experience and understanding of local communities and their needs, and it provides a range of vital services that are closely connected to social care—the report recognises that point—so we need to work together to find the best way to secure the review's recommendations and the spirit of its intent.

What is abundantly clear is how much we and COSLA agree on. I hope that before Parliament rises for the elections in May, we will have reached areas of agreement with COSLA that form a firm foundation for the work of the next Scottish Government.

The second concern comes from those whose lived experience contributed so much to the review who think that this will be another report of fine words and laudable sentiments that, in the end, goes nowhere, because vested interests combine to make little real improvement to people's lives, and because we spend all our energy and time arguing about structures that we fail to grasp the opportunity to deliver. I understand that concern too and take it seriously. For those people, there is no time left to waste and there are too many lives still to be fully lived.

We can take immediate action, however, to secure improvement. On the associated themes of individual autonomy and citizenship, I am pleased to announce a new community living change fund of £20 million to deliver a redesign of services for people with complex needs, including intellectual disabilities and autism, and those who have enduring mental health problems. The fund will focus on delivering a proper sense of home for people with complex needs, including those who have encountered lengthy hospital stays or who might have been placed outside of Scotland, and who could, and should, be more appropriately supported closer to home.

The report also highlights the fundamental role of unpaid carers in our society. The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 is a building block for strengthening the rights and status of unpaid carers and must act as a springboard for major improvements. I have already prioritised support for the implementation of that act, and I have backed that with significant investment, which now stands at £39.5 million a year, with an additional £28.5 million uplift that is earmarked in the budget

for 2021-22. That brings the total investment in local support for carers to £68 million.

The report recognises and highlights the critical and invaluable support that the social care workforce provides to people all over Scotland. A key recommendation from the Fair Work Convention's report "Fair Work in Scotland's Social Care Sector 2019" is to consider establishing a new sector-level body with responsibility for ensuring that social care workers have effective voice and developing a collective bargaining role in that sector. I confirm our support for that work, which is being taken forward through the fair work in social care group, which is chaired by Andy Kerr. By the end of May, we will establish a minimum set of standards that reflect fair work, effective voice, what that will look like and how it will play out in terms and conditions, and how it will be applied across all our social care workforce.

Since 2016, we have provided funding to enable adult social care workers to be paid the real living wage for waking hours. During 2018-19, that commitment was extended to include those undertaking overnight social care support. We want to ensure that there is no delay in the annual uplift being received by the workforce. I confirm that, with the fair work in social care group, as a priority, we will seek to agree a national approach to implementing the real living wage for adult social care workers for 2021 and future years.

The report rightly highlights how commissioning for the public good can drive change and that ethical commissioning and procurement can support the standardisation and implementation of fair work requirements and practices. I have therefore asked that this year's minute of variation requirement for the national care home contract should also embed changes that drive the fair work agenda, and that, for the first time, union representatives should be party to the discussions on the contract.

I want to work towards parity with the national health service, in which healthcare and social care are both free at the point of delivery, so we will work with local partners as quickly as is practicable to end all charges for non-residential care. I have already announced a significant uplift in the allowances for self-funders, and I want to move swiftly towards a position in which all care is fully funded in residential settings.

Finally, the report has recommended a number of important areas for substantial investment not in more of the same, but in supports that will propel our vital social care system forward and make it work consistently and to a high standard across the country for those who need it.

The report sets out how we need to invest in adult social care financially, and it highlights the

wider economic benefits of investing in our social care system. Many may be tempted to ask how we can afford that, but—for me, for the report authors and for many members across the chamber—the answer has to be, how can Scotland now afford not to do it?

I believe, as the report sets out, that improving adult social care gives us a tremendous opportunity to improve people's lives, build our economy and invest in high-quality, fair work. This is just the beginning of a process for improvement. It is now up to us, in the Parliament, to consider carefully the practical application of the recommendations and to build on good practice in order to ensure a social care system that consistently delivers high-quality services across Scotland, is founded in fairness, equality, and human rights, and puts lived experience at the heart of its redesign and delivery.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the Independent Review of Adult Social Care and supports its recommendations, which provide the foundation to enhance adult social care provision across Scotland; expresses thanks to the review's chair, advisory panel and all the individuals and organisations who shared their views and experiences through the programme of engagement; believes that the incoming parliament should implement these recommendations as quickly as practicable, including scrapping non-residential social care charging; commits to establishing a human rights approach to social care that incorporates equality, individual autonomy and citizenship; recognises the fundamental role of unpaid carers in society and commits to providing them with improved recognition and support; agrees that increased and more effective investment in social care will benefit everyone in Scotland, in terms of economic growth, as well as wellbeing; recognises the critical support provided by the social care workforce on a daily basis and commits to providing improved pay and terms and conditions that reflect the Fair Work principles, and delivered through national bargaining, and commits to establishing a National Care Service in law, on an equal footing with NHS Scotland, to provide national accountability, reduce variability and facilitate improved outcomes for social care users across the nation.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Donald Cameron to speak to and move amendment S5M-24134.4.

16:14

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I welcome the opportunity to open for the Scottish Conservatives in this important debate, and I place on record my party's thanks to the advisory panel and to all who contributed to the thorough and wide-ranging report.

I pay tribute to Derek Feeley, in particular, not just for leading on the report but for his regular engagement with health spokespeople from all political parties during the process. I can honestly say that, in all my time as an MSP, I have never felt more involved in such a review. Much of that

comes down to the personal dedication shown by Mr Feeley and the genuine and sincere attempt to consult Opposition politicians. Such a radical and refreshing approach should be the way forward for future reviews and reports.

It is important that we reflect on why the review was commissioned in the first place and why it is critical that we make changes. One factor behind the review—it was not the only factor, of course, but it was an important one nonetheless—was the tragic loss of life in our care homes during the Covid-19 pandemic last year. That is still happening, although, thanks to life-saving vaccines and better practices, the mortality rate is declining.

The latest figures show that there have been 3,146 deaths in care homes in respect of which Covid-19 was mentioned on the death certificate. That accounts for 36 per cent—over a third—of Scotland's total Covid-19 deaths. That is 3,146 lost mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters and friends. It is 3,146 grieving families left behind and urgently looking for answers.

We know that more than 100 patients were sent to care homes earlier in the pandemic, despite their testing positive for Covid-19. We also know that, according to Public Health Scotland, some 3,000-odd patients were discharged into care homes between 1 March and 30 May without being tested. Those may have been clinical decisions, but they were clinical decisions that were overseen by the Government. That is why our amendment repeats our call for a public inquiry, which has already been agreed to twice in parliamentary votes.

The other key factor behind the review is the near universally agreed view that the way that we deliver social care is not working and that change is needed. The Royal College of Nursing has said:

"the current way that adult social care operates is not fit for purpose and needs radical overhaul".

I agree with it.

There are many recommendations emerging from the report that the Scottish Conservatives agree with and welcome. We agree that

"Carers need better, more consistent support to carry out their caring role well",

as the report states. We, as a party, have a strong record of supporting our carers, which includes the delivery of short breaks for unpaid carers as part of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 and our calls for an increase in the carers allowance.

We also agree with the need to remove the needlessly bureaucratic process of accessing social care. In the report, families described that as "notoriously difficult" and "over-complicated".

There are strong and compelling arguments for applying national standards and for driving high-quality care on a Scotland-wide basis, as well as for approaching workforce issues at the national level and for a human rights-based approach to delivering care. We acknowledge that there is a need to improve training and career development opportunities for carers. The report argues that many felt that there was a

“need to improve the skillset of the workforce”

and that

“the Scottish Social Services Council is not equipped or resourced to support effective training and development of staff.”

The RCN has said that its members feel that there is

“a barrier to nurses working in adult social care”

due to

“a lack of opportunity to undergo training at work, as well as a perception, rightly or wrongly, about lack of career progression”.

As the cabinet secretary said, at the heart of the review is the call for a national care service to be placed on an equal statutory footing with NHS Scotland. We have long agreed that health and social care need to be seen as integral parts of the same system, and that implies parity between them.

The Scottish Conservatives believe that the creation of a national care service in Scotland could assist in achieving higher-quality care as well as improve the employment conditions of care workers. However, the Scottish National Party Government must provide details of how that will work in practice. Such a service must avoid becoming a centralised, monolithic structure, and it must ensure that individual people are at its heart. The Government has an unenviable record when it comes to centralisation, and there are patent dangers if that were to become another act of amassing power and control in central Government. It is imperative that any change to the delivery of social focuses on such care being person centred.

