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**HOUSE OF COMMONS**  
**OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY**  
**DEBATES**  
**(HANSARD)**

**Monday 12 May 2025**

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# HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

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§ *Members of the Government listed under more than one Department*

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# THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

## OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT OF THE  
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND  
[WHICH OPENED 9 JULY 2024]

THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF  
HIS MAJESTY KING CHARLES III

SIXTH SERIES

VOLUME 767

SIXTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 2024-2025

### House of Commons

*Monday 12 May 2025*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

#### PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

### Oral Answers to Questions

#### WORK AND PENSIONS

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

##### Personal Independence Payment: Disabled People

1. **Imran Hussain** (Bradford East) (Lab): What steps her Department is taking to support disabled people in receipt of personal independence payments. [904036]

**The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Liz Kendall):** Personal independence payments are a crucial benefit that makes a contribution towards the extra costs of living with a disability. I know how anxious many people are when there is talk about reform, but this Government want to ensure that PIP is there for people who need it now and into the future. In our Green Paper we promised to review the PIP assessment, working with disabled people, the organisations that represent them and other experts, and we are starting the first phase of that review today. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disability will be inviting in stakeholders this week to develop the scope and terms of reference of this review, and will keep the House updated as this work progresses.

**Imran Hussain:** Many of the 41,000 disabled people in Bradford who rely on PIP to live with dignity and stability are rightly horrified by these proposed cuts. In particular, the four-point rule has the potential to devastate the lives of tens of thousands of people in Bradford overnight. Let us be clear: these plans would take away a vital lifeline from those with the greatest need living in the most deprived areas of Britain. I cannot support any cuts that worsen inequalities in places such as Bradford, so I say to the Minister in absolute sincerity: please listen to the growing calls in this place and out there to scrap these unfair cuts and instead do the right thing by taxing the super-rich so that they can pay their fair share.

**Liz Kendall:** I hear very clearly what my hon. Friend says, but I also want to be clear to the House: if people can never work, we want to protect them; if people can work, we want to support them. The truth is that a disabled person who is in work is half as likely to be poor as one who is out of work. We want to improve people's chances and choices by supporting those who can work to do so and by protecting those who cannot.

**Sir Roger Gale** (Herne Bay and Sandwich) (Con): The personal independence payment does what it says on the tin: it is designed to enable people to live an independent life. As someone who has represented constituents in tribunal appeals, I know only too well that, while there are many who should not be claiming PIP, there are also many whose disabilities may not be immediately apparent. Will the Minister assure me that she will use the utmost care and sensitivity before taking any further decisions?

**Liz Kendall:** I can absolutely reassure the right hon. Gentleman that we will make these changes carefully. We are consulting with disabled people and the organisations that represent them about what support can be available for anyone who loses out. We will be consulting with disabled people about how to build our £1 billion a year employment support programme, and we will make sure that those who can never work will be protected, including by making sure that they do not have to go through reassessment repeatedly, which has been the situation so far.

**Deirdre Costigan** (Ealing Southall) (Lab): I welcome the Secretary of State's confirmation that there will be a full review of PIP in consultation with disabled people and their organisations. PIP was designed 13 years ago, but since then we have increased our understanding of the impact that fluctuating conditions and mental health problems can have on disabled people's ability to live independently. Does the Secretary of State agree that it is certainly past time for a review of the PIP system to ensure that mental health problems are fully understood and that the fluctuating nature of some conditions is properly taken into account?

**Liz Kendall:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is more than a decade since PIP was introduced, and there have been changes in the prevalence of disability, in the nature of long-term conditions, in wider society and in the workplace too. We have also seen a real increase in recent years in the numbers of younger people and those with mental health conditions, so it is right that we now have a review of the PIP assessment process. This is a highly sensitive issue, and it will take time, but my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disability and I will be doing this in consultation with disabled people and the organisations that represent them, and we will begin inviting them in from this week. I also very much hope that all Members of Parliament can feed into this process, including with the organisations in their own constituencies.

**Stephen Gethins** (Arbroath and Broughty Ferry) (SNP): The Secretary of State will be aware of our concerns around the changes and the damages they could do to the most vulnerable. She will also be aware of the implications for the Scottish Government who administer this. Will she at least give me the assurance that the full details about how the changes will interact with devolved powers will come before a vote is brought to this Chamber?

**Liz Kendall:** My right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disability is working closely with all the devolved Administrations to ensure that the changes work in every part of the country. I also say to Opposition Members that we want to ensure that disabled people in Scotland have the same rights, chances and choices to get into work, stay in work and get on in their work, so I hope the hon. Member will be keen to work with us on those issues, too.

**Mr Speaker:** I call the Liberal Democrat spokesperson.

**Steve Darling** (Torbay) (LD): In my constituency, more than 3,000 people are set to lose the lifeline that is PIP. When we look at other elements of the Green Paper, 3.2 million families across the country are set to lose out. Often, those who benefit from PIP are from the most deprived communities in the United Kingdom, and those are set to be hit hardest. Will the Secretary of State advise how the Government are considering the economic impact of the cuts on these communities with high levels of deprivation?

**Liz Kendall:** The hon. Gentleman's figures are the number of people right now who may have fewer than four points on PIP. These changes are not coming in overnight—they would not be implemented until November next year—and many people's health conditions change,

so it is not right to say that that is the exact number who would lose out. We want to ensure that anyone who does lose out has their eligible care and health needs met, as well as having the employment support they need. We know that many disabled people want to work. They have too often been denied opportunities to get into work, and this Government want to change that.

### Education, Employment and Training Support: Makerfield

2. **Josh Simons** (Makerfield) (Lab): What steps she is taking to support young people into employment, education or training in Makerfield constituency. [904037]

**The Minister for Employment (Alison McGovern):** It is an unacceptable part of the Conservative legacy that almost 1 million young people are out of work or education and have little hope of a good start in life. That is why, as part of the plan to get Britain working, we will create a guarantee for all young people aged 18 to 21 in England to ensure they have access to high-quality training or an apprenticeship, or have help to find work. That plan will be vital to young people everywhere, including in Makerfield's towns.

**Josh Simons:** In the towns I represent, the largest type of private employment is the trades. Bricklayers, plumbers, electricians—these are the people who build our nation's future and on whom our future security and prosperity depend. They are the working people the Labour party was created to represent. What is the Minister doing to ensure that more young people get into the trades, in particular partnering with local technical colleges like ours in Wigan and Leigh?

**Alison McGovern:** I thank my hon. Friend for that question because, as the Prime Minister says, we are the party of the builders. As my hon. Friend says, the Labour party was created to serve the simple principle that working-class people could run the country. The Department for Education is working closely with colleges and with us in the Department for Work and Pensions to create construction foundation apprenticeships from this August, which will give many more young people the tools they need for a career in the trades. That is in addition to DWP support for employers, which we have recently expanded specifically with those trades he mentions in mind.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): The rules and regulations that apply to employment, education or training in the Makerfield constituency should apply across this great United Kingdom. Many of those in the construction sector that the Minister referred to, whether they are builders, carpenters, plumbers, plasterers or electricians, come from my constituency of Strangford across to London, so it is important that people in my constituency and across Northern Ireland get the same opportunities through the colleges. Will the Minister ensure that discussions take place with Northern Ireland so that my constituency can continue to supply the people who build houses here in London?

**Alison McGovern:** I pay tribute to all those from the hon. Gentleman's constituency who have been part of building our whole country. We work very closely with

the devolved Administrations across the United Kingdom to ensure that, as the Secretary of State laid out, chances and opportunities are there for everybody. I look forward to working with the hon. Gentleman as we move forward through our change programme.

### **Young People not in Education, Employment or Training**

3. **Chris Murray** (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab): What steps she is taking to help support young people not in education, employment or training.  
[904039]

**The Minister for Employment (Alison McGovern):** Our new changed jobcentres will serve the whole of Great Britain. The changes that we are bringing forward will mean more personalised help for everyone, but especially young people. Frontline work coaches who help young people need better technology and more time to help them find the best opportunities. The goal of our changes is to better serve employers and young people.

**Chris Murray:** In the pandemic, young people were among the least at risk, but they gave up so much of their lives to protect those who were at risk. No generation has made such a sacrifice for another since the war, but they have been badly let down: across the UK, one in eight are not in employment, education or training, and it is worse in Scotland, where the figure is one in six young Scots. What steps is the Minister taking to mitigate the inaction of the SNP Scottish Government and build a better future for young Scots?

**Alison McGovern:** As I just mentioned, our new jobcentres will create a universal service across Great Britain. We must make those changes to serve young people. My hon. Friend makes an excellent point about the pandemic generation, who deserve much better from us all. I know that his city of Edinburgh is full of chances and opportunities that we cannot let go to waste. Given the role of Edinburgh and Glasgow in our visitor economy, I am sure that he will be interested in the work we are doing with UKHospitality to help more young people to have an opportunity in that great sector.

**Wendy Chamberlain** (North East Fife) (LD): Struggling to make ends meet, paying bills, buying work appropriate clothing and paying for public transport all affect someone's ability to get and keep a job. That is just as true for under-25s as it is for anybody else, but the Government continue to maintain a lower rate of universal credit for young people when there is no guarantee that they have financial support from their families. In looking at universal credit, will the Government consider that?

**Alison McGovern:** As the hon. Member will know, we are reviewing universal credit. I am particularly focused on ensuring that young people have a chance before they reach the age of 25. If they are out of work in those first years after leaving school or college, it is absolutely devastating for the rest of their careers. That is why we are making these changes.

**Ms Polly Billington** (East Thanet) (Lab): Over the weekend I was shocked, but not surprised, to see the new statistics for young people in Thanet who are not in education, employment or training—having hit 11.6%, the figure is the highest in the south-east. Some 3% of young people in Thanet also experience support for special educational needs. Although I am not suggesting that correlation equals causation, can the Minister explain how denying access to the health-related element of universal credit will help those young people into work?

**Alison McGovern:** The House will know that we have consultations in a number of policy areas relating to my hon. Friend's question. As I have said, in the end, young people need an opportunity at the start. In places like Thanet, where there are significant poverty and challenges but great opportunity, I want to ensure that we serve employers, and the young people who need them, much better.

**Mr Peter Bedford** (Mid Leicestershire) (Con): Employers in my constituency tell me that they are less likely to employ young people as a result of the Employment Rights Bill because of the increased risk of employing someone at the start of their career. What representations has the Minister made to her colleagues to ensure that the most damaging parts of that legislation are softened?

**Alison McGovern:** The House may know that, on coming into office, the Secretary of State and I totally changed the way the Department for Work and Pensions approaches employers. We want to serve them much better, and we have given them a single point of contact. Having met many businesses over the past six or seven months, my experience has been that they have vacancies and want us to help fill them. We will do that so that we can serve employers and young people alike.

### **Personal Independence Payment Assessments**

5. **Robin Swann** (South Antrim) (UUP): What steps her Department is taking to help increase the accuracy of personal independence payment assessments.  
[904041]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Andrew Western):** The Department is committed to ensuring that individuals receive high-quality and accurate assessments. Assessment suppliers are closely monitored using a range of performance measures designed to improve the accuracy of their advice. Independent audits are conducted to maintain high standards, and as part of our pathways to work proposals we are considering recording assessments as standard to increase transparency and build trust in the system.

**Robin Swann:** Data shared with me by Dermot Devlin from Disabled People Against Cuts shows that £50 million has been spent on PIP appeals in the past year alone, and also that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service has reported that over 70% of those PIP appeals have been successful. When people are put through the harrowing process of being told that their PIP appeal is not appropriate and having to go through the entire appeal system, what are Ministers doing to ensure that any changes make that system friendly to those using it?