We know that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work. I note the comments of the Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland, which has stated that

“any new system must also allow for local variation, flexibility and accountability”.

The Scottish Association for Mental Health notes that

“Social care providers ... also need to be involved in the design of social care services”,

with many

“delivering a support service that has not been designed with a person-centred or recovery-based ethos in mind.”

We also acknowledge the views of local government, which is concerned that some of the recommendations in the review, especially around the national care service, could see local accountability diluted.

COSLA’s health and social care spokesperson, Councillor Stuart Currie, has argued that council leaders are opposed to

“the recommendations on governance and accountability which would see the removal of local democratic accountability and a degree of centralisation, which Leaders rightly felt would be detrimental to the local delivery of social care and its integration with other key community services.”

We must be highly mindful of those views. Any new service should involve local stakeholders, and local decision making should be enhanced rather than diminished.

The review also calls for the reform of integration joint boards as part of a national care service, and more detail is needed from the Government about what that would involve. As constituted, IJBs are far from perfect, and the current system of integration raises many issues around funding, organisation and delivery.

The Scottish Conservatives believe that a local approach remains crucial in designing a new service and that local government should receive the support that it needs. That is why the Scottish Conservatives have pledged to

“enshrine fair funding for councils into law, ensuring that local authorities receive a set fraction of the Scottish Government budget each year”.

I will draw my comments to a close. The review is detailed and provides many positive ways forward in improving the experience of social care for those receiving it and for the many people who are either working in care or providing care voluntarily. I reiterate my thanks to Derek Feeley and the advisory board for producing the review during the most difficult of circumstances.

It is clear that the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed many of the weaknesses in the existing care system and that reform is long overdue, but we must be cautious in how we achieve that change and ensure that the people who receive care are at the heart of any change. All relevant stakeholders, whether they be the public, the third sector, local government or others, must be consulted and kept apprised by the Scottish Government.

I move amendment S5M-24134.4, to leave out from “supports its recommendations” to end and insert:

“thanks the review’s chair, advisory panel and all those who shared their views and experiences; believes that the creation of a National Care Service in Scotland could assist in achieving higher quality care, as well as improving the employment conditions of care workers, but that the Scottish Government must provide details of how this will work in practice, and must address, in particular, concerns raised about undermining local decision-making; believes that any changes must ensure that care is person-centred; notes that, sadly, more than 3,000 residents have died in care homes during the COVID-19 pandemic, and calls again for an inquiry into this tragedy, as voted for by the Parliament in resolutions to previous debates.”

16:22

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): Scottish Labour has campaigned for improvements to our chronically underfunded care services for a long time. We believe that social care support in Scotland should always be free at the point of use, based on need and not income, and rooted in a system that respects the dignity of people, service users and staff.

Although it breaks my heart that it has taken the effects of a global pandemic to shine a spotlight on the flaws in the current market-based system, I welcome the fact that we are finally seeing social care getting the attention that it deserves. I want to put on the record Scottish Labour’s thanks to those who have worked on the independent review of adult social care and contributed to its recommendations. There is much to be welcomed in it, and I am grateful to Derek Feeley for his willingness to engage with MSPs, to keep us updated and to engage widely with trade unions and service users.

Social care should be based on upholding human rights. The commissioning of services should be for the public good. The workforce should always be properly valued. Reform of social care and the creation of a national care service has been Scottish Labour Party policy for a long time. Sadly, it was rejected by Nicola Sturgeon when she was the health secretary.

My colleague Richard Leonard has used his time in Parliament to bring social care out of the shadows. During his time, he provided leadership, elevating social care and the need for a national care service before and during the pandemic. The issue has now come back to the top of the political agenda. Scottish Labour’s “It’s time to care about care” campaign last year reignited the debate on a national care service, and I am pleased that the Scottish ministers have finally paid heed to what has to be done.

Social care has borne the brunt of the pandemic, from what happened in our care homes to what happened in people’s own homes. All too often, it was left for staff to raise the alarm or for heartbroken families to speak out.

We know that the Scottish Government’s pandemic preparedness exercise, Silver Swan, identified social care as a weak link. At the beginning of the pandemic, we heard repeated warnings from front-line workers and trade unions including Unison, Unite the union and the GMB—I refer to my entry in the register of interests—who all spoke out about the inadequacy of personal protective equipment. Those calls went unheeded for too long. In April last year, Scottish Government guidance from the chief nursing officer was still in circulation that suggested that home carers did not need any PPE beyond the basic apron and gloves that they always use.

We welcome the recommendations in the report, but we also want to hear when the country will get a public inquiry into the pandemic response and, in particular, what has happened in social care. There were comments in the chamber earlier today about the exclusion of essential care givers. I pay tribute to my colleague Neil Findlay—I am sad that he is leaving the Parliament at the end of this session—who has worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to make the case that family care givers are an essential part of the care team. They are not an extra—not just a visitor—and they, too, should have access to PPE and testing to be part of the safe provision of care in our care homes. I hope that we get to a place where the Parliament can unite and support Anne’s law, which would ensure that people never again have to spend a year in isolation without access to their loved ones.

The creation of a national care service offers the opportunity to create jobs and improve pay for social care workers. The Scottish Labour amendment reflects our support for a wage of £15 an hour for social care workers. That workforce is made up primarily of women. It is not unskilled and it deserves to be properly recognised for its labour. Fair work has far from met its potential. Fair work in social care has been a positive coalition well navigated by Andrew Kerr, but ambitions have been too low. Until we politicians take action, it is all just talk. Fair work has to be a floor, not a ceiling.

On a positive note, there are recommendations that we welcome, and, if the Government’s motion is turned into action, that would be a huge step forward for the workforce and for women in Scotland. We know that 83 per cent of carers are women, so seeing a dramatic wage rise for those workers would not only end the recruitment and retention crisis; the economic multipliers in wider society would be huge. Unpaid carers should also get equal payment and formal recognition for their labour. A properly funded care sector that creates decent, well-paid jobs will help us to meet our ambitions for the caring economy.

As things stand, too much money has leaked out of care to offshore tax havens. Care should always be about people, not profits. The report criticises the market-based system but then recommends largely leaving it in place with a bit more regulation. That is not Scottish Labour's vision for a national care service. The amendment in my name makes it clear that a national care service has to be about delivering parity, with national standards that are delivered locally. We cannot have a system of centralisation that does not work for care visitor staff.

At the moment, the report holds only promise and requires further action. Nonetheless, it is a positive start and it is evidence of what the Parliament can achieve when there is the will to do so. I look forward to taking the matter forward, not just in the years come but through immediate action that must be taken now, including getting that pay rise to workers through the budget. If we can work together to achieve bold and radical change, we can have a national care service that is not just a title—not just words on a page—but that brings those to life and delivers better outcomes for service users and the workforce.

I move amendment S5M-24134.3, to leave out from “provide national accountability” to end and insert:

“deliver national funding and consistent standards for care services which offer equal access, based on need not income, and facilitate improved outcomes for social care users across the nation; acknowledges the grave concern expressed by COSLA that the report's recommendations could undermine local delivery of social care; agrees with local authority leaders that local democratic accountability for care services must be maintained; believes that the Scottish Government should demonstrate its commitment to support the social care workforce, and calls for a minimum £15 an hour social care pay package in the 2021-22 Scottish Budget.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Alex Cole-Hamilton to speak to and move amendment S5M-24134.2.

16:29

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): It gives me great pleasure to rise for the Liberal Democrats. I welcome the publication of the report of the independent review of adult social care, which examines the future delivery of care for older people and disabled people in Scotland. The review's recommendations focus, rightly, on a better service for care users and fairer pay and conditions for care workers, all of whom we have come to rely on so much—that is, we have come to understand how much we rely on them—in the course of the pandemic.

The review also sought to address disabled people's concerns that previous pieces of legislation, such as the Carers (Scotland) Act

2016, the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 and the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013, have not worked sufficiently well or lived up to the aspirations that were set for them. They have not created a system that is based on human rights, which would allow each individual to achieve their goals.

The review's aims are laudable, and the Liberal Democrats will always support efforts to stretch ever higher in the quality of support that we offer. We support moves such as the establishment of national entitlements and paying our workforce so as to make social care a profession of choice and recognise the tremendous contribution that those workers make to the fabric of our society.

We have tried and failed to reform social care through policy before, so this root-and-branch review is both timely and necessary. However, the suggested move to a national governance structure causes us significant concern. To our minds, the delivery of health and social care is not suited to central control. That is why we—rightly—have 14 territorial health boards, and even more integration joint boards. Subsidiarity must apply here, because Scotland is too diverse for a one-size-fits-all approach to the delivery of care that is governed from the centre. We need only look at the problems that came with the amalgamation of Scotland's regional police forces to form Police Scotland to see the difficulties that can arise from a central-belt-knows-best approach.

As Liberals, we believe that there should be a step change in social care so that it is provided on a human rights basis and is built around the individual and the realities of their geography. Care should be considered a normal part of human life that merits investment in order to allow people to achieve their goals and secure their own wellbeing. As with all aspects of intervention in health and social care, we should embrace prevention first and foremost to offset the need for that care. Where care is needed, as it will be more often than not, people should have the security of nationally prescribed entitlements and the expectation of a gold standard of provision. We need a step change in how we do that, and that change will be key to improving quality of life for social care users. Implementation should begin now, through existing systems, and should not be delayed by the need to create a cumbersome, overarching organisation to deliver it.

Above all, those in the social care workforce should be respected for the work that they do. As a result of the pandemic, they have finally received—perhaps for the first time—some of the recognition that they deserve. They should be afforded a nationally agreed and mandatory fair work package that will make social care a

profession of choice and allow us to retain those vital high-quality individuals in the profession.

The answer in social care is never centralisation. Centralisation has not delivered the benefits that were promised for other public services, and the loss of local democratic accountability is a risk, not a benefit, to care users and staff. As Liberal Democrats, we will work with other parties in the chamber, and with the architects of the report, to reform social care in our communities, embracing much of what those communities ask of us.

We need changes in the experience of care users and care workers, as described by the independent review, built around a new national consensus that social care should be provided on the basis of human rights first and foremost. We need the setting of national care service standards and entitlements, with the funding put in place to meet those standards. Effective complaint resolution procedures for those for whom services do not come up to scratch should be at the heart of the system. We need local commissioning to involve disabled people and other care users in service design, and to be informed by local experience of unmet needs, as highlighted by the independent review.

Changes to value the social care workforce better should include a requirement that any care service, whether it is delivered by public, private or charitable providers, must comply with fair work requirements that are set nationally, and all staff should have nationally agreed pay, terms of employment and career progression.

Monica Lennon: Does Alex Cole-Hamilton agree with Scottish Labour that the fight for 15 campaign is a fair ask, and does he support a rate of £15 an hour for social care workers?

Alex Cole-Hamilton: Monica Lennon made a compelling argument for that, and I do not see a reason why we would not support it, in particular given that, as she rightly said, 83 per cent of the social care workforce are female, so there is gender pay inequality as well.

As well as involving service users, we must harness the creativity and passion of our dedicated care workers. That means affording them the opportunity of effective collective bargaining and giving them a chance to help to shape the service that they provide. That must be built around the essential principle of allowing care services to operate in a way that allows carers to build relationships and trust with care users, moving away from narrow task-based contracts in which individual carers change with alarming and unsettling regularity.

Part of the offer must begin with the scrapping of charges for care services that are delivered at

home. By so doing, we can enable more people to stay in their homes if they choose and experience the better outcomes that that can mean.

It is important to recognise that reform of social care should not just cover the profession itself. The measure of our efforts to bring reform will lie in how we recognise the tireless contribution of unpaid carers, giving them better support, respite and the ability to continue to work.

I will draw my opening remarks to a close, but I have more points to make in my summation.

I move amendment S5M-24134.2, to leave out from “welcomes” to end and insert:

“notes the recommendations of the Independent Review of Adult Social Care; agrees with the ambition to enhance adult social care provision across Scotland; believes that centralisation has not delivered the benefits promised for other public services, and the loss of local democratic accountability is a risk to care service users, and calls for the new resources and new human rights approach to social care to be provided through integrated local services, governed locally, involving care users, to national care service standards and entitlements; believes that there should be a new national consensus that social care should be provided on a human rights basis, and that a preventative approach should be championed; notes the concerns of disabled people that previous legislation has not worked sufficiently well to give them a system based on their human rights which allows each individual to achieve their goals; recognises the critical support provided by the social care workforce on a daily basis and believes they must be afforded a nationally agreed and mandatory fair work package on pay, terms of employment and career progression, shaped by care workers and collective bargaining; considers that there should be national care service standards, with the funding put in place to meet those standards, and effective complaint resolution for when they are not met; calls for national standards and local commissioning to involve disabled people and other care users, and be informed by local experience of unmet needs, as highlighted by the independent review; believes that charges for care services delivered at home should be scrapped; calls for unpaid carers to receive better support and respite in recognition that their role is critically important, and considers that these step changes, described by the independent review, are key to improving the quality of life for social care users, and that implementation should begin now and not be delayed by a need to create new organisations to deliver it.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you for keeping to your time, Mr Cole-Hamilton.

16:35

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): The Scottish Green Party thanks everyone for their involvement in the review process and in what the cabinet secretary referred to as the “road map”. The Scottish Green Party supports a national care service.

The 53 recommendations set out how adult social care can be improved, but that should not be taken as a suggestion that the delivery of care is not already of the very highest standard, by and

large. Overall improvement is needed, however, and it is important that we look forward, rather than backward.

Families feel a range of emotions about care. They welcome the support, but they worry about changes in care, and about continuity of care. They worry about transitions and about their loved ones being institutionalised if care is not available at home—which is ideally where we want care to be delivered.

There is a role for self-directed support, but I issue a slight caution about that: in the wrong hands, it can be seen as a way for those who are responsible not to meet their obligations.

The report discusses a more “collaborative approach” to adult social care. I can identify with that, reflecting on my days with Highland Council. The council and NHS Highland were the first to come together in what remains a unique model. The assessment of the effectiveness of the delivery of care at home found, strangely enough, that the teams that were co-located had the best results. That will surprise no one—the more collaboration, the better.

Integration joint boards have been mentioned. They are not universally welcomed, and their status relative to that of some local authorities is an issue.

There is talk of a step change in capability to address the implementation gap. That should not be at the behest of the profit motive, with private companies cherry picking high-density areas, leaving behind the remote, less densely populated areas, such as the one that I represent. Then there is the local authority, which has the statutory obligation and extols how much cheaper it can do things. There are many fine examples of good work being done by commercial care deliverers, but the statutory obligation of the limited company is to deliver profits for its owners, and I and my party are certainly of the view that care and profit need to be separated. I recall mentioning that in my first speech in the Parliament two sessions ago.

It has been said that the voice of lived experience needs to be amplified when it comes to proposed service design, and I absolutely get that. There is a suggestion of consultation fatigue. Of course we seek input from individuals, but their experience is not the whole story. We all experience things differently and the way ahead is to take a patient-centred approach.

Local authorities are concerned about accountability. I had representations from one authority last night. I have been a bit critical of the relationships in some of the joint boards, but I find that a bit ironic, particularly as—in my experience—they have sometimes sought to

sidestep their own accountability and to blame central Government.

That said, it is important that we listen to COSLA. I am delighted that the cabinet secretary has indicated that there has been engagement there. I do not think that we are clear about the shape of the system. Is it entirely new and innovative? I certainly want it to be innovative, but I do not think that we want to discard some of the good practice that has been set out.

The need to set out a clear vision is covered in the review. Vision is good and passion is good; empathy is much better. I am not sure that that has ever featured as a qualification in any procurement process. The new system must be consistent, and the statutory responsibilities must be very clear.

I do not think that private companies have a role here at all, but it is important that we discuss the recommendations in a positive, constructive manner. We must recognise that posturing sometimes puts people off, and we want public support for what goes ahead, which must be evidenced by the information that we have at hand.

I like the suggestion that a national care service should be “on an equal footing” with the NHS, and I hope that, over time, we will see the warmth and affection for a national care service that we have seen for the NHS and what it delivers.

It is very important that we take a human rights approach. The Highland Senior Citizens Network was involved in ensuring that Scotland’s national action plan took a human rights approach. I remember speaking to someone who was very cynical and thought that human rights related to prisoners. However, there were many issues at that time, such as hydration for people in care homes. Making human rights relevant to people is important, and they certainly cannot be more relevant than for people who require—*[Inaudible.]*

The recommendation on a national improvement programme is good, and so is the one on shifting from markets and competition to collaboration in commissioning and procurement practices. I do not think that there is a role for the profit motive; it is about delivering fair work.