**Andrew Western:** I would be very happy to have a conversation with the hon. Gentleman about the assessment process and the mandatory reconsideration process, but I would also say to him that I do not recognise those statistics. Indeed, under the current statistics, appeals are down by 16% on the previous year to January 2025. The other point that I would make to him is that while around 20% of applications are subject to a mandatory reconsideration, only around 5% of those are successful.

**Sonia Kumar (Dudley) (Lab):** The Centre for Inclusive Living in Dudley, which supports those with disabilities, and many residents have written to me to raise concerns about the PIP entitlement criteria and assessment. What reassurances can my hon. Friend give that this Government will protect those most vulnerable in society and that those with disabilities will be enabled, not disabled?

**Andrew Western:** I thank my hon. Friend for raising her constituents' concerns and say to them that, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said at the beginning of this session, we have this week announced a broader review of the PIP assessment process that I hope in due course, and by working with stakeholders, will be able to give my hon. Friend's constituents and stakeholder organisations considerable reassurance.

**Sir Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con):** Can the Minister explain why it appears that telephone assessments for PIP have a significantly higher success rate in applications than face-to-face applications?

**Andrew Western:** I am not able to explain the reason for that difference, but I am able to reassure the right hon. Gentleman that we are looking to move away from telephone appointments and return as quickly as possible to assessments made face to face wherever we are able to do so.

**Steve Yemm (Mansfield) (Lab):** Can the Minister give us more information on what the PIP assessment review will look like?

**Andrew Western:** As my hon. Friend will appreciate, the review has only been announced today. There are a considerable number of strands to it that will be led by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disability. What I can tell my hon. Friend is that, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said earlier, that work is beginning this week by reaching out, as is entirely appropriate, to those stakeholder organisations, who will feed in to the purpose and scope of that work moving forward.

### **Personal Independence Payment: Assessment Review**

**6. Richard Burgon (Leeds East) (Lab):** What progress her Department has made on its review of the personal independence payment assessment system. [904042]

**The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Liz Kendall):** As I said in response to an earlier question, it is over a decade since PIP was introduced and there have been significant shifts in the nature of disability and long-term conditions in this country, as well as changes in wider society and the workplace. That is why our Green Paper announced our plans to review the PIP assessment, working with disabled people, the organisations

that represent them, and others. We are starting that work today, inviting key organisations representing disabled people in to discuss the terms of reference, which we will publish, and we will continue to keep the House updated as our work progresses.

**Richard Burgon:** There has rightly been a lot of focus on the 250,000 people the Government's own impact assessment says will be pushed into poverty by this cruel disability benefit cut, but the true impact on poverty will be even worse. New DWP figures, obtained from a freedom of information request, show that 700,000 families already in poverty will be hit even harder. It is wrong that that has had to come out through a freedom of information request, so will the Minister come clean today about the true scale of poverty that this disastrous policy will cause? Does it not fly in the face of what a Labour Government are meant to do—lift people out of poverty, not push them further into poverty?

**Liz Kendall:** My hon. Friend will know, as we have been very clear with the House, that those figures do not take into consideration the number of disabled people who we believe will find work through our biggest ever investment in employment support, Pathways to Work. Neither do they take into consideration the huge strides we will make with our forthcoming child poverty strategy. We have been more open and transparent than any previous Government, publishing all the poverty impact and other detailed assessments, because we are very happy to have this debate in the House and to put forward our case. Our mission is to get as many people as we can into work and on in their careers, with more income and better choices and chances: that is what a Labour Government are for.

**Vikki Slade (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (LD):** My consistent, Louisa, wrote to me about her PIP assessment. She suffers from a number of debilitating fluctuating conditions. Her assessment took over two hours and the assessor ignored her explanations, did not ask how she felt afterwards and threatened to end the call when her words were misinterpreted, which goes against DWP guidance. Will the Secretary of State undertake to review how fluctuating and invisible conditions are handled in the assessment process?

**Liz Kendall:** Yes, and I would really like the hon. Lady to send in that information and we will go through it with a fine-toothed comb.

**Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op):** I would be interested to hear from the Secretary of State about what assessments she has made of the impact on public services, particularly adult social care, of the move to change personal independence payments. In my local authority, the director has said to me that she is deeply concerned about the additional costs and about moving people into dependency, as their independence is removed. Can the Secretary of State set out what assessment has been made and provide figures to demonstrate that?

**Liz Kendall:** Our objective is to give disabled people more independence by ensuring that those who can work have the support to do so. We have clear evidence that being in work is good for people's health: good work is good for people's physical and mental health.

We are investing extra money into social care, including an additional £3.7 million this year, on top of the £26 billion extra for the NHS. I would be more than happy to meet my hon. Friend to discuss these issues further, as I know she is passionate about ensuring that people have the help, care and support that they need and deserve.

**Sián Berry** (Brighton Pavilion) (Green): Last Wednesday, the Prime Minister told me that cutting back on PIP eligibility was in line with post-war Labour principles, but more and more Labour Members are saying that that policy—balancing the Government's books on the backs of disabled people and those who care for them—is cruel and wrong in principle. Will the Secretary of State tell us who is right?

**Liz Kendall:** I do not recognise the way the hon. Lady framed the Prime Minister's answer. We want a social security system that protects those who can never and will never work, but disabled people who are out of work and economically inactive are more likely than non-disabled people to say they want to work, and if they are in work, they are half as likely to be poor. We want to shift the focus of the system to do more to help people who can work to do so, and to protect those who cannot, because that is the way that we give people a better future.

#### Education, Employment and Training: Kensington and Bayswater

7. **Joe Powell** (Kensington and Bayswater) (Lab): What steps she is taking to support young people into employment, education or training in Kensington and Bayswater constituency. [904043]

**The Minister for Employment (Alison McGovern):** As we have already discussed, every young person in this country needs a good start. As part of our plans to get Britain working, we announced £45 million-worth of funding for eight youth guarantee trailblazers to lead the way. Kensington and Bayswater is covered by the youth guarantee trailblazer launched last month by the Greater London Authority.

**Joe Powell:** I recently visited the North Kensington jobcentre to learn about its support for young people and discuss the potential for working more closely with our brilliant local college, the North Kensington Centre for Skills, so that people can access opportunities in industries such as trades and housing. Will the Minister outline what more the Department is doing to bring together colleges and jobcentres for young people?

**Alison McGovern:** I thank my hon. Friend both for his question and for going to see the team at the North Kensington jobcentre; there is a really dedicated team of five work coaches specifically for young people. I am working with colleagues in the Department for Education on the development of Skills England so that in the future our work coaches—for example, the five who serve his constituency and look after young people—will have much closer access to get them into courses and get them building to move our economy and their careers on.

**Sir Ashley Fox** (Bridgwater) (Con): The Government's own impact assessment of their Employment Rights Bill says that it will increase the cost to businesses by £5 billion, which will be borne mostly by small businesses. Does the Minister share my concern that, when combined with the additional national insurance charges on employers, that will reduce the opportunities for young people in my constituency just as much as for young people in Kensington and Bayswater?

**Alison McGovern:** I have said already in this session of questions that we have changed the DWP to serve employers much better, and that is an important shift. I understand that Conservative Members do not want people in this country to have greater rights at work, sick pay if they need it or secure hours if they are on an exploitative zero-hours contract. Unfortunately for them, last year the public voted for the opposite.

#### Private Pension Pots: Young People

9. **Blake Stephenson** (Mid Bedfordshire) (Con): What steps she plans to take to encourage young people to increase their private pension pots. [904045]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Torsten Bell):** This is an important question, and one where we have seen some good news on the back of cross-party working over the last 15 years. Automatic enrolment has succeeded in transforming participation rates in workplace pensions, particularly for young people. Participation among all eligible 22 to 29-year-olds has increased from 35% to 86%, but there is much more to do. That is why the second phase of our pension review will look at further steps to improve pension outcomes for everyone, including those lucky enough to be young.

**Blake Stephenson:** I thank the Minister for that response. Thanks to the introduction of auto-enrolment, millions of young people are now saving for their retirement, but I have heard worrying reports in Mid Bedfordshire that increases in employers' national insurance, which have resulted in pay freezes, are now causing people to decide to opt out of pension savings. Does the Minister recognise that risk to pensions adequacy? If so, what is he doing to address it?

**Torsten Bell:** Less than 1% of savers actively opt out of saving each month, but the hon. Gentleman is completely right to say that we need to remain vigilant and ensure that opt-out rates do not rise in the years ahead. There was some more volatility in opt-out rates during the pandemic, for reasons that I am sure he will understand, but, as I say, we have been seeing those come down recently. I am happy to keep talking to him about that in the years ahead.

**Callum Anderson** (Buckingham and Bletchley) (Lab): If we want young people, including those in my constituency, to believe in the value of long-term investing, they need to see that their pensions are helping to build the country that they live in and are not just distant markets. Will the Minister set out what steps he is taking to ensure that the Government's pensions reforms encourage funds to invest more in UK infrastructure and hybrid companies?

**Torsten Bell:** My hon. Friend raises an important point. Although we celebrate the success of auto-enrolment, as the hon. Member for Mid Bedfordshire (Blake Stephenson) has just done, we must complete the job. We need bigger and better pension funds that are better able to deliver returns for their members, support our economy and invest in infrastructure and private assets in the months and years ahead.

#### **Personal Independence Payment: Eligibility Criteria**

10. **John Milne** (Horsham) (LD): What estimate her Department has made of the potential impact of changes to the eligibility criteria for personal independence payment on the number of people receiving that payment who will move into employment. [904046]

**The Minister for Social Security and Disability (Sir Stephen Timms):** Pathways to Work sets out reforms to stop people falling into inactivity. They include tailored employment support for people out of work on health and disability grounds, including those claiming personal independence payments, so that they can fulfil their ambitions like everybody else.

**John Milne:** The Government say that their PIP reforms will help people into employment, but the Multiple Sclerosis Society says that 60% of sufferers believe those reforms will make it harder for them to find work, not easier. An estimate must have been made of what percentage of claimants will feasibly enter employment as a result of these reforms. Will the Minister share those figures?

**Sir Stephen Timms:** This is a very important set of reforms, for exactly that reason—to make sure people do have the opportunity to move into work. One in five working-age PIP claimants were in work in March last year; we want many more to have that opportunity. We are going to improve employment support substantially, Connect to Work is being rolled out across the country this year, and there will be an additional £1 billion per year for employment support by the end of the Parliament. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the impacts of these changes will be set out by the Office for Budget Responsibility at the time of the autumn Budget, and there will be very big improvements for those who are intended to benefit from them.

**Neil Duncan-Jordan** (Poole) (Lab): Helping those who can work to find meaningful employment is an important way to tackle poverty among disabled people, but it will require investment in employment support programmes, incentives for employers to recruit disabled people and enforcement of anti-discrimination rules. Given the importance of these measures, is it not appropriate that Members are asked to vote on any changes to the benefits system only after all the information about the impact of the proposals has been provided?

**Sir Stephen Timms:** My hon. Friend is right about the scale of the ambition and the changes that need to be made to deliver on it. Sir Charlie Mayfield is leading the Keep Britain Working review at the moment, looking at what more employers can contribute to those goals. We have committed an extra £1 billion a year for employment support, but we need to get on with the changes we have

announced in order to ensure that the costs of PIP in particular are sustainable in the future, as it is very important they should be.

**Mr Speaker:** I call the shadow Minister.

**Danny Kruger** (East Wiltshire) (Con): It is six weeks since the Government cobbled together an emergency plan for welfare cuts to rescue the Chancellor from the consequences of her job-destroying, economy-shrinking Budget, but we are still waiting for some information. Can the Minister tell the House how many more people will be in work as a result of these measures?

**Sir Stephen Timms:** As I have just told the House, the Office for Budget Responsibility will publish its assessment in the autumn—that is what we said at the time of the spring statement. This is a very big programme; the commitment of an additional £1 billion a year to employment support will open up opportunities for a very large number of people, in the way that the new deal for disabled people did under the last Labour Government all those years ago. We want to get back to providing the support that people need. At the moment, 200,000 people who are out of work on health and disability grounds say that they could be in work today if they had the support they need. We are committed to delivering that support.

**Danny Kruger:** I look forward to the OBR's report, and also to its assessment of the impact of the Employment Rights Bill. We know that many tens of thousands of jobs are going to be lost because of the national insurance rise, and we know from the OBR that because of the changes that the Government have introduced and the scrapping of the measures we were introducing, 16,000 fewer people will be in work and almost half a million more will be on long-term sickness benefits.

However, let me ask the Minister about disability benefits. Is he aware that half the number of people who receive PIP who have multiple sclerosis will no longer be eligible for that benefit under the plans that the Government are bringing forward? A quarter of people with cerebral palsy and three quarters of people with arthritis will also be ineligible. Is the Minister happy with that, and if not, what hope can he give the hundreds of thousands of people who are being abandoned that the Government will look after them?

**Sir Stephen Timms:** The hon. Gentleman is completely mistaken. These changes will not take effect until November next year and following each claimant's award review after that date. Who receives the benefit will depend on the outcome of the assessment at that time. As the hon. Gentleman will know, the view of the Office for Budget Responsibility is that about 10% of those who are currently claiming PIP will lose their benefit as a result of these changes—a much lower proportion than the one he has just referred to.

#### **Education, Employment and Training: Colne Valley**

11. **Paul Davies** (Colne Valley) (Lab): What steps she is taking to support young people into employment, education or training in Colne Valley constituency.

[904047]



**The Minister for Employment (Alison McGovern):** In Colne Valley, my hon. Friend's constituents receive support from Huddersfield jobcentre. Work is also ongoing led by West Yorkshire combined authority, which is one of our trailblazers. It is stepping up to help everybody who needs help getting into work, whether or not they are on universal credit.

**Paul Davies:** Recently, Kirklees college, in partnership with Flannery Plant Hire and Kirklees council, officially launched the Kirklees operator skills hub to meet local skills demand in the construction industry. The hub, which is the fifth of its kind in the country, is a mobile unit with two virtual-reality plant machinery simulators and classroom facilities for skills bootcamps, and will open many doors for young people in my constituency. Does the Minister agree that such initiatives will help many young people into work, and help us to bring about the growth that we need in our economy?

**Alison McGovern:** I do agree with my hon. Friend. As we have said in response to a number of questions, our ministerial team know that this Government are about building the homes that we need and ensuring that the jobs in the sector go to people who will really benefit from a career in construction, and I congratulate Kirklees college and all those involved in that pioneering work. Last week I visited the UK Construction Week conference, where George Clarke talked about the fantastic opportunities in construction and the great building businesses. I say well done to everyone in my hon. Friend's constituency who is pushing this forward.

#### Winter Fuel Payment: Means-testing

12. **Wendy Morton** (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con): What assessment she has made of the potential impact of means-testing the winter fuel payment on levels of pensioner poverty. [904048]

**The Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury (Torsten Bell):** I refer the right hon. Member to the Secretary of State's letter of 19 November to the Work and Pensions Committee. As well as means-testing the winter fuel payment, this Government launched the biggest ever pension credit take-up campaign, because we want all pensioners to receive the support to which they are entitled. The result has been almost 50,000 more awards than were received during the same period in the preceding year.

**Wendy Morton:** The Government did indeed launch a campaign to increase the number of pension credit applications, but sadly there was also a surge—an increase of 133%—in the number of claims that were not allowed, and more than 100,000 awards were not made. For many pensioners, including a number in my constituency, the winter fuel payment was a lifeline—indeed, many need their heating to be turned on throughout the year, not just during the winter—but just because of an arbitrary threshold they now receive nothing at all, and they are losing out. Will the Government look at this again, given the impact and the risk of pushing more pensioners into poverty?

**Torsten Bell:** I can tell the right hon. Member about pensioner poverty. It halved under the last Labour Government and it rose on the Conservatives' watch, by 200,000. Yes, we have had to make some difficult choices, but it is because of those difficult choices that we can

afford a £31 billion annual increase in the state pension over the current Parliament and an extra £26 billion a year for the NHS. None of those choices would the Conservatives back, which is why the NHS and the state pension would be endangered on their watch.

**Cat Smith** (Lancaster and Wyre) (Lab): In my 10 years as a Member of Parliament, I have run consistent campaigns throughout my constituency to raise awareness of pension credit and encourage hundreds of people to sign up to it, but I know that many of my constituents are just above the threshold and by no means well off. What assessment will the Government make of those who are not eligible for pension credit but will still face fuel poverty next winter?

**Torsten Bell:** I am grateful for the work that has been done by councils and third sector organisations throughout the United Kingdom to drive uptake of pension credit. That work has led to the 50,000 extra awards that I mentioned earlier. The choices we have made mean that we can protect pensioners across the board, and the 4.1% increase in the state pension in April was possible exactly because of the tough choices that we have had to make.

**Mr Tom Morrison** (Cheadle) (LD): Stockport council was one of the first local authorities to roll out the warm spaces programme that was used by third sector groups to support people in need during the winter months. Will the Government commit themselves to helping authorities roll such programmes out earlier, in the face of the winter fuel cuts and rising energy prices?

**Torsten Bell:** I am grateful for the work of local authorities, including mine in Swansea, to provide places for pensioners and, in fact, members of all age groups to go to if they are in need during the winter. The most important action we can take is tackling directly the cause of the issues that the hon. Gentleman has raised by bringing down energy bills in the years ahead, moving away from the system that the Conservatives left us—which is dependent on the price of gas driven by the action of dictators such as Putin—and continuing to raise the state pension faster than inflation over the current Parliament, which is why the new state pension is set to increase by £1,900 by the end of this Parliament.

**Damien Egan** (Bristol North East) (Lab): This morning, the Work and Pensions Committee was at the Welsh Assembly, where we heard from Wales's Older People's Commissioner as part of our pensioner poverty review. I was impressed that Wales has a role with real legal clout. From what we heard, it is making a difference for older people in Wales. Do Ministers agree that we should at least look at extending that to England and Scotland?

**Torsten Bell:** We should always learn lessons from Wales. In fact, this Government are already doing that. The roll-out of free breakfast clubs, which is happening across England at the moment, was pioneered in Wales. Children are receiving a free breakfast because of the work done in Wales. I praise my hon. Friend and the entire Work and Pensions Committee for the work that it is doing as part of its inquiry into pensioner poverty.

I will be coming to give evidence to the Committee shortly, and I know that its members have been listening not just in Wales but more widely, with events in Glasgow and Manchester as well.

**Mr Speaker:** I call the shadow Secretary of State.

**Helen Whately** (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con): I suspect that the hon. Members on the Government Front Bench are now surrounded: I suspect that they are the only people left in this Chamber who are prepared to defend the cutting of the winter fuel payment. Dozens of their own MPs have now joined a long list of people telling the Government that they have got it wrong, including the Welsh First Minister—talking about learning lessons from Wales—the money-saving expert Martin Lewis, and voters up and down this country. The Conservatives have led this campaign from the start, but if the Government will not listen to us, will they now listen to everyone else and think again?

**Torsten Bell:** We have set out our policy, but here we are 10 months on and I have no idea what the Conservatives' policy is. I am not even sure that they know what their policy is. For all the shouting, there is no promise to reinstate a universal winter fuel payment. There is one policy from the Leader of the Opposition, the very woman who called for the winter fuel payment to be means-tested in 2022: now, she wants to means-test the entire state pension. Apparently, that is “exactly the sort of thing we will look at”. She thinks that is bold policymaking. It is not—it is bonkers.

**Mr Speaker:** The good news is that the Minister has no responsibility for the Opposition.

**Helen Whately:** That is not something that the Leader of the Opposition said. To the point in hand—the winter fuel payment—I wonder for how much longer this tone-deaf final stand will go on. Every time the Government talk about winter fuel payments, they make out that they had no choice, but that is simply not true. To govern is to choose. At best, this policy was only ever going to save £1 billion or so, but they are spending £8 billion on setting up an energy company, and the cost of asylum hotels will rise to £15 billion under Labour. This has always been a choice, and it is the wrong one. Can the Minister guarantee that next winter, every single one of the 750,000 poorest pensioners who missed out on the winter fuel payment this year will receive it?

**Torsten Bell:** I can guarantee that this Government are going to deliver on our priorities for pensioners by raising the state pension, with a £470-a-year increase this April, and saving the NHS, with a £26 billion increase every single year. What will the Conservatives be doing? None of that, because they oppose every single measure required to fund it. We know what the Tory plan is, because we have just lived through it: pensioner poverty rising and the NHS collapsing.

### Social Security: Tackling Poverty in Wales

13. **Ann Davies** (Caerfyrddin) (PC): What steps she is taking through the social security system to tackle poverty in Wales. [904049]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Andrew Western):** This Government are committed to tackling poverty right across the UK. We are reviewing universal credit to ensure that it is doing the job we want it to do: making work pay and tackling poverty. We have already announced that we will improve the adequacy of the standard allowance in universal credit, and we have introduced the fair repayment rate. Alongside that, the child poverty taskforce is exploring all available levers to reduce child poverty in all four nations, including considering social security reforms.

**Ann Davies:** Just a day before the new figures revealed yet another rise in child poverty in Wales, the UK Labour Government confirmed plans for billions of pounds-worth of welfare cuts, pushing tens of thousands more children into hardship. The Government tell me that the data is not robust enough to know the poverty impact on Wales, which is really not good enough. The Labour First Minister—of the Senedd, not the “Assembly”, if I may correct the hon. Member for Bristol North East (Damien Egan)—has also criticised this Government's approach. Will the Secretary of State now listen to the First Minister of Wales, conduct a Wales-specific impact assessment and scrap these cruel measures?

**Andrew Western:** I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Lady, but I am sure she would not want us to produce a potentially inaccurate assessment of the impact on Wales. What I would say—and I am sure that she agrees with this—is that the levels of poverty in Wales are unacceptable, which is a result of 14 years of the Conservative party failing to address the long-term industrial decline of many communities across Wales. I would also say to her that the best way to get people out of poverty is to get them into work, so I am sure she will welcome the recent launch of the inactivity trailblazer in Wales.

**Catherine Fookes** (Monmouthshire) (Lab): Does the Minister agree with me that the new fair repayment rate, which caps universal credit deductions at 15%, along with the actions of the Welsh Government to help more than 48,000 young people gain skills and find jobs through the young person's guarantee scheme will help alleviate poverty in Wales, and therefore should be welcomed?

**Andrew Western:** I of course agree with my hon. Friend, about both the benefits of the youth guarantee and the specific impact of the fair repayment rate, which across the country will support 1.2 million of the poorest families, including 700,000 families with children.

### Topical Questions

T2. [904063] **Greg Smith** (Mid Buckinghamshire) (Con): If she will make a statement on her departmental responsibilities.

**The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Liz Kendall):** Since our last Question Time, Work and Pensions Ministers and local leaders have launched eight of our 17 Get Britain Working trailblazer programmes across the UK, backed by £240 million of additional investment. These include South Yorkshire's brilliant plans to get people back to health and back to work; five trailblazers in London, including specialist support



for young care leavers and those with musculoskeletal conditions; joining up health and employment support in Blaenau Gwent, Denbighshire and Neath Port Talbot in Wales; and our youth guarantee in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. There is still much more that we need to do, but we have already made real progress in unlocking people's potential and getting Britain working and growing again.

**Greg Smith:** One of my constituents is experiencing severe delays in getting Access to Work scheme payments, dating back to February. In correspondence with the Department, a letter openly says there is no long-term solution to that, so when will the Secretary of State come forward with a long-term solution to speed up these payments?