In the very short time that I have left, I will turn to the rural dimension. There must be subsidiarity in all aspects of this, because we want a care system that delivers across Scotland.

We will not support the Conservative and Lib Dem amendments, but we will support the Labour amendment. We share Labour’s aspiration of improved conditions, but there are many other areas that we care about, and we will address those through the budget process. “Care after

Covid: A UNISON vision for social care” does not contain the £15 per week figure that Labour’s amendment mentions. Sectoral bargaining arrangements would be far more important than any figure, and it is important that Labour, like everyone else, explains where the money would come from and meaningfully engages with the budget process.

It is important that we all get behind the creation of a national care service.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Lewis Macdonald to speak on behalf of the Health and Sport Committee.

16:41

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): I am glad to have the opportunity to speak in the debate and to highlight the Health and Sport Committee’s two-year inquiry into the future of social care, which was interrupted but not derailed by the Covid pandemic. I know that all committee members would want me to express our collective thanks to all paid and unpaid carers, particularly for all that they have delivered under the most difficult circumstances in the past 12 months.

I particularly thank the carers and people receiving care who shared their views and experiences with our inquiry. Our report is driven by their views and our inquiry has been guided by their experiences. Crucially, they told us that the voices of carers and care users were not being heard or even listened for. Users and carers were equally clear that they did not feel that they were being listened to or valued. However, throughout our inquiry, we learned that care-experienced individuals and front-line staff have valuable insights from which decision makers could learn a great deal.

We believe that there must be a national conversation about the future of social care and support in Scotland, with the voices of people who give and receive care at its heart. Everyone who is involved in developing and delivering social care in Scotland must work with and alongside those who are most impacted. The views of users and carers should drive the reform process. That might seem self-evident, but we are clear that that has not been happening.

We therefore welcome the independent review and its call to put a human rights-based approach at the centre of the social care system. We are pleased that the review puts people at the centre of policy development and decision making, and that many of its recommendations seek to achieve the same aims that we have, with a focus on involving people who use services, their families and their carers.

Throughout our inquiry, we heard that the current model of care is crisis driven, reactive and ultimately unsustainable. The provision of care is considered only after a crisis has struck, generally after a person has been admitted to hospital. A fundamentally different approach to social care is required—a proactive approach, with prevention at its core. We must move away from the current crisis-driven system. A key aim should be supporting people to live longer, healthier lives in their own homes.

Throughout the past five years, the committee has been alert to the benefits of shifting the balance of care from the acute sector to the community. Our budget report of 2019 showed that a preventive approach to providing care was more cost effective in many cases, and that it improved the quality of life of users at the same time.

Looking ahead, better use of technology, increased public and community involvement and improved data collection must be embedded in any changes in the way that social care is planned and delivered.

Neil Findlay: Will the member take an intervention?

Lewis Macdonald: Certainly.

Neil Findlay: As he is convener of the Health and Sport Committee, could the member tell me what evidence the committee took from stakeholders about integration and its success or otherwise? We were told that integration would release huge amounts of money by eradicating delayed discharges, yet we have record levels of delayed discharge. Could the member address that?

Lewis Macdonald: The committee took a great deal of evidence on that. We have done so not only in this context but in the context of a number of inquiries over the years. Neil Findlay’s point is reinforced by the evidence that we heard that the opportunities for greater effectiveness, efficiency and better care through integration are yet to be realised.

We need to create a fair and equitable system. To achieve that, local partnerships must be supported to work with communities to deliver creative, innovative solutions and not be hindered by over-complicated processes and bureaucracy. As we have heard, social care is underpinned by a strong legislative and policy base, but that is being undermined by poor implementation.

Commissioning and procurement came through strongly as areas with overly complex processes resulting in confusion, risk aversion and an over-focus on the system, instead of on outcomes, wellbeing and care planning for individuals. We

are therefore pleased that the independent review recommends commissioning for the public good and seeks to reframe commissioning and procurement as collaborative, rights-based and participative. Our own recommendations take the same approach.

We are particularly pleased to note the review's recommendations on unpaid carers. We, too, are calling for unpaid carers to receive increased support and recognition and to be valued for the significant contribution that they make. Indeed, we believe that the status and value of all carers, paid and unpaid, must be addressed. The lack of value placed on social care staff has been amplified by the pandemic, with social care staff witnessing their NHS colleagues being celebrated and praised, rightly, but in a way that social care staff are not. We are therefore pleased to see recommendations in the review relating to that.

We also believe that action must be taken to improve public understanding of social care in Scotland. More must be done to educate and inform the public, to encourage people to have their own conversations about care and support and to think about the type of care that they might need in the future. That will help to move away from a crisis-driven system to more flexible and prevention-focused care.

The committee's report does not pretend to answer every significant question, but is driven by the thoughts, needs and aspirations of the public. As such, we believe that it adds significant value to the debate. Our recommendations are intended to encourage the change and action that are urgently needed for the future of social care and support in Scotland, and I commend them to the Parliament.

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

16:48

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this extremely important debate and thank the organisations that have provided briefings, including the Scottish Association for Mental Health, Marie Curie, Inclusion Scotland, Age Concern and the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland.

The independent review of adult social care is an important step towards the creation of a national care service for Scotland, which can enable us to improve the experiences of everybody who uses social care support, their carers, their families and the workforce, especially in this Covid pandemic world and recognising the lives lost to the virus.

The review is comprehensive and has found many aspects of our adult social care system that are worthy of celebration, such as the introduction of self-directed support, the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 and the Scottish Government's commitment in legislation to integrate health and social care.

However, it has also found room for improvement, including through ensuring that the Scottish Government's commitment to the principles of fair work is embedded in social care, to achieve better terms and conditions and more rewarding roles for our skilled social care workforce. It is important that that extends to unpaid carers and that unpaid carers receive equal rights and recognition for the invaluable work that they do.

The review found that adult social care support in Scotland is an area of unrealised potential. There is sometimes a gap between the intention behind groundbreaking legislation, such as that introducing self-directed support, and the lived experience of people who need support. The report highlights the need to move from old to new ways of thinking about adult social care and for a more collaborative approach. That could bring about a step change in our capacity to address the implementation gap. The voice of lived experience could be amplified in all aspects of the proposed redesign of adult social care. To that end, the report sets out a clear vision for a new system to ensure delivery of consistent, high-quality social care support.

The report found that

"human rights, equity and equality must be placed at the very heart of social care"

and that those qualities should be "mainstreamed and embedded". The report also found that

"delivering a rights based system in practice must become consistent, intentional and evident in the everyday experience of everyone using social care support."

John Finnie gave good examples of human rights for all, not only for prisoners. That includes unpaid carers, families and those who work in the social care support and social work sectors.

The report says:

"People must be able to access support at the point they feel they need it, including for advice and signposting to local community-based resources and help, and for barriers to this, such as the current eligibility criteria and charging regime, to be fundamentally reformed and removed, to allow a greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention."

It goes on to recommend:

"People should understand better what their rights are to social care and supports, and 'duty bearers', primarily social workers, should be focused on realising those rights rather than being hampered in the first instance by considerations of eligibility and cost."

There are many other recommendations, but those highlight the importance of a person-centred, human rights-based approach for those who rely on our social care system. That is eloquently highlighted in the report by a service user who said:

“Start listening to disabled people. We are the solution, we’re not the problem.”

That is an important approach. I urge the cabinet secretary to ensure that all are involved and engaged with future changes so that all voices, from those of service users to those delivering the service, are heard. We must ensure that the social care system delivers for everyone in Scotland.

16:52

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): I welcome the publication of the independent review of adult social care. There have been calls for an independent review from the third sector and social care providers for many years. In 2019, when I held a round-table event to discuss self-directed support, concerns were raised about gender assumptions, training, development, funding, local authority guidance, the complaints process and many more issues that appear in the review.

However, Covid-19 has done most to reveal the cracks in adult social care. The SNP’s failure to protect care homes, with more than 3,000 deaths in them in the past year, has prompted the review and moved the situation on. We know the effect that decisions have had on care homes: residents have been put under pressure and staff have faced pressure on their mental health and wellbeing, and have seen the deaths of residents who were also friends and family.

The review identifies familiar themes that will resonate with members across the chamber. The report outlines a jumble of a system that reflects experiences that many constituents and groups have presented to me, in my role as an MSP. The need to fight for support and services causes stress and anxiety. Disabled people are frustrated when they discover that no personal assistant with the right skills to help them to lead an active and independent life is available in their home town.

On self-directed support, when people are told the options that exist, social workers too often do not tell them that they can employ someone themselves—they are not given all the options. When I was putting together my care package, there was no mention of that option during my several meetings with the social worker. The meetings were all about the state or other people providing my care package. That might be appropriate for many people, but if we are truly to revolutionise care for older people and people with

disabilities, they must be given all the options, and the funding must follow what is best for the individual, not what a social worker thinks is best for them.

We have too many people still caught up in bedblocking because their package of care has been cancelled, is not available or has been delayed. For many relatives, the challenges of securing appropriate social care for a loved one are just too difficult and overwhelming. That can require them to take on the role of unpaid carer, which sometimes leads to financial insecurity when they cannot hold down employment alongside their caring responsibilities. As we heard from Monica Lennon and others, the responsibility often falls on women relatives and mothers, among others, to provide that care. That is why we need to look at the issue as one that affects women particularly, in our society.

We must not kick the recommended improvements into the long grass. We must start moving on them and not wait for yet more discussions, regardless of whether the improvements are about developing people’s personal capacity, looking at how we direct self-directed support in a more positive way or empowering people in their communities. We should be united on the issue, so I am pleased that we have a lot of cross-party support on it. I hope that whoever forms the next Government will get the support of the whole Parliament to take the issue forward.

16:56

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): I congratulate the convener of the Health and Sport Committee and the committee clerks on the pragmatic way in which they managed to ensure that we debated the work that led to our report, which is helpful for us in this debate.

This is an important debate for all of us in the chamber. How we progress from here could make this one of the landmark points in the on-going story of the Scottish Parliament. It goes without saying that anything that we say and do regarding social care comes on the back of a difficult year for everyone, but it has been an especially difficult year for people who have lost a loved one, and for those who work in a sector that has had to deal with difficult and challenging circumstances.

However, there is much in our adult social care system that warrants celebration. Key legislation has been created to support the sector, examples of which are the introduction of self-directed support, the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 and the Scottish Government’s integrated health and social care agenda, all of which are part of the way forward. We have had challenges along the way in

meeting expectations, but nothing worth while is easy. If it was, we would have done it previously.

In September 2020, the Scottish Government announced in its programme for government the review of social care, the report on which we are discussing today. If we have learned anything over the past year, it is that there is a need for change in our social care settings and that there are better ways of working.

I have continually pursued that with health boards when they have come to committee. Recently, they have said that they have found better ways to work with other services over the past year because they have had to do it and it was important that they did so. Those who manage our health boards are correct to say that they have, during this difficult year, found ways to make what appeared to be impossible last year happen this year. The solution tends to be around how they interact with integration joint boards, but they should have been working previously as they work now.

Everyone in Scotland's NHS and care sector is to be congratulated for the work that they have done. However, whenever board members come to committee and explain what they have achieved this year, I cannot help but ask why it took a worldwide pandemic to make all that work. I know that a crisis can focus people on delivery, but I still find it bizarre that many health boards took so long to understand what was needed.

The independent review of adult social care could not have been published at a more important time. It is a substantial piece of work, and its many recommendations show us a different way forward for providing care. The creation of a national care service has been spoken about by many colleagues in the debate. In my opinion, probably the most important part of the report is on how we take forward the recommendations. Our challenge is to create a robust and deliverable national care service of the type that we all want.

That the establishment of human rights in the approach to social care should incorporate equality should go without saying. However, there should be better support and representation for unpaid carers. I am sure that I am not the only MSP who has had unpaid carers approach them, and who has guided them through the process and tried to get them the support that they need. The report is extremely important in that it provides a road map for making that process better.

Most important is that we are talking about delivering fair work for the workforce, with increasing and more effective investment. For far too long, many women who work in the care

sector have been subjected to financial and work-related conditions that are different from those that are afforded to women who work in our national health service. Anything that can balance that anomaly is to be welcomed. Obviously, that will be helped by the proposed shifting of the adult social care model from markets and competition to collaboration, commissioning and procurement practices.

The report also highlights the need to move from old thinking to new thinking. That seems to me to be something that should have been obvious to us all.

However, this is day 1, so we all need, as the debate progresses, to work together to ensure that we create the service that we want, so that we are not having the same debate in future years.

17:00

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): I, too, very much welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. I will begin by being positive—it is a positive review—so who better to quote than the chair of the review, Derek Feeley. He said:

“there is much about adult social care support in Scotland that is ground-breaking and worthy of celebration. The introduction of self-directed support, the integration of health and social care, and the promise of the Carers Act form the scaffolding upon which to build.”

That is exactly what we need to do. We need to build on the foundation blocks that the Scottish Government has put in place so far. I welcome the cabinet secretary's earlier announcement about the improvements and moneys for carers.

I fully support the report's recommendations, and I thank everyone who has been involved in shaping and feeding into the review. I am pleased that extensive engagement with service users was undertaken as part of the review. As we all know, their lived experience is crucial to informing changes to the system.

I have, as a member of the Health and Sport Committee, been looking at the subject. We hope that our work will also feed into the review and help to shape the future of adult social care across the country.

The committee also engaged with service users and those who deliver social care services. I was struck by their personal experiences. There is so much that those of us who do not need to access social care services take for granted. Service users have spoken of systemic barriers in accessing services, with their choices about, and control over, their lives and needs not being taken into consideration or even being taken away completely.

For almost a year, we have all been firmly focused on the pandemic. Our collective actions have been—quite rightly—to protect lives and our NHS. It has been a year like no other, with our front-line workers facing incredible challenges. People who are dependent on the social care sector and those who work in it—paid and unpaid—have also been feeling the enormous impact of the pandemic.

The evidence that the committee received from one service user should resonate with all of us. They were reflecting on how the pandemic took away much of their control and choice over how they live their life. They said:

“this gives people a small insight into what it’s like for people with support needs and their carers because that’s our everyday lives, controlled by rules and regulations about what we can and cannot do.”

Another service user said:

“I don’t think the general public realise if you are dependent on this kind of support how precarious it can be. I don’t think they realise we’re talking about the most fundamental needs and rights, and to have that taken away from you by somebody who very often doesn’t know you, or hasn’t really taken the time to understand your situation, is such a violation.”

Those are only a couple of examples, but they are certainly not lone voices; others share their experiences.

We must recognise and learn from the effects of the pandemic, but as George Adam said, we also need to look beyond it at how we can use the foundations to create a sector that, as one service user said,

“is not a safety net but a springboard for those that need support”—

a system that enables people to reach their potential and provides independence through a rights-based people-power approach.

A national care service that is shaped and informed by service users would have enormous potential. I hope very much that it will be delivered in the next parliamentary session. There is much work to be done, but the review clearly sets out what we need to put in place, where support is needed and how such support should be provided, if we are to ensure equality and equity.

In his remarks, Alex Cole-Hamilton mentioned that people should be able to expect a gold standard. Indeed, they should. However, I believe that they should be able to expect that of elected members, in particular. I ask Mr Cole-Hamilton to reflect on that point.

17:05

Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): I will begin by setting out where we find common

ground on this subject. In his foreword to the review’s report, Derek Feeley said:

“If we want a different set of results, we need a different system.”

I agree with him. Our system should be built on the values of human rights, equity and equality. We need to have co-production by service users in the design and delivery of social care. We must demand, at last, a decisive shift in public policy, and a shift of public spending towards prevention, which was recommended a decade ago by Campbell Christie. Instead of that, over the past 10 years we have witnessed cuts of up to 20 per cent to social care services in Scotland, as the SNP central Government has decimated local government budgets year after year.

As the report says, public spending on social care represents

“an investment in the Scottish economy”

and the principle of

“social care free at the point of need”

should be adopted right across Scotland. In addition, the long-standing—and outstanding—question of the undervaluation of the sector’s predominantly female workforce must be addressed with renewed urgency and unwavering ambition.

But let me turn to the report’s main conclusion, which is that we need to create a national care service. I agree. The Government’s motion speaks of establishing

“a National Care Service in law, on an equal footing with NHS Scotland”.

I agree with that, too. However, that is not what the review recommends. In fact, it goes out of its way on that point by devoting a whole section to an attack on the case for public ownership. It points to the example of Home Farm care home on Skye. However, that care home does not make the case for continued private ownership of social care; it makes the case against it.