**Liz Kendall:** I really thank the hon. Gentleman for his question, and we do actually have a plan right now. It was announced in our Green Paper that we are going to reform Access to Work. It is a brilliant support, with a grant or money to help people with physical aids and adaptations, and other support, to get work and to stay in work. I would encourage him to input into the review, and either I or my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disability would be more than happy to meet him to hear his views about how we can make this work for his constituent.

T3. [904064] **Sam Carling** (North West Cambridgeshire) (Lab): According to Sense, there are over 2,500 people with complex needs in North West Cambridgeshire, many of whom will never be able to work because of their conditions. Does the Minister agree that dignity for severely disabled people needs to be a priority for the welfare system, and can he update the House on progress towards ensuring that people whose conditions mean they will never be able to work are no longer subject to the appalling repeated reassessments that we saw all too often under the previous Government?

**The Minister for Social Security and Disability (Sir Stephen Timms):** My hon. Friend raises a very important subject. Social security must always be there for those who cannot work. The changes announced recently to the rates of universal credit protect the incomes of those with the most severe lifelong conditions who will never be able to work. We will also guarantee that, for both new and existing claims, those in this group will not need to be reassessed in future. Those are baked into the Green Paper proposals.

**Mr Speaker:** I call the shadow Secretary of State.

**Helen Whately** (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con): The number of job vacancies is falling month on month under this Labour Government, but the number of people employed is also falling. Could the right hon. Lady admit what this means is happening in the economy?

**Liz Kendall:** It is quite interesting to get that question from the shadow Secretary of State, since under her Government the employment rate did not get back to where it was pre-covid—the only country in the G7 not to do so. She left 1 million young people not in education, employment or training, and she left near record numbers of people—2.8 million—out of work due to long-term

sickness. Businesses are still desperate to recruit. We are overhauling the system to ensure that people get the support they need.

**Helen Whately:** I am disappointed that the Secretary of State did not answer the question. I can answer it, if she will not. It means that businesses have stopped hiring, the growing economy that we left is being hammered by the Government's jobs tax, and thousands of young people are leaving school and university with worse prospects than this time last year. Businesses need a Government who understand them and back them—that is what jobs depend on. She needs businesses to hire people so she can hit her employment target. What is her message to them?

**Liz Kendall:** The shadow Secretary of State fails to recognise that job vacancies were falling under her Government. I would say to her that we are inundated with businesses that are desperate to recruit and to get young people the skills they need. I met a whole group of businesses in Leicestershire last week who are really keen to work with us. I suggest the hon. Lady takes a good, long, hard look at her own party's record—the number of people she left on the scrapheap—say sorry and get her own policies right first.

T4. [904065] **Laura Kyrke-Smith** (Aylesbury) (Lab): I have been in touch with a constituent who has a disability and needs help with showering and dressing. She is concerned that, under our proposed reforms, she will not score enough points to continue receiving the daily living portion of PIP. I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement that the Government are reviewing the PIP assessment, including the descriptors, but can she confirm that cases like that of my constituent will be considered as part of the review?

**Sir Stephen Timms:** I recognise my hon. Friend's concern. We will engage stakeholders to consider the scope of the review before publishing terms of reference. In the review we will consider whether the assessment criteria effectively target the right people at the right level. We will look at the descriptors and consider the points allocated to them.

**Mr Speaker:** I call the Liberal Democrat spokesperson.

**Steve Darling** (Torbay) (LD): With 300,000 people set to be plunged into poverty through the proposals in the Green Paper and 700 families set to go deeper into poverty, will the Secretary of State advise how changes to PIP will ensure that people with disabilities are living their best lives?

**Sir Stephen Timms:** The crucial thing is to improve the employment support for people who are out of work on health and disability grounds. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have an ambitious programme, Connect to Work, which is being rolled out this calendar year, building up to an additional £1 billion a year in employment support by the end of the Parliament. At the moment there are 200,000 people out of work on health and disability grounds who say they would like to be in a job now, and could be in a job now, if they had the support they need. We are determined, through the changes, to provide exactly that support.

T5. [904066] **Dr Rupa Huq** (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): My constituent Charlie Vernon was happily benefiting from the Access to Work scheme until redundancy. He found a new job and did a fresh application last autumn, but since then, well beyond the 24-week timeframe, there has been nothing. Will my right hon. Friend look into these sorts of delays and have a more joined-up system, because assessors are apparently dealing with applications from August at the moment?

**Sir Stephen Timms:** My hon. Friend is right that there are currently delays with the Access to Work scheme, reflecting the very large increase in demand and applications for it over the past year or two. We are making changes to speed things up. We are also, in the Green Paper, consulting on the future of the Access to Work scheme. I would really welcome input from my hon. Friend, and perhaps her constituent as well, about the changes we should be making.

T6. [904067] **Mr Gagan Mohindra** (South West Hertfordshire) (Con): The Government claim to be the party of business, but speak to businesses today and they are hurting. Reduced opportunities for wealth creation and entrepreneurship, employee national insurance contributions and the Employment Rights Bill are destroying opportunity. What are the Government doing to incentivise our wealth creators and encourage job creation?

**Liz Kendall:** The Government are providing the stability that businesses desperately need. We are working to transform skills in this country—that is absolutely what most businesses say to me they are desperately short of. We are overhauling our job centres, so that we actually serve businesses' needs. I would just say gently to the hon. Gentleman that it was under his party that we saw the lowest business investment in the G7. We are going to overhaul that and make this the best country in which to start up and grow a business.

T9. [904070] **Peter Lamb** (Crawley) (Lab): What assessment has the Minister made of the merits of increasing local housing allowance to alleviate the pressure on housing authorities?

**Sir Stephen Timms:** My hon. Friend raises an important matter. I just point out that the April 2024 one-year local housing allowance increase has cost an additional £1.2 billion in the last financial year, and it will cost about £7 billion over five years. We keep local housing allowance rates under review. He is right to stress the importance of those, but future decisions on them will need to be based on the Government's priorities and reflect the difficult fiscal conditions that the Government are dealing with.

T7. [904068] **Wendy Morton** (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con): Helping more people off welfare and into work will require the support and good will of employers, which I fear those on the Government Benches do not fully recognise. How will the Minister achieve that move, having clobbered businesses with the jobs tax, which covers all sectors of businesses, hospices, charities and many employers?

**Liz Kendall:** As I said in response to an earlier question, we are overhauling the way that the Department for Work and Pensions supports employers. We think it is unacceptable that only one in six businesses has ever

used a jobcentre to recruit. We are changing that, including by having a single account manager for businesses, so that they do not have to tell their story time and again. We are overhauling skills in this country, reforming the apprenticeship, and extending the number of sector-based work academy programmes and short skills programmes that businesses desperately want. I know that businesses are desperately keen to engage with us, because they want to recruit, and it is about time that the right hon. Lady's party started listening to businesses.

**Gregor Poynton** (Livingston) (Lab): I have been asked by many of my Livingston constituents for reassurance on the Government's proposed welfare changes. Can the Secretary of State assure the House that these reforms will genuinely help people into decent, secure work, all the while protecting those who clearly cannot work due to ill health or disability?

**Liz Kendall:** I absolutely reassure my hon. Friend that that is what we intend to do. Our employment Bill is about ensuring that we improve the quality of jobs, give greater security to people and bring about more flexible working that will benefit sick and disabled people. We are investing £1 billion in employment support to make sure that disabled people have the chances and choices they deserve. Through our review, led by Sir Charlie Mayfield, we are changing the workplace to make it more inclusive, because the Labour party is absolutely about ensuring that disabled people who can work have the right to do so.

T8. [904069] **Robin Swann** (South Antrim) (UUP): Carers UK reports that unpaid carers are still receiving debt notices over carer's allowance. Between May 2024 and February 2025, the number of notices increased by 9,000, so we are now talking about 144,000 people. Will the Secretary of State halt the creation of those overpayment debts until her independent review has taken place and the recommendations are implemented?

**Sir Stephen Timms:** The hon. Gentleman is right that there has been a problem over a long period with overpayments—often inadvertent—of carer's allowance. That is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State appointed Liz Sayce to undertake her independent review. I know she is making good progress, and I have regularly kept in touch with her. We are looking forward to receiving her recommendations, which will cover those who have been affected, and will recommend changes for the future, too.

**Warinder Juss** (Wolverhampton West) (Lab): What analysis has been done of how the changes proposed in the "Pathways to Work" Green Paper will affect those who rely on PIP not just for employment support, but for their daily living and mobility needs? Can my right hon. Friend please assure my constituents in Wolverhampton West who are disabled and will never be able to work that their financial support will not be restricted in a way that affects their quality of life, so that they can live with independence, and the dignity that they deserve?

**Sir Stephen Timms:** That is an important concern. As my hon. Friend knows, we are determined to open up opportunities for people who have been out of work,

often for a long time, on health and disability grounds, and to give them the chance to get into work through much better employment support. However, we recognise that there will be people who will never be able to work. Under the proposals for claims for the new universal credit health element, from next April, a higher payment will protect those with the most severe lifelong conditions that have no prospect of improvement, and who will never be able to work. Eligibility for that will be through the work capability assessment severe conditions criteria.

**Lewis Cocking** (Broxbourne) (Con): How is the Minister working with the Department for Education to ensure that when young people leave education, they have the skills they need to thrive in the world of work?

**The Minister for Employment (Alison McGovern)**: I refer the hon. Gentleman to some of the responses we have already given. The DWP and the DFE are working together closely as we change apprenticeships and change our jobcentres to ensure that the opportunities are there. Having met the hon. Gentleman, I know that his constituency is full of opportunities for young people, and we want to ensure that they get them.

**Mary Kelly Foy** (City of Durham) (Lab): Recent analysis by Health Equity North shows that more than £13 million will be stripped out of the local economy in the City of Durham every year due to PIP changes. That comes on top of the already worsened health conditions for people in the north-east due to Tory austerity. Would it not be more constructive for the Government to start by listening to the calls of disability groups and disabled people, and supporting them into work, rather than cutting the benefits first and pushing those people further into poverty?

**Sir Stephen Timms**: I can reassure my hon. Friend that we are listening. We are consulting precisely on how best to deploy the additional £1 billion a year for employment support that we have committed to in the Green Paper. However, the assessment of those measures needs to take account of the significant impact that supporting many more people into work will have on reducing poverty.

**Caroline Voaden** (South Devon) (LD): My constituents are extremely concerned about changes to the PIP assessment system, and particularly how they will affect people with mental health issues and fluctuating long-term conditions. Those people may not be able to show the required evidence of how their ability to function is impacted, since their experiences do not always fit within the daily living and mobility assessment criteria. Can the Minister assure me that the assessment system will be updated to take those genuine challenges into account?

**Liz Kendall**: As I said earlier, we are reviewing the PIP assessment process to ensure that it is fit for the future. That starts this week, with stakeholders having been invited in to discuss the scope of the review and its terms of reference. However, it is important to bear in mind that by the end of the Parliament we will still be spending £8 billion more on personal independence payments, and there will be 750,000 more people on PIP than there are now. We are making changes to focus PIP on those in greatest need, while looking at the underlying

assessment process to ensure that it is fit for the future, but there will be more spending and more people on PIP by the time of the next election.

**Mr Speaker**: I call the Chair of the Work and Pensions Committee.

**Debbie Abrahams** (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for what she said about resolving the issues with the application process for Access to Work. Will she also kindly reassure disabled people about the future of Access to Work, and that there will not be cuts in the budget for it?

**Liz Kendall**: Our reforms to Access to Work are not about savings; they are about ensuring that this brilliant service is available to more people in future. We are also looking at how it might be delivered—whether it will continue to be delivered through the Department, or through an arm's length body—or, indeed, an organisation run by and for disabled people. This is a big opportunity to make changes to a brilliant programme, and I know that the Select Committee will engage with us on this.