We know—because it is in the report—that 84 per cent of the current annual funding of social care in Scotland comes directly from the public purse, through the public sector. However, instead of recommending the creation of a national care service that is publicly funded, and so publicly owned—which would place it on an equal footing with the NHS—the Feeley review recommends that local councils, and the tens of thousands of social care workers whom they employ, be reduced to competing as just another provider in a procurement exercise run by unelected integration joint boards. I ask the cabinet secretary to reflect on whether that is an equal footing.

I accept that the review calls for a “new deal” with private providers. However, its silence is deafening on the ethics of the biggest providers of residential care in Scotland being run by private companies whose ultimate ownership is in offshore tax havens. It is also silent on how public ownership keeps all funding in the local economy and all money reinvested in the care service and its workforce.

If the Parliament is serious—as I believe it must be—about establishing a national care service with the same values as our national health service, and on an equal footing with it, it must be based on public service, not private markets, collaborative or otherwise; human dignity, not corporate profit; and public interest, not the money interest. The means by which it is delivered should be local, it must be democratically accountable and it must be owned and run publicly and not privately.

That matters because, as the cabinet secretary knows, it is about the kind of society that we want to live in, and the relationships of power within it. She must also know that now is the time for boldness, courage and conviction, and that the change that we need to make is not simply for this generation but for future generations. It demands vision from the Government and resolve from the Parliament; above all else, it demands the active consent of the people. That is what we need if we are to create a national care service that is truly worthy of the name.

17:10

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP):

The independent review is an important step towards the creation of a national care service for Scotland. In creating that service, there must be a laser-like focus on improving the experiences of everybody who uses social care support, their carers, their families and the workforce.

There is no doubt that over this past, difficult year, the pandemic has brought existing inequalities sharply into focus and laid bare the fragility in our systems. Policy intention in terms of equality and human rights does not always match the experience of far too many of our citizens—a point that Age Scotland highlights when it says that the review identifies the

“significant gaps between what should be happening in social care and what happens in reality.”

I agree with Age Scotland that ensuring that those gaps are addressed as a priority would be a major step forward.

Improving adult social care gives us a tremendous opportunity to improve people’s lives, to build our economy and to invest in high-quality, fair work. The report’s recommendations on

establishing a human rights and equality approach to social care services and support are rooted in the work to consider the incorporation of international treaties into domestic legislation and the recent experiences during the pandemic that exposed structural inequalities and pre-existing inadequacies in the current social care support system.

Of course, I agree that placing human rights, equity and equality at the very heart of social care and mainstreaming and embedding that approach is essential. However, even as I use those words, I am acutely aware that it is phrasing that I hear a lot and—to be blunt—those words mean nothing unless that is what is delivered in practice.

In practice, a rights-based system has value only when it is consistent, intentional and, most important, evident in the everyday experience of people using social care support, evident in the experience of unpaid carers, evident in the experience of families and evident to people working in the social care support and social work sector.

The report recommends that

“People must be able to access support at the point they feel they need it, including for advice and signposting to local community-based resources and help, and for barriers to this, such as the current eligibility criteria and charging regime, to be fundamentally reformed and removed, to allow a greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention.”

The report also recommends that

“People should understand better what their rights are to social care and supports”.

It highlights the role of “duty bearers”, primarily social workers. We must take a serious look at what barriers are in their way when it comes to realising the rights of their clients. Social work as a profession takes a rights-based, person-centred approach. If considerations of eligibility and cost are hampering workers in that practice, we must address that.

Good provision of care is an investment in our whole country and a mark of a good society. Social care exists to help people enjoy their human rights equally, including the right to live with dignity, the right to independent living and the right to meaningful and active participation in Scottish society, work and education. There have been some fine speeches this afternoon showing that that is understood across the chamber. Social care must have parity with our NHS, be free at the point of delivery and have human rights and fair work truly at its heart. Let us make sure that, collectively, we take on the challenges and opportunities presented in the report and deliver just that for the people of Scotland.

17:14

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): The independent review is an important step towards the creation of a national care service for Scotland, which will ultimately enable us to improve the experiences of everybody who uses social care support, their carers, their families and the workforce.

Covid-19 has changed the way that we think about many aspects of our lives and has made us think about the sort of country that we want to live in. I am pleased that the Government set up the review, which in time really could be a positive legacy of what has been a most difficult and tragic period in our history.

I am pleased that, as George Adam said, the review found many aspects of our adult social care system that should be commended, including the introduction of self-directed support, which has been particularly useful to many of my constituents. In addition, the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 and the Scottish Government's commitment in legislation to integrate health and social care should be celebrated. However, it is recognised that there is room for improvement and, once the 53 recommendations that have been made are implemented, they will result in even more support being provided. The recommendations are robust and will allow us to move to a new way of thinking in which collaboration is the key to ensuring that those with lived experience are listened to when we are designing and implementing a social care system that delivers for everyone.

By establishing a human rights approach to social care that incorporates equality and gives better support to unpaid carers, we will start to address the gaps that have been identified. We must also deliver fair work for the social care workforce, through increased and more effective investment. Our social care staff have shown just how much they deserve more recognition and higher pay, in working throughout the pandemic and putting themselves and their families at risk, often on low pay and with little recognition. Every one of them deserves our thanks and praise and our commitment to better their working conditions.

I recently spoke to a care home worker in my constituency who had been off work for a period after testing positive for Covid-19. Unfortunately, and to her surprise, she was not eligible for the self-isolation grant, which meant that she lost out on pay, and that made her feel really undervalued. I know that the self-isolation grant criteria have now been updated and that there is integration and overlap between various parts of the system, but even small things like that can make a big difference to people such as that care worker.

As other members have done, I will speak briefly about the important role that unpaid carers play. Supporting unpaid carers has been a priority for the SNP Government, both before and during the pandemic, which is why, in the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, we established rights for all carers to support and advice. The Scottish Government continues to support local implementation of those rights, backed by additional investment that now stands at £39.5 million per year. That is particularly important now, when many carers are under additional pressure. The actual number of unpaid carers in Scotland could be as high as 800,000. We all know someone who is a carer, and we might even be one, either now or some time in the future.

I will take this opportunity to mention my gran. I was thinking about her this morning, as she always loved pancake Tuesday—I am not sure why, but she really went out of her way each year—and I was telling my kids about those memories. In the context of the debate, as I have said in the Parliament before, looking back to the late 1990s and early 2000s, I would probably have been classified as a young carer, because I and the rest of my family helped to care for my gran in her latter years. That is just what we chose to do; we did not think of ourselves as carers, and that is the point. It is likely that there are many people in that position today, which is why it is so important that support is made available through the Government.

At the heart of the review and our decisions is the opportunity to improve the lives of adults who receive care and those who give it. There are of course added financial benefits to the economy and we have an opportunity to invest in high-quality fair work but, first and foremost, we must ensure that the people of Scotland can equally enjoy their human rights, including the right to live with dignity, as well as rights to independent living, meaningful and active participation in Scottish society and opportunities for work and education.

I will conclude by talking about care homes, as others have done. MSPs of all parties and in all positions in Government—every one of us—will have been struck by the almost impossible dilemma and heartbreaking situation facing residents over the past year.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Mr MacGregor, you are slightly over time already. Please bring your remarks to a conclusion.

Fulton MacGregor: Okay.

On the one hand, we have been dealing with a horrible virus that disproportionately affects our older generations and those in care homes, and on the other hand we have the most extreme restrictions, which are necessary to prevent the

virus but which impact on isolation, loneliness and the dignity of residents. That is an impossible choice. It is important that the creation of any national care service delivers for care homes and honours the legacy of those residents who have sacrificed so much in so many ways during the past year.

I support the Government motion.

17:19

Alex Cole-Hamilton: It has been an excellent debate, with real passion having been displayed in some of the speeches. I will touch on that passion as I summate the Liberal Democrats' amendment.

The Parliament has attempted the reform of the social care ecosystem several times before. We heard something of that in the integration of health and social care agenda—a great idea, but poorly executed and not given the resources or accountability that it required. Self-directed support was mentioned eloquently by Emma Harper and Fulton MacGregor. I worked in the social care sector when self-directed support was first introduced. An example of how the idea was great but the execution was poor could be seen when I helped a local authority to anticipate how it was going to build in self-directed support for its community. The local authority had a respite care unit that served 107 children who required respite support. It did so, and it met every single one of the children's needs. There was no market for another provider to produce a rival service so that parents could choose how to direct their support. Nothing changed for them as a result of that agenda. We need to recognise the importance of putting individuals at the heart of this but understand the market conditions around which it is built.

Donald Cameron shares my party's concern about centralisation. He rightly mentioned the briefing that has been provided by the CCPS, which pointed to the need for any national care provision to have local variation, flexibility and accountability built into its core. I do not believe that we can do that with a monolith at the centre, controlling things.

Monica Lennon pressed me on the £15 an hour, which she referred to as a floor, not a ceiling. I have a lot of sympathy for that. As I said in my reply to her, 83 per cent of women are affected by that. However, John Finnie captured our party's position and said that sectoral bargaining is more important than a baseline figure. I have a lot of sympathy with the baseline being £15 an hour, but I think that we would go for—

Monica Lennon: Will the member take an intervention?

Alex Cole-Hamilton: I will not take an intervention at this point—I am sorry that I do not have time. However, the member's point was compelling.

John Finnie also made an important point about rebalancing the priorities among private sector providers away from profit and towards continuity of care and the importance of giving dignity in old age. He acknowledged the difficulties of rurality that I referred to in my opening speech, with 25-minute journeys for 15-minute visits, which, again, are stripping relationships out of care.

Lewis Macdonald referred to the social care inquiry, which should remind us that deliberation in this place on reform of social care is almost perennial. Jeremy Balfour, in an excellent speech, talked about the cracks in adult social care—from problems that can be found in publicly funded care homes in my community, which are now rectified, to the Covid disaster that we have seen in our care homes.

George Adam talked about

“the type of national care service that we all want.”

If this debate has done anything, it has helpfully shown that there are at least four different views about what a national care service might look like. We see that in the amendments that we have debated this afternoon.

Richard Leonard made a barnstorming speech. I acknowledge his qualities as a speaker and his loss as a speaker as the leader of Scottish Labour. However, although I agreed with a lot of what he said, I do not think that he recognised that, although private homes fail, so do public homes. Public provision is not a guarantee of quality. I am not saying that that is wrong, but it is important to recognise the reality of the situation. Richard Leonard also talked as if the NHS was entirely free from privatisation, when in fact there is a significant element of private provision in the NHS.

Ruth Maguire talked about unshackling social work, which is important, too.

We need to build a cathedral of trust in social care that is built around the individual but acknowledges the shortcomings of the current system. In our view, those shortcomings will not be resolved from the centre. Local accountability, flexibility and autonomy are at the very heart of the vision that we would all aspire to.

17:23

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): I declare an interest as a member of Unite the union. Also, my mum is a resident in a care home.

I have probably spoken about social care more than any other issue in my 10 years in Parliament.

We could fill the chamber with the reports that have been written on social care over those years. The system that we know is broken. It was broken before Covid, but the crisis has exposed it like never before. Everyone accepts that there must be change and that the good work that is going on in social care is despite the system, not because of it. Nowhere is that more evident than in the workforce. Currently, as we have heard across the piece, the sector is riven with low pay, poor conditions and, in some cases, outright profiteering.

Consider HC-One, which has more than 300 care homes in the UK and more than 50 in Scotland. In 2019, that company, which let us not forget is registered in the Cayman Islands, paid £48 million in dividends in one year to its shareholders and paid zero corporation tax—none—and it has posted a loss every single year it has been in operation. Today, it advertises care assistant jobs—I checked this morning—at £9.30 an hour and a laundry assistant job at £8.72. HC-One owned the Skye care home and currently owns the Redmill care home and many others that have been at the centre of scandalous neglect at times and multiple deaths during the pandemic. The Feeley report says nothing on getting rid of HC-One from the sector.

The report mentions good stuff on fair work—absolutely. I do not know how many times I have tried to amend legislation in here to give social care staff fair work and decent conditions. I have attempted it several times with amendments, all of which were rejected by ministers and voted down by George Adam, Sandra White and all the other back benchers who spoke in the debate, who are now falling over themselves to give care workers good terms and conditions. What happened? We could have done it in the past.

It is two years since the fair work convention's report on social care recommended establishing collective bargaining. Why has it not happened by now? We will, I hope, vaccinate the entire population in six months, but we cannot set up collective bargaining in two years—why not?

On workforce issues, we are taking a big step in the right direction. The recommendations are welcome and need to be implemented now. However, one of the great frustrations of the report is the lack of genuine analysis of the past 14 years of cut after cut to social care and of whether integration has been a success or failure.

The report also fails to consider delayed discharge prior to Covid, and its magical eradication in April and May. Where is the condemnation of policy decisions that contributed to the current human rights catastrophe that goes on in our care homes—the PPE issue, the failure to test, the “Do not resuscitate” issue and denial of

hospital treatment? There is silence on the fundamental issues that are at the heart of the human rights agenda.

Although Feeley's report is good in parts, what it does not recommend is the creation of a national care service on a par with the NHS, because like so many of the Government's initiatives, the rhetoric is not met with reality. We know that we have had 14 years of cuts and an overreliance on the private sector; that the standards in many care homes are not good enough; that we have a pay and conditions and recruitment crisis. However, the report says that the problem lies with councils—the very councils that have been stripped of cash to deliver the service in the first place—and that the answer is to remove their local role, centralise decision making and pass it back to ministers and senior civil servants who know best. I don't think so—I reject that approach.

The greatest, central weakness of the report is the refusal to do anything at all about removing the profit motive from the care system. Feeley proposes reforms of commissioning and identifies delayed discharge as—once again—the magic elixir that will release millions of pounds into the system and drive up care. The reality is that we all know the magic elixir—pounds, shillings and pence. That is what eradicated delayed discharge in April and May this past year when all those elderly people were fired out of hospital untested into care homes almost overnight, because money was made available that was not there before.

I reject Mr Feeley's faith in what he calls “an actively managed market”. I believe that that is complete hokum. When the cabinet secretary was a socialist, she probably believed that too. The report rejects the nationalisation of the sector, which means that the likes of HC-One will continue to extract their 10 per cent profit every year. Why do we not consider buying back care homes, saving money for the system in the long run to put back into care?

We have to now be at the start of a campaign for a genuine national care service. That is our goal, with decent care for our older people and dignity for everyone who needs social care. That is what I will be campaigning on.

17:30

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I am very pleased to be closing this hugely important debate on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives.

As others have, I place on record my party's thanks to Derek Feeley, to the panel and to all those involved in what is a very comprehensive report. In general, the debate has been quite consensual, because, I think, we are all working for the same outcome.

As my colleague Donald Cameron reminded us, the report has been delivered against the backdrop of a Covid-19 pandemic that, to date, has claimed the lives of 3,146 care home residents—more than a third of Covid deaths—in Scotland. Furthermore, it cannot be overlooked that patients were sent to care homes early in the pandemic despite being Covid-19 positive and that, between 1 March and 30 May 2020, more than 3,000 patients were discharged into care homes without being tested. That is why our amendment repeats our call for a public inquiry into that scandal, which has already been agreed twice through votes in the Parliament. Relatives and friends will need answers.

As for the report, I think that the way in which the issues pertaining to adult social care have been framed captures much of the challenge that social care faces. My committee colleague George Adam, in his speech and in his continuing questioning of IJBs and health boards, has asked why it took a global pandemic to make the change and to start IJBs and NHS boards collaborating with each other. He has a point. However, change is what we have, and we need to maintain the rate of that change. As Donald Cameron highlighted, the RCN has stated that the way in which adult social care currently operates is not fit for purpose and needs a radical overhaul. That change is needed.

There is much in the report's aims and objectives that we agree with, including the removal of needlessly bureaucratic processes in addressing our social care. We cannot have families describing it, as they did in the report, as "notoriously difficult" and "over-complicated". Applying national standards to drive up the quality of care across Scotland is obviously a good aim, as is delivering better working conditions nationally, including by improving training and career opportunities for carers. That speaks to recruiting and retaining staff as well as delivering a healthy workplace environment for all staff.

As its convener, Lewis Macdonald, has said, the Health and Sport Committee considered the report and the responses that were required. Part of our report said that health and social care partnerships should be required to deliver a

"prevention-focused"

strategy.

"To prevent crisis situations",

there has to be

"a focus on a neighbourhood approach to the planning of health and social care services. Better collaboration and relationship building across sectors and policy areas is required. Locality planning must be required and measured against its success in achieving this shift."

One of the committee's key recommendations was on the need to develop

"a strategy for widespread use of technology to improve ... delivery of social care ... support."