**David Mundell** (Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale) (Con): What steps is the Secretary of State taking to ensure that the financial reparations that will be made to LGBT veterans following the Etherton review are not taken into consideration when assessing entitlement to other benefits?

**Sir Stephen Timms**: There is an issue with compensation payments more widely, and the right hon. Gentleman gives an example of a current case. We are looking at how we can ensure that people who receive those payments are protected.

**Emma Lewell** (South Shields) (Lab): South Shields will be the 15th most negatively impacted constituency if the Government's proposed welfare changes go ahead, yet there are no in-person consultation events in the north-east at all. Can my right hon. Friend please rectify that?

**Liz Kendall**: I will absolutely take that away to look at it.

**Bradley Thomas** (Bromsgrove) (Con): So many disabled members of society are unable to demonstrate the minimum academic requirements to get on to many courses, or to secure employment. What steps are the Government taking to support those people, so that they can demonstrate vocational and non-academic competencies, and get the jobs that they deserve?

**Alison McGovern**: That is exactly the point of our changes to jobcentres and the £1 billion of investment in employment support—so that we can understand the pathways to work for people who have skills and talents but, as the hon. Gentleman said, perhaps not quite the right qualifications.

**Steve Witherden** (Montgomeryshire and Glyndŵr) (Lab): More than 9 million people in the UK are not actively seeking work, with long-term illness cited as the single largest reason. Does the Minister agree that rather than penalising those who are sick or disabled, the Government should introduce a wealth tax to fund a



genuine transformation of our public services, enabling us to face the future with a healthier, happier and more productive workforce?

**The Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury (Torsten Bell):** I refer my hon. Friend to the fair, tough choices in the 2024 autumn Budget: there are increases in inheritance tax, capital gains tax and dividends tax, and there are fair taxes on private jets and private schools. For what purpose? To fund investment in our public services, with £50 billion extra every year by the end of this Parliament. This is bringing an end to an era of austerity. Those are the fair choices that this Government have made and will continue to make.

**Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD):** A number of constituents of mine in Edinburgh West—former police officers, and former and current NHS staff—have come to me with concerns about the way the McCloud judgment on public sector pensions is being implemented, and worries that they will be negatively impacted at great cost. How will the Government ensure that there is no negative impact?

**Torsten Bell:** The implementation of the McCloud judgment—unfortunately, one of the sad consequences of botched reform under the Liberal Democrat and Conservative coalition Government before 2015—is important, and we need to take it seriously. If there are specific cases, please do write to me about them. I am aware of the issue about making sure that scheme members get the details from the NHS pension scheme, and we are working together closely to make sure members get those letters as soon as possible.

**Mr Speaker:** I call Perran Moon.

**Perran Moon (Camborne and Redruth) (Lab):** Meur ras, Mr Speaker. Some of the most vulnerable people in my Camborne, Redruth and Hayle constituency have profound anxieties about what the changes to personal independence payment eligibility criteria will mean for them. What steps is the Minister taking to communicate to people who will never be able to work again that the new process will not subject them to unnecessary and degrading assessments?

**Sir Stephen Timms:** My hon. Friend raises an important point. I recognise that there is a good deal of concern at the moment, and we want to ensure that people respond fully to our consultation set out in the Green Paper. We have said clearly in the Green Paper that we will ensure that those who will never be able to work will not go through repeated reassessments. That will be built into the system. Initially, the people who will benefit from that will be those who meet the work capability assessment's severe conditions criteria.

**Tessa Munt (Wells and Mendip Hills) (LD):** Today is World ME Day, and I hope that the Secretary of State and her Ministers will recognise the up to 1.3 million people who live with ME and ME-like symptoms, and some of those with long covid. All they want is to have a normal life. I recognise what she has said about making PIP work for fluctuating conditions. Can I ask her to work with her colleagues in the Department of Health and Social Care to put aside research funding, so that money is available to ensure that those who would love nothing more than to live a normal life and go to work can get better?

**Liz Kendall:** I will certainly discuss that with the Health Secretary. We have a joint work and health programme and team, who are really trying to join these two issues up. The hon. Member for Wells and Mendip Hills (Tessa Munt) has made her point very strongly in the House, and I am sure that she will do so again at Health and Social Care questions.

**Luke Myer (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Lab):** The Middlesbrough Disabled Supporters Association does vital work to support disabled Boro fans, but it is currently being hammered by increased bank charges. Will the Minister for Disability work across Government to help take these banks to task so that non-profit disability groups such as the MDSA can continue their important work?

**Sir Stephen Timms:** I am aware that there are concerns along those lines across the charity sector as a whole. I would be delighted to work with my hon. Friend to address the concerns in Middlesbrough specifically.

## Protection of Prison Staff

3.45 pm

**Robert Jenrick** (Newark) (Con) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Justice if she will make a statement on the failure of the prison estate to protect staff from serious and sustained violence by high-risk inmates.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Sir Nicholas Dakin)**: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his question. I am shocked and saddened to hear about the serious assault against a prison officer that took place on Thursday 8 May at HMP Belmarsh. My thoughts are with the family and colleagues of the brave, hard-working prison officer at this time. We will not tolerate any violence against prison officers. Prisoners who are violent towards staff will face the full consequences of their actions.

The incident at HMP Belmarsh is subject to a police investigation. As such, we are unable to comment further in any level of detail at this stage. The Prison Service has also commissioned an investigation, and its terms of reference are being finalised. It will include details of what happened and why, as well as recommendations to prevent recurrences. We will provide updates to Parliament in due course. Separately, on 22 April we announced to Parliament an independent review of the recent terrible incident where staff were assaulted by Hashem Abedi at HMP Frankland; we will make further announcements in the coming days.

Our prison officers are some of the hardest working and bravest public servants this country has. We are committed to ensuring that they are safe at work and are able to keep the public safe. We announced at last the Justice oral questions that the Prison Service has commissioned a rapid review of access to and use of self-cook areas across the prison estate, including their use in special units. The review will report back with recommendations in June. We recently announced a review of conducted energy devices—also known as Tasers—and there is a trial involving a small number of national operational response and resilience unit staff.

Body-worn video cameras, batons, PAVA spray and rigid bar handcuffs are currently available for use by staff, and protective body armour is already worn by specialist prison staff and officers in cases where there is planned use of force or where safe systems of work for the management of high-risk prisoners dictates. We have also announced a review into whether protective body armour should be made available to frontline staff, and that review will report in June. I repeat: the safety and security of our frontline prison staff is our No. 1 priority.

**Robert Jenrick**: Let me place on record our sympathies to the prison officer injured at HMP Belmarsh. We wish them a full recovery and thank all prison officers for their courage in the face of growing danger.

Let us be clear about what is happening in our prisons. Violence against officers has spiralled out of control. In just the past month, two of Britain's most dangerous terrorists—Axel Rudakubana and Hashem Abedi—have launched vicious attacks on officers in two of our supposedly most secure prisons. The Secretary of State ordered a snap review into the attack at HMP Frankland,

but three weeks later we have no answers and no action. Every day it goes on, the safety of officers is at risk, so I ask the Minister, when will this review conclude? Why has every prison officer exposed to dangerous inmates not already been provided with a stab vest—not in June, but today? I have spoken to officers who say that attacks with boiling water are not uncommon. Will the Minister commit to ordering the removal of every kettle from high-risk prisoners—not in June, but today?

This goes deeper than one review. Men like Rudakubana and Abedi glorify violence and dream of martyrdom, and still governors pander to them. I could not care less if Rudakubana never had a hot drink again—nor would the British public. This culture of appeasement and protecting the rights of convicted terrorists and criminals over the safety of our officers must end now. If that means keeping them in cells with just a bed, so be it. If it means no contact, no privileges, and certainly no cups of tea, so be it. Let segregation truly and finally mean segregation.

I want to say this as clearly as I can. I warn the House now that if the Government do not get a grip, a prison officer will be killed. We have had enough reviews. We need action. That is the least that prison officers deserve.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin**: We are managing the most complex people in the most complex system. Our prison staff have to manage extremely dangerous people, and they do it with real bravery. We will do whatever it takes to keep them safe. That is why we have already taken the actions that we have.

All prisons carry out regular risk assessments and implement associated safe systems of work. If a risk is identified regarding kettle use or intelligence is received that one might be used in an assault, the kettle will be withdrawn. Frankly, kettles were used for 14 years under the previous Government's watch, as they rightly trusted the professional skill and expertise of those running and working in our prisons. That is what we are doing now.

**Mr Speaker**: I call the Chair of the Justice Committee.

**Andy Slaughter** (Hammersmith and Chiswick) (Lab): Last week, the Justice Committee visited Wandsworth prison and noted improvements, but from a very low base. We heard that the poor reputation of some prisons, including rising violence, makes recruitment more difficult. That is the legacy of 14 years of starving prisons of resources. What are the current Government doing to improve the recruitment and retention of prison officers?

**Sir Nicholas Dakin**: My hon. Friend is completely correct: we inherited a prison system in crisis, where prisons were on the edge of collapse. Reducing violence in prisons is a key priority. That is why we have taken the actions we have in building new prisons and in the sentencing review: to ensure that we always have prison spaces to lock dangerous people up.

**Mr Speaker**: I call the Liberal Democrat spokesperson.

**Josh Babarinde** (Eastbourne) (LD): No prison officer should go to work in fear that they may leave in an ambulance. I therefore send my sympathies and those of the Liberal Democrats to the officer injured at

[Josh Babarinde]

HMP Belmarsh. Assaults on prison staff have doubled since 2015—a reality for which the Conservatives should hang their heads in shame.

The Government must now get a grip. The Prison Officers Association, which is holding its conference in my constituency this week, has requested more protective equipment. The Ministry of Justice is reviewing that, but will it accelerate the review to ensure that officers get that support now, not next month?

Recruitment and retention issues also compromise prison officers' safety, so what are the Government doing to address that? Will not discontinuing prison officer graduate schemes such as Unlocked Graduates compromise safety? How is the MOJ robustly rehabilitating violent offenders to reduce the risk they pose to prison officers and our communities?

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:** Immediately after the incident at HMP Frankland, the Lord Chancellor, the Prisons Minister in the other place and I met the Prison Officers Association. That was a significant discussion, and commitments were made to ensure that things were addressed properly and correctly. The Prisons Minister will be speaking shortly at the Prison Officers Association conference.

The reviews that are in place are being done in fast time, but they need to be done properly so that we can learn the lessons and take the appropriate actions. They also need input from the people who know exactly what is going on: those in the workforce and those who manage our prisons.

**Warinder Juss** (Wolverhampton West) (Lab): I confirm my interest as a member of the Justice Committee. Does the Minister agree that overcrowding in prisons is a cause of increased violence towards our prison officers and that that is a direct result of how the previous Government dealt with our prisons system? Will he please outline what steps are being taken to reduce overcrowding in our prisons?

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:** My hon. Friend is completely right to say that prison overcrowding makes addressing these issues far more difficult. That is why the Government have pledged to continue building the remaining 20,000 prison places, which the last Government failed to deliver. In 10 months, this Government have already added more than 2,000 prison places. The Conservative Government added 500 places in 14 years.

**Esther McVey** (Tatton) (Con): Surely as a minimum, any prisoner who assaults a prison officer should automatically forfeit any right to early release and all privileges. Does the Minister agree? If so, when will he introduce that change? If not, why not?

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:** The right hon. Member is right to say that anything that happens should be dealt with immediately by the prison authorities, and that is exactly what is happening. That is why these reviews are in place: to learn the lessons so that appropriate action can be taken and appropriate steps put in place for the future, taking into account the issues she raised, among others.

**Kim Johnson** (Liverpool Riverside) (Lab): This Government inherited a violent, squalid prison estate, which makes the job of prison officers much more difficult and dangerous. The privatising of maintenance has contributed to overcrowding and the spiralling of violence towards prison officers, so can the Minister explain why contracts are being retendered? Also, will he release the report recommending more privatisation, so that we can all understand the logic behind this decision?

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:** My hon. Friend raises a question about prison maintenance; that is always under review. Contracts were in place when this Government came into office that needed to be taken forward to ensure that our prisons were kept as safe as possible. Those who are assessed as posing a raised risk of violence are supported through a case management approach that is centred around the individual and addresses the underlying causes of their violence, including specific risk factors and needs, to help them manage and move away from violent behaviours.

**Sir Julian Smith** (Skipton and Ripon) (Con): I support the shadow Secretary of State's request for accelerating the supply of stab vests. Can I ask the Minister for a bit more detail on the Government's thinking on the use of Tasers? There is a long track record of Taser use in the UK, and it would seem that we could also accelerate the use of Tasers in prisons as quickly as possible.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:** I agree with the right hon. Member that this needs to be looked at as quickly as possible. This summer, an operational trial on Tasers will be launched, involving specialised officers, to help staff respond to high-risk incidents more effectively. The findings of the trial will inform any future decisions about the use of Tasers in the prison estate. We need to learn from what we do so that we can get it right in the future.

**John McDonnell** (Hayes and Harlington) (Ind): I declare an interest as an honorary life member of the Prison Officers Association. I thank the Minister for the working relationship he has established with the union since coming into office, but could I ask him to liaise with the POA and urgently bring forward a report, prison by prison, about staffing levels and the timescale set aside for training staff, particularly to deal with the violent prisoners they are dealing with at the moment?

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:** I am very happy to continue to work with the Prison Officers Association and other staff associations working in the prison sector to try to address the issues that my right hon. Friend rightly raises.

**Seamus Logan** (Aberdeenshire North and Moray East) (SNP): The Minister very graciously found time in his busy schedule to meet me and colleagues recently to discuss the "68 is Too Late" campaign. Does he agree that recent events prove the tremendous pressures on our prison officers and staff, and will he give an undertaking to me and the House that, during the course of this Parliament, the terms and conditions of prison officers could be reviewed, especially with a view to the "68 is Too Late" campaign?



**Sir Nicholas Dakin:** I thank the hon. Member for his question and for meeting me earlier in this Parliament to discuss these issues. Yes, these things rightly need to be kept under review, and the conversations taking place with the workforce through the Prison Officers Association and other bodies will continue to make progress on this matter.

**Catherine Atkinson** (Derby North) (Lab): Violence in prisons escalated for years under the previous Government, who left our prisons at breaking point. What is the Minister doing to bring down levels of violence in our jails?

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:** My hon. Friend is right to point that out. A violence reduction training module is available to all staff to help them better understand the drivers of violence and how to mitigate and manage those risks, including the use of a case management model for those at raised risk of being violent. Measures to ease prison crowding are vital for improving prison safety, as we know that crowded conditions can fuel violence. In recent years, prisons have expanded security measures, such as X-ray body scanners and airport-style enhanced gate security, to tackle the smuggling of drugs, mobile phones and other contraband that can drive violence in prisons. We must always be alert and moving things forward because the situation is forever changing.

**Sir Ashley Fox** (Bridgwater) (Con): Does the Minister accept that the safety and security of our prison officers should always come before protecting the rights of convicted criminals? Will he provide stab vests and Tasers for all officers who request them?

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:** I agree wholeheartedly that the safety and security of our prison staff must always come first and foremost. To address the other part of the hon. Member's question, I have already indicated that a review is going on. That needs to be done properly and effectively, and we will come back and inform the House in due course.

**Jayne Kirkham** (Truro and Falmouth) (Lab/Co-op): Violence in prisons rose sharply as investment and staffing fell under the previous Government. I spoke to a prison officer who got an award for his bravery in dealing with one of the many incidents at the prison. He took his daughter to receive the award, and afterwards she begged him to stop doing the job. He no longer was a prison officer after that. What are the Government doing to halt the levels of violence and increase staffing levels?

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:** I congratulate that prison officer for the award he got and the work he did. The Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018 requires courts to consider the fact that serious offences were committed against emergency workers. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 doubled the maximum penalty to two years, so there are actions in place, but we need to be ever vigilant on this matter. That is why the right hon. Member for Newark (Robert Jenrick) was right to ask the urgent question: we need to be ever vigilant and work ever harder with the brilliant people who run and work in our prisons.

**Liz Saville Roberts** (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): As co-chair of the justice unions parliamentary group, I know that unions have been raising the problem of safety and violence against staff in prisons for years under the previous Government, which underfunded them and let them down. Will the Minister commit to meet unions at the launch in July of the newly updated "Safe Inside" prisons charter developed by the Joint Unions in Prisons Alliance, a coalition of nine unions representing workers in prisons, and that His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service will accept the recommendations in the charter?

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:** I am happy to meet those unions and the right hon. Member on the charter. Obviously, until we see the charter, it is difficult to know where things are going on that, but I am sure that HMPPS will be proactive in working with all the associations on getting the charter right.

**Mary Kelly Foy** (City of Durham) (Lab): Ministers will recall the horrific attack on prison staff at HMP Frankland in Durham last month. While I was grateful for the Minister for Prisons' reply to my correspondence, I noted the lack of commitment around the issuing of stab-proof vests on the high-security estate. That is a key ask from the Prison Officers Association. While I welcome the Minister's words today when he said that it will be looked into, I ask that it is done at pace because too many prison officers are worried about whether they will come out of work in their own vehicle or in the back of an ambulance.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:** Where an assessment is needed for stab-proof vests now, they can be deployed, but following the recent incident at HMP Frankland, HMPPS has commissioned a review to establish whether it is necessary for prison officers to wear protective body armour routinely. The review will inform any decision on the use of protective body armour on the prison estate and will report in June. June is next month, so it is happening pretty quickly, and rightly so because this is an urgent issue.

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): We all understand the need to strike the right operational atmosphere and balance in prisons, but in the interests of the retention and recruitment of prison officers, which is absolutely key if our prison estate is to work effectively, I hope that—irrespective of what the review might advise—the Minister and the Department will move speedily to a position whereby the wearing of anti-stab clothing and the carrying of Tasers and other equipment becomes de facto and routine, rather than merely happening in response to gleaned internal intelligence. Otherwise, there will be a crisis in the retention and recruitment of officers.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:** It is crucial that prison officers are equipped with the right protective equipment to do their job safely and securely. The purpose of these reviews is to ensure that we get that right.

**Luke Akehurst** (North Durham) (Lab): Many of my constituents work at HMP Frankland, which is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mary Kelly Foy). I met representatives of the

[*Luke Akehurst*]

Prison Officers Association last week. Two of the concerns they raised were about equipment. They said that during the horrific terrorist attack by Hashem Abedi, they were unable to use batons because the space was too small to wield them, and he was so enraged that pepper spray had no effect on him. They clearly need additional equipment, so what steps are being taken on that? If, as the POA told me, activist lawyers and the courts are insisting that dangerous terrorist prisoners have access to kettles and the ability to use kitchens, will the Government consider changes to primary legislation to enable those privileges to be removed from that category of prisoner?

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:** Let me say straightaway that access to kitchens has been immediately withdrawn. A review of equipment is taking place. The point that my hon. Friend makes about the intelligence he has had from prison officers at HMP Frankland illustrates the complexity around that issue. That is why we need to take our time to get this right while moving at pace and coming back to the House fairly quickly.

**Robin Swann** (South Antrim) (UUP): Thirty-two prison staff were killed in Northern Ireland by terrorists and their criminal associates. What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that our prison officer staff are safe both inside and outside prisons, as we see an escalation in terrorist activity across this United Kingdom? Will he raise that issue at the five nations forum on prisons?

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:** I can certainly commit to ensuring that that is raised at the five nations forum. The hon. Gentleman raises a sensitive and serious issue that needs to be addressed in the right and proper way. I thank him for his question.

**Tom Hayes** (Bournemouth East) (Lab): I have met constituents who are prison officers. They agree with the former Justice Secretary who said that prison officer cuts were “too much” and led to overcrowding and unsafe conditions. This Labour Government are rebuilding the trust of prison officers with a 5% pay award, whereas the Conservatives ran away from making such an award. What engagement does the Minister have with prison officers to understand what safety changes they want, particularly the use of Tasers and stab-proof vests?

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:** My hon. Friend makes a good point about the way in which the Government immediately recognised the need for an uplift in pay, in line with the independent pay report, and took action straightaway. As I said, immediately after the terrible incident at HMP Frankland, the Lord Chancellor, the Prisons Minister in the other place and I met the Prison Officers Association. Lines are open with all the other staff associations across the piece. It is important that we work with them to address this issue properly.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Minister very much for his answers—he always comes to the Chamber with the answers we hope for. It was shocking to read of the violent attack on prison staff by the Southport killer, which highlights the need for greater supervision of, and security measures for, prisoners. What steps will the Government take to tighten the prison privileges system? Take away their parole, for example. Take away all their privileges. If that does not work, put them in solitary confinement. Those evil killers have forfeited any right to privileges in this world. I think it is time that the Government took steps in the right direction by ensuring that high-risk offenders do not have access to freedoms that could be used to seriously harm those who risk their lives working in our prisons.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:** The individual to whom the hon. Gentleman refers is part of a police investigation at the moment, so it would be inappropriate for me to comment on that. He makes a good point about the management of very dangerous people in our prisons. That is why we rely on the expertise and experience of prison staff, officers and governors.

**Mr Jonathan Brash** (Hartlepool) (Lab): Prison should be a rehabilitative place for the vast majority of prisoners; that is good for society, for lowering crime and for our economy. But there is a small number of prisoners in our prison system for whom it should never be about that; instead, it should be about punishment. The Southport murderer should die in jail and if he cannot be in jail without threatening prison officers, he has forfeited his rights. Does the Minister agree?

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:** What I do agree with is that punishment and public protection are two very important reasons why people go to prison. As I said to the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), I cannot comment on a live police investigation, and my hon. Friend will understand the reasons why.

**Chris Vince** (Harlow) (Lab/Co-op): I thank the Minister for his response to the urgent question and, like everybody in this House, my thoughts are with the officer who was attacked. From speaking to friends of mine who have worked in the Prison Service over the last couple of years, it is clear that this is not a new problem, and it is vital that we tackle it. Will the Minister echo his commitment to ensure that everyone, whether they are a retail worker in Harlow or a prison officer in Belmarsh, is safe at work?

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:** I absolutely give that commitment: this Government will do all we can to make sure that people are as safe as possible when they go to work. Nobody should suffer what happened to these very brave, wonderful prison officers doing their duty; that should not happen to anybody when they go to work.



## US-UK Trade Deal: Northern Ireland

4.11 pm

**Jim Allister** (North Antrim) (TUV) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade if he will make a statement on the US-UK trade deal, with particular reference to the impact on Northern Ireland.

**The Secretary of State for Business and Trade (Jonathan Reynolds)**: With your permission, Mr Speaker, I am grateful to be able to give a statement today, following that given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade Policy and Economic Security on Thursday, to update the House on the agreement we have reached with the United States and specifically to address the important circumstances of Northern Ireland.

I can confirm that we have closely considered the impacts of this agreement on Northern Ireland. I have personally spoken to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister twice while negotiating this deal, the first time alongside the Prime Minister. I want all Northern Ireland colleagues to know that the importance of Northern Ireland in this deal, and all trade deals, is paramount to me personally, and I commit absolutely to working with any colleague from Northern Ireland on the implementation of agreements of this sort.