I have long called for significant investment in communication and collaboration technology that can follow the patient as they transition between social, primary and secondary care. Future policy must be driven by the collection and analysis of quality data. That allows for the setting of measurements of success, for monitoring against those measurements and for evaluating outcomes. Audit Scotland's briefing "Planning for outcomes" asked that public bodies be supported to deliver measured outcomes. However, the committee found it difficult to follow the money, and that needs to change.

The role of the third sector was also investigated by the Health and Sport Committee, and we recommended that its advocacy role be strengthened. For me, one of the key takes from the report is the wider view of what adult social care should include. The integration of statutory and third sector services has to improve.

As I think I said earlier, the report frames adult social care issues very well. However, it will be in the delivery of solutions that we will determine levels of success. In that regard, will we get to hear how the Scottish Government will implement any of the recommendations?

The Scottish Government must avoid the continuing centralisation of statutory services, which are much better delivered as close as possible to the point of need. That will require fair funding for councils, which the Conservatives have called for. The outcomes must be controlled around the needs of the individual and allow for variation, flexibility and accountability, as the Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland has suggested. There is no one size that fits all. As SAMH has suggested, social care providers need to be included in the design of social care services.

As Jeremy Balfour said, Covid-19 has put incredible pressure on our social care and the NHS. Under that pressure, weaknesses have been exposed. Healthcare workers and carers who deliver in the system have been nothing short of remarkable. I agree with Neil Findlay that fantastic work is being done despite the system. That cannot be stated too many times, but the systems have been problematic. The communication in the NHS—especially between secondary care and social care—has been highlighted as falling short too often. The Scottish Government should not try to hide from that. We need to accept it and look at how the system can

be made more robust and deliver solutions that are accessible to those in need.

This is the start of a national conversation about adult social care in Scotland, its future, and how a more prevention-focused approach to adult social care needs to be delivered, as the convener of the Health and Sport Committee has highlighted. Adult social care needs a complete overhaul, and Covid has laid bare the need for a national discussion about how it will be funded, organised and delivered. I look forward to hearing from the Scottish Government what a national care service would look like in its eyes.

17:36

Jeane Freeman: I thank members for their contributions to the debate. Although there are undoubtedly disagreements and we shall support none of the amendments to our motion, there are clear areas of agreement. That bodes exceptionally well for the work in the next parliamentary session, which will have to get into much more of the detail than we will be able to in the weeks that remain to us.

It is really important to be clear at the outset that the Feeley report is very clear that there is a great deal to build on in the existing provision of social care by many of those who provide it and in the legislation that exists, which has the right intent and the right legislative underpinning. However, it is also clear that that is not enough and that it is not consistent enough.

Jeremy Balfour put it particularly well in describing, from his personal experience, what it is like for a person to be told what they are going to get as opposed to being asked what they need. We see that across the country. The quality of delivery is not consistent enough—that is what we, as MSPs, have heard. I have heard that, as the cabinet secretary in this role and previously as a minister, and that is what the Feeley review heard.

That takes us to a central dilemma: how do we ensure that national standards and national consistency are delivered so that there is not one level of social care support in one part of the country and a different level of social care support in another part of the country? How do we create a national care service but manage to retain local knowledge, expertise and input?

It is really noticeable that the removal of variation is specifically argued for in the report. MND Scotland, Marie Curie, Inclusion Scotland, the Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland and the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland all support the creation of a national care service because of the standards that it can bring, the ethical commissioning that it can put in place,

the fair work principles that it can embed, and the removal of variation.

We need to work our way through what should not be an either/or or a black-and-white situation. The service certainly does not need to be the monolith that Mr Cole-Hamilton fears. How do we create a national care service that retains a level of local input and, most important, has at its heart those who use the service and are part and parcel of making decisions about its delivery?

Much of that is for the next parliamentary session and the next Scottish Government. As I hope I have set out today, I am not waiting for that. I am moving now to provide the additional resource that I set out today—and that is in the budget—for the active work with Andy Kerr, which has a clear timeline, and the fair work group that he leads so that it can begin to flesh out and put in place early on in the next parliamentary session the opportunities that exist for collective bargaining for improved terms and conditions, as well as what it means to have ethical commissioning.

I am also moving now to use the national care home contract to make some important changes, not the least of which are bringing trade unions to the table for the first time ever and working with COSLA to see how far we can go towards addressing its concerns and setting out the significant areas on which national and local government agree.

The next bit is critically important and very close to my heart. I will put in place the steps necessary to put users and their voices at the heart of policy and delivery. We have done it before and we do it elsewhere in Government. I have to say—and, yes, I have a vested interest—that we did it very successfully in social security, and it continues. There is no reason why we cannot do it again in this most critical of areas.

The next Scottish parliamentary elections loom, and it will be for all parties to set out their own plans. However, I and the Government are clear that, in May, we will ask the people of Scotland to back the creation of a national care service that is intentional in its human rights and in the delivery of dignity and fairness, that is person centred at its heart, and that comes with a significant additional financial investment. Those are political choices, and every party has to decide how it wants to make them. The Government is clear that, if it forms the future Government, it will make those political choices, make that investment, ensure that variation is removed and, significantly, put those who use the services and who will use them in the future at the heart of its design, delivery, regulation and control.

At the end of the day, it is an investment that we will make in ourselves, in each other and in our country's future.

Decision Time

17:42

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Before I put the first question, I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Donald Cameron is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Monica Lennon will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S5M-24134.4, in the name of Donald Cameron, which seeks to amend motion S5M-24134, in the name of Jeane Freeman, on the independent review of adult social care, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

I suspend the meeting to allow members, both in the chamber and externally, to access the voting app.

17:42

Meeting suspended.

17:47

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: We move straight to the vote. The question is, that amendment S5M-24134.4, in the name of Donald Cameron, which seeks to amend motion S5M-24134, in the name of Jeane Freeman, on the independent review of adult social care, be agreed to. This will be a one-minute division.

The vote is now closed. If members had any difficulty in voting, they should let me know by raising a point of order.

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I was not able to vote. I would have voted no.

The Presiding Officer: Mr Ewing would have voted no. I will make sure that your vote is added to the voting register, Mr Ewing.

For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire)

(Con)

Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)

MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Ind)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Abstentions

Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Reform)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S5M-24134.4, in the name of Donald Cameron, which seeks to amend motion S5M-24134, in the name of Jeane Freeman, on the independent review of adult social care, is: For 28, Against 95, Abstentions 1.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-24134.3, in the name of Monica Lennon, which seeks to amend motion S5M-24134, in the name of Jeane Freeman, on the independent review of adult social care, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division. This will be a one-minute division.

The vote is now closed. Again, members should let me know if they had any difficulties in exercising their vote.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Ind)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Reform)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinrossshire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)

Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S5M-24134.3, in the name of Monica Lennon, which seeks to amend motion S5M-24134, in the name of Jeane Freeman, on

the independent review of adult social care, is: For 30, Against 95, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-24134.2, in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton, which seeks to amend motion S5M-24134, in the name of Jeane Freeman, on the independent review of adult social care, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division. This is a one-minute division. Again, members should let me know if they have any difficulty in voting.

For

Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Reform)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Ind)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinrossshire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)

Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)

Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S5M-24134.2, in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton, which seeks to amend motion S5M-24134, in the name of Jeane Freeman, on the independent review of adult social care, is: For 8, Against 117, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-24134, in the name of Jeane Freeman, on the independent review of adult social care, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)

Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Ind)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Reform)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)

McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S5M-24134, in the name of Jeane Freeman, on the independent review of adult social care, is: For 68, Against 57, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the Independent Review of Adult Social Care and supports its recommendations, which provide the foundation to enhance adult social care provision across Scotland; expresses thanks to the review's chair, advisory panel and all the individuals and organisations who shared their views and experiences through the programme of engagement; believes that the incoming parliament should implement these recommendations as quickly as practicable, including scrapping non-residential social care charging; commits to establishing a human rights approach to social care that incorporates equality, individual autonomy and citizenship; recognises the fundamental role of unpaid carers in society and commits to providing them with improved recognition and support; agrees that increased and more effective investment in social care will benefit everyone in Scotland, in terms of economic growth, as well as wellbeing; recognises the critical support provided by the social care workforce on a daily basis and commits to providing improved pay and terms and conditions that reflect the Fair Work principles, and delivered through national bargaining, and commits to establishing a National Care Service in law, on an equal footing with NHS Scotland, to provide national accountability, reduce variability and facilitate improved outcomes for social care users across the nation.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time. I remind members to wear their masks, to observe social distancing and to follow the one-way system when leaving the chamber.

Meeting closed at 17:56.

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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