First, as Northern Ireland is part of the UK's customs territory and internal market, Northern Ireland exporters can access the US market under this deal on the same preferential basis as the rest of the UK. Secondly, this deal does not affect how imports to Northern Ireland operate. US origin goods will be able to benefit from this deal where they are not at risk of entering the EU. As a result of the Windsor framework, Northern Ireland businesses importing eligible US goods under this deal can avoid any unnecessary duties with established schemes such as the UK internal market scheme. Thirdly, there is a comprehensive tariff reimbursement scheme. The difference between the UK and EU duty can be claimed back, so long as it can be demonstrated that the goods did not enter the EU single market. The customs duty waiver scheme also allows at-risk duties to be waived entirely regardless of the destination, subject to an overall limit. As we have said all along, we have continued to act in the best interests of all UK businesses, which very much include those in Northern Ireland.

More broadly, I can confirm that this agreement saves thousands of jobs, gives the UK an advantage over other countries in relation to trade with the US, and confirms a process of potentially securing a much wider trade agreement between our two countries. The UK-US trading relationship, which is already worth £315 billion, is important and growing. We have £1.2 trillion invested in each other's economies, employing around 2.5 million people across both our countries. That is why this deal was so important. Throughout our negotiations, businesses have consistently praised our calm-headed, pragmatic approach to working with President Trump's Administration and I thank them for their engagement, their support and their advocacy.

Turning to the detail of the agreement, in no industry was the potential impact of tariffs more acute than in our automotive sector. We have therefore negotiated a quota of 100,000 vehicles where tariffs will be reduced from 27.5% to 10%—

**Mr Speaker**: Order. I gently say that answers to urgent questions are only meant to last for three minutes. I can see that you have quite a few more pages; I am happy to take them because I think it is important that the House knows about the deal, but we need to understand what we have granted and what we have not granted. I do not want to go back over the events of Thursday, when nobody seemed to understand the procedure of the House, and I recognise how important this issue is to hon. Members but, seriously, we should know the rules and I just wonder how this has gone wrong again.

**Jonathan Reynolds**: Mr Speaker, I am incredibly grateful for your forbearance. If it is okay, I will continue to these words, given how important I know the matter is to all Members of the House.

**Mr Speaker**: Order. If it is so very important, why was it not presented to the House as a statement or converted? That is what I would say. I never quite understand—the other day, we could not convert them quickly enough, but today we do not want to.

**Jonathan Reynolds**: Mr Speaker, I would have been more than happy to make it a statement, and I was hoping to be able to do so.

We have negotiated a quota of 100,000 vehicles where tariffs will be reduced from 27.5% to 10%, and secured an agreement for associated car parts, recognising the vital role that this sector plays in our economy.

For steel and aluminium, this deal will remove the 25% additional tariffs that were put in place earlier this year, reducing US tariffs on core steel products to zero. This will provide a critical lift for the steel industry, which has been brought back from the brink of collapse, allowing UK steelmakers to continue exporting to the US. This follows our intervention last month to take control of British Steel and save thousands of jobs in Scunthorpe.

For pharmaceuticals and life sciences, this deal provides assurances that we will receive significantly preferential access in case of any new US tariffs, something that, so far, only the UK has secured. As the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector contributes £20 billion to the UK economy a year and employs around 50,000 people, this was a priority for us.

On aerospace, we agreed that UK aerospace exports, such as Rolls-Royce engines and plane parts, will have a specific guarantee of zero tariffs as a result of this deal. This will be a huge boost to the sector, which supports 450,000 jobs in the UK.

To secure this deal, we have made agreements with the US on beef, ethanol and economic security. On beef, we have agreed a new quota of 13,000 metric tonnes, and have reduced the UK tariff on existing US imports coming through a World Trade Organisation quota limited to 1,000 metric tonnes. Crucially, I can confirm this will comply with sanitary and phytosanitary standards, in accordance with the commitments that we have always made.

The increase in the quota of 13,000 tonnes compares with the 110,000 tonnes in the Australia deal negotiated by the last Conservative Government. Even more importantly, the deal is reciprocal, meaning our UK beef farmers will have unprecedented market access to

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the US. Our farmers will be able to export their high-quality beef through an exclusive UK quota to a market of over 300 million people, providing unparalleled access to the world's largest consumer market.

On ethanol, we already import a significant amount of ethanol from the US and have agreed a duty-free quota capped at 1.4 billion litres. We are working closely with our domestic sector to understand its concerns and any potential impacts to businesses, including what more Government can do to support the sector.

Finally, the UK and US will strengthen our co-operation on economic security and work together to combat duty evasion. We will continue to use investment screening measures already in place, and we will work together to protect our existing supply chains from any third-country investment that concerns either one of us. This Government will take a consistent, long-term and pragmatic approach to managing the UK's relationships with third countries, rooted in our UK and global interests.

As we have made clear, the aspiration on both sides is that this is just the beginning, with the US agreeing to deepen transatlantic trade and investment further, and to progress discussions towards a transformative UK-US technology partnership. This deal has seen jobs saved and jobs won, but it is by no means job done. The siren voices of the extremes can claim to be the voice of working people all they want, but we know that on matters of action on wages, security and opportunity, it is this Government who will make the difference.

The deal comes on the back of our India trade deal earlier last week and on the promises that many Governments have made to secure trade agreements with the US. Although many people have talked about those deals, it is this Government that have got them across the line for every bit of the UK, including Northern Ireland.

**Jim Allister:** For all his verbosity, the Secretary of State came nowhere close to addressing the issues that arise from the fact that this Government and this House do not control the trade laws of a part of this United Kingdom—namely, Northern Ireland. Under the Windsor framework, Northern Ireland was placed under the EU's customs code, so it is therefore its tariffs, not the UK's tariffs, that govern the imports to Northern Ireland. With the EU having no trade deal with the US or India, the resulting tariffs on imports under this deal will be higher when the goods come to Northern Ireland than when they come to GB. For manufacturing and consumers, that creates huge disadvantage and fundamentally contradicts the equal citizenship that is supposed to denote a United Kingdom.

The Secretary of State referred to the convoluted and tardy system of possible recoupment of tariffs, but the onus there is on those applying to prove that anything they produce will never go into the EU. It is no answer to Northern Ireland's subjection to foreign trade laws, which we do not make and cannot change. The Secretary of State would not contemplate that for his own constituents, but he expects us to sup it up in Northern Ireland.

I will ask the Secretary of State about three specific issues. Under the deal, will it not be easier for US manufacturers to buy tariff-free steel from Great Britain

than for manufacturers in Northern Ireland to buy the same steel from their own country to bring it into their own country? That steel will be subject to EU tariffs. How can that ever be compatible with Northern Ireland supposedly being part of the EU's internal market? In terms of beef and the tariff-free trade within the quota that has been set, how can—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I am sure that the hon. and learned Member must be coming to an end. Just because the Secretary of State has taken advantage of the Chamber, I certainly do not expect every other Member to do so—Front Benchers, yes, but the hon. and learned Member will know that he is limited to two minutes.

**Jim Allister:** Where there is a set quota for imports of beef, how can Northern Ireland participate in that if the UK cannot offer a reduced tariff rate in Northern Ireland? Does that mean that our beef-exporting farmers in Northern Ireland will be excluded? Surely all these trade deals expose the folly of surrendering part of our territory to foreign customs control.

**Jonathan Reynolds:** I am grateful to the hon. and learned Member for bringing this urgent question and for putting his community's concerns on the record; I understand how strongly he will feel about them. There is much that I could say and criticise about the previous Conservative Government's approach to a lot of things, but the approach that they took with the Windsor agreement to balance the obvious, practical problems and realities of Brexit—of leaving the single market when Ireland is in the EU and the customs union—alongside our commitments under the Good Friday agreement to observe what we have all signed up to and want to support is fundamentally better than when they threatened to break all kinds of international laws and agreements with key partners. It was the better way to find a way through them.

I absolutely accept and understand that this issue is difficult and complicated, but I can tell the hon. and learned Member that that is not just the perspective of the UK Government, in terms of working with our colleagues and ensuring that these issues are reflected in the agreements, but what we hear from the other side in these agreements. When we explain what we need to see happen around agreements such as this, we see that the US is absolutely committed to peace, to the Good Friday agreement and to the sound working of the Windsor agreement.

The hon. and learned Member has raised a number of specific questions, and I will ensure that we deal with them. We will meet with him and a delegation of MPs and ensure that we are in correspondence with him, as we have promised to be with the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. This approach is complicated, but it is far better than the one we briefly glimpsed in that difficult period when the Conservative Government did not have the Windsor agreement in place. Fundamentally, there is a difference between goods entering Northern Ireland and therefore entering the UK and goods entering Northern Ireland if there is a risk of them entering the single market more widely. This is a sound system to deal with that, and I accept that we must make it work.

This is not our system, but we recognise what the previous Government were trying to do. Whether the hon. and learned Member wants it or not, I offer him an absolute, unequivocal agreement that we will work with him on any concerns he or his community have to ensure that we get this right to the maximum degree possible.

**Rosie Wrighting** (Kettering) (Lab): Can the Minister update the House on the Government's engagement with the chemicals industry?

**Jonathan Reynolds:** Absolutely. Whenever any trade agreement of any sort is agreed, there will obviously be domestic impacts if our trading partners have requested further access to the UK market. That is particularly the case for the agreement on bioethanol. Senior officials from my Department have been meeting representatives of the domestic industry, and I have a personal meeting set up—on Wednesday of this week, I believe. A lot of the issues we need to address are wider than what has been agreed through this trade agreement, but our commitment to working with the domestic industry to help manage any trade-based transitions is absolute.

**Mr Speaker:** I call the shadow Minister.

**Greg Smith** (Mid Buckinghamshire) (Con): I congratulate the hon. and learned Member for North Antrim (Jim Allister) on securing this urgent question, although I agree that the Government really should have offered a statement to the House on this important subject.

Of course, the House has still not yet seen the full detail of the trade agreement with the United States of America. The Secretary of State says that this is just the beginning, but there are still a great many unanswered questions about what we have so far, including what are clearly ongoing negotiations on pharmaceuticals. In his answer, the Secretary of State said that the UK will have significantly preferential rates, but what does that mean in practice? Where is the detail about what "significantly preferential rates" actually means? There are similar questions about the digital services tax.

Last week, the shadow Secretary of State for Business and Trade, my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel and South Downs (Andrew Griffith), asked the Trade Minister a straight question: whether this trade agreement would

"protect the special status of Northern Ireland".—[*Official Report*, 8 May 2025; Vol. 766, c. 899.]

The Minister was unable to provide an answer at the time, and I remain unconvinced by what the Secretary of State has had to say today—there is still a lot of talk about the risks of goods entering the European Union. Clearly, this is a far more complex situation than the Secretary of State would like us to accept. As the hon. and learned Member for North Antrim made clear, the EU is still hugely influential in Northern Ireland trade law. The points he made about steel, for example, were accurate and deserve clear answers.

It is clear that this deal will have a number of implications for the functioning of the dual customs regime, yet businesses in Northern Ireland have been left in the dark for too long by the lack of detail in last week's announcement. I would therefore be grateful if the Secretary of State would confirm what discussions he

has had with his US and EU counterparts about rules of origin and the green lane in Northern Ireland. What specific measures are the Government implementing to ensure that Northern Ireland businesses are not disproportionately burdened by increased costs and administrative complexities as a result of this trade agreement? Finally, given that the Prime Minister is gearing up for his surrender summit with the European Union next week, can the Secretary of State confirm that there will be no backsliding on Northern Ireland's place as an integral, absolute and total part of our United Kingdom?

**Jonathan Reynolds:** That was a fairly odd stream of consciousness, if I am being totally honest. It appears that I have given a stronger defence of the Windsor agreement negotiated by the former Conservative Government than the Conservative party has managed today.

The shadow Minister has asked for detail. I acknowledge that, particularly when dealing with the US and the style of the US system, negotiations have a pace—a pulse—and they are perhaps different from how we would present the detail of a complete trade agreement, such as the one we agreed with India. However, I think he would acknowledge the importance of last week's announcements, because such a significant part of our exports to the US is covered by its sectoral tariffs, not the reciprocal ones. Businesses would have had to start planning this week for a world of—in some cases—25% tariffs, which would have had major repercussions for jobs, businesses and growth in the UK. Being able to give those businesses reassurance, alongside a clear indication of the ongoing nature of the negotiations, is a significant win for British business. I hope the Opposition recognise that.

The hon. Gentleman asked specifically about preferential rates on pharmaceutical products. Those in the United States have not yet completed their own investigations in respect of some of the sectoral tariffs to which they have alluded, and have not announced what they are putting in place. The nature of the agreement, given that it covers the sectoral tariffs, is to recognise that we would want the UK to be in a preferential position on those as well, rather than agreeing what we have already agreed on sectoral tariffs and then seeing further sectoral tariffs announced in future.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the digital services tax. It is not in the agreement; it is not a part of what was announced last week.

As for the question of the special status of Northern Ireland, this is the agreement that the Conservative party struck. It manages two very difficult countervailing pressures. The Conservatives might have thought more about this during the Brexit process, but they did not. They had to resolve the issue after the agreement, and to be honest, I do not think they did a particularly bad job in reaching the compromise that Windsor represents.

Exports from Northern Ireland are covered by the preferential trade terms that we have secured with the United States. When goods come into Northern Ireland, there is a differential depending on whether they are staying in the United Kingdom or there is a risk of their entering the EU's single market. That is what the Conservative party agreed. I think that the new degree of complexity comes from differentials between the



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EU's approach to trade and trade defence, and our own, but surely we all recognise that part of what we are talking about here reflects the fact that we are not in the European Union. The hon. Gentleman again engaged in some language about the European Union.

This country did a trade deal with India last week, one that the Conservative party promised many times but never delivered. We reached an agreement with the United States in the same week. We have the EU summit coming up. Everything that we have said about how this country does not have to pick just one trading partner—it can be the best connected market in the world—is borne out by the agreements that we have signed. Every Member of this House should get behind a UK that is strong on the world stage and connected to each and every one of the major economic markets that we need to be our partners.

**Joe Morris (Hexham) (Lab):** I congratulate the Secretary of State first on being papped in the away end on Friday night, and secondly on, twice in one week, upholding our world-leading environmental and welfare standards. Can he assure me that as these conversations—and, indeed, conversations with future trading partners—develop, further deals will always prioritise high food standards to protect both our farmers and our consumers?

**Jonathan Reynolds:** Last week was a good week all told, on footballing and trade matters. You may be noting, Mr Speaker, that my voice is a little hoarse as a result.

We on the Government Benches were elected on our manifesto commitment not to alter our sanitary and phytosanitary regime and our food standards. Some people said that a deal with the United States would not be possible if we stuck to that, but we did, and we have an agreement. That proves everything we said about why that issue is so important to us.

**Mr Speaker:** I call the Liberal Democrat spokesperson.

**Clive Jones (Wokingham) (LD):** Please bear with me, Mr Speaker, because I think that I too am losing my voice.

Parliament must be given a vote on the United States trade deal and all future trade deals, which must be properly scrutinised by Parliament. Let me remind the Secretary of State that Labour party policy was to have a vote in Parliament on trade deals. What a massive U-turn has taken place over the past few months. Trump's trade war threatens jobs across the United Kingdom and especially in Northern Ireland, where there is heightened uncertainty because of the Tories' botched Brexit deal. What is the Secretary of State's assessment of the impacts of Trump's trade war on our small businesses and our living standards, and what will he do to address those impacts?

In Wokingham, where I live, Shinfield Studios employs hundreds locally. We are the Hollywood of the UK. What steps are the Government taking to protect the UK film industry from potential tariffs, and thus to protect jobs in Wokingham and in other parts of the UK, including Northern Ireland?

**Jonathan Reynolds:** We have discussed this issue across the Chamber on several occasions. We as a Government are not proposing any changes in how the UK and Parliament ratify treaties. I have never given the promises that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned; I have not changed my position. The position is as it always has been—that Parliament has a key role in scrutinising treaties, and any changes that require legislation or alterations in our domestic laws go through Parliament in the usual way.

I think the hon. Gentleman will recognise that this week there could have been announcements of job losses and restructuring that would have been very difficult for a range of important sectors in our economy, and I do not think any Member of Parliament would have wanted to see that happen because of a parliamentary process. I understand that the Liberal Democrats want us to rejoin the customs union, and that therefore trade deals with the United States or India would not be possible. That is consistent and fair, but it would have been very painful if that had been the UK Government's position going into negotiations.

The hon. Gentleman asks about the impact of any potential issues in the global trading system on small businesses and the wider economy. They are significant for our bilateral relationship, but he will also know that the UK is very exposed to wider relationships because we are an outward-facing economy. That is why we have to be on the pitch with our sleeves rolled up, trying to find solutions for ourselves that other countries can follow.

The hon. Gentleman asks a very pertinent question about the film industry. Again, for any area where there has been the suggestion of sectoral tariffs but they are not yet in place—to be honest, it is not entirely clear what would be the subject of a tariff in the case of a film—we have language in the agreement that reflects that. We would cite that as an existing area where there is a really strong and mutually beneficial bilateral trading relationship between ourselves and the United States.

**Chris McDonald (Stockton North) (Lab):** I welcome this trade deal, and particularly the beneficial impact it will have on the steel and automotive sectors. I was pleased to hear the Secretary of State mention his discussions on ethanol, where I know some concerns have been raised. I have spoken to industry representatives, and they are confident that they have a solution that will work well for the Government's trade deal. Notwithstanding his meeting with Ensus on Wednesday, will my right hon. Friend meet me and senior representatives of the UK's two bioethanol producers to discuss how they can make the Government's trade deal with the US a major success?

**Jonathan Reynolds:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his question, and for his industrial expertise. I promise to have that meeting. Whenever trade arrangements have an impact on domestic industry, it is important that we work as a partner to industry in order to address that. He is right to say there are two substantial bioethanol plants in the United Kingdom that might be affected, and we are already setting up a process to work with them, as he has requested.

**Sir Julian Smith (Skipton and Ripon) (Con):** This deal, as with the India deal, is good for the UK. It is particularly good for Northern Ireland, which in turn

can also access the single market. However, the urgent question has some merit, because the reimbursement scheme is quite onerous, and I urge the Secretary of State and his team to look into where efficiencies could lie. Will he clarify how his Department can help Northern Ireland businesses to expand in the US and take advantage of this deal?

**Jonathan Reynolds:** First of all, I am extremely grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for pointing out that, across this House, there should be unanimous agreement that trade agreements with the United States and India are in everyone's interests. I have been a bit dismayed by some of the feedback from those on the Conservatives Benches—not Back Benchers, but Front Benchers—because we should all recognise that such deals are important not only for our bilateral trading relationships with those key markets and for the potential growth that comes from that, but because they send a message to the rest of the world about free, fair and open trade at a time when that message is very much needed.

Feedback on the performance of the duty reimbursement scheme has been significant and we are working with partners in Northern Ireland, and with the Treasury, to see how we can improve the scheme. I think people recognise the fundamentals of the scheme and what it is trying to do, but there are complaints about how easy it is to access. I recognise that and commit to working on it.

We have a whole range of export programmes, as the right hon. Gentleman might be aware, but how exciting it will be to have businesses from Northern Ireland and every part of the UK take advantage of some of the new, liberalised trading relationships that we have in place. They are not only preferential to what we have had in the past, but preferential to what other countries have. For instance, the deal with India offers access to Indian Government procurement that no other country in the world has. I am excited by that, and I hope other colleagues are too.

**Chris Vince** (Harlow) (Lab/Co-op): I thank the Minister for his vital work on this trade deal—I am feeling more and more like Jim Shannon all the time.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Caroline Nokes):** Order. The hon. Member means “the hon. Member for Strangford”.

**Chris Vince:** Apologies. I am feeling more and more like the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) all the time.

Can the Minister give the House some additional detail on how this trade deal and others will protect jobs in both Northern Ireland and Harlow? Does he agree that these trade deals mean that we avoid a trade war, which is good for everybody?

**Jonathan Reynolds:** I thoroughly endorse that. There are some significant headline wins from these trade agreements. Obviously, we are focused in the main on headline reductions in tariffs—whether that is whisky going from 150% to 40% under the India deal, or the removal of sectoral tariffs through the US deal—but there are other things. I have mentioned procurement from the Indian Government, but what really interests

me is how we can remove frictions for smaller businesses and how we could have greater access to the US market. Trade—liberalised trade and free trade—is one of the absolute certainties for growth, for jobs and for investment. That is why I want all colleagues to be behind these deals. At times in the UK's history, there has been a genuine cross-party consensus on the benefits that trade can bring, and I want to see every colleague on either side of the Chamber get out there and sell the benefits to businesses in their own communities.

**Stephen Gethins** (Arbroath and Broughty Ferry) (SNP): This trade deal with the United States does not even touch the sides of the trade deal promised by Brexiteers. Neither does it touch the sides of the damage done by our being ripped out of the customs union and the single market. I have heard the Minister talk about the challenges, but there was a compromise that Labour used to back, or certain Labour Members would back, of remaining part of the single market and the customs union. What is it about a Reform and Tory Brexit that he embraces so well?

**Jonathan Reynolds:** That has never been our position. It was never the position in our manifesto and it was never our position after the introduction of Brexit. The hon. Gentleman talked about the promises that Brexiteers made. I am not accountable for those and never have been, and frankly I am relieved about that. I would simply ask him whether an economy of our size—a G7 economy—can contract out trade policy to a customs union when we are not part of the political arrangements sitting behind that. I just do not see that as realistic.

I hear the hon. Gentleman not get behind, for instance, the reduction in the Indian tariff on Scotch whisky from 150% to 40%, but he should promote his own interests a bit more strongly. Regardless of how Members voted in the referendum on the European Union, they should get behind the benefits for every part of the United Kingdom, whether in the deal with India or that with the US. It will not be the same as being part of the single market—that political decision was taken in the referendum—but despite that we can build the best possible position for every bit of the United Kingdom. I think we should look to the future, rather than relive the battles of the past.

I know this will not mean much to the SNP, but the political uncertainty after the referendum while we did not have the new arrangements in place really did cause harm to the UK. It was in itself a detriment, and that is exactly why the continued obsession about the constitutional position of Scotland is not in the interests of Scottish businesses. We are looking to the future, and agreeing deals that benefit every part of the UK, and if the hon. Gentleman cannot get behind that, so what? We will defend Scotland's interests, and make sure it is getting better access to every market in every bit of the world.

**David Mundell** (Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale) (Con): Although it pains me, as it does, to do so, I have to concede that whiskey is produced in Northern Ireland. When the Minister for Trade Policy and Economic Security made the statement on the Indian trade deal, he understandably placed great emphasis on the benefits to the Scotch whisky industry and indeed the UK whisky industry from that deal, but when he

[David Mundell]

made the statement on the US deal, he said precisely nothing about whisky. Can the Secretary of State clarify exactly what is the current position on whisky with the US, and what is his aspiration?

**Jonathan Reynolds:** First, while we would all recognise the superiority of the quality of Scotch whisky, the deal with India also covers exports of gin. I was at the Beefeater factory, not far from here, last week. The deal also covers Northern Irish whiskey; Bushmills is part of this deal, too.

The right hon. Member's question on the US is about the reciprocal tariffs put in place; obviously, no sectoral tariffs have been put in place on anything affecting whisky production. That conversation is part of the wider ongoing discussion about the reciprocal tariff, or the 10% as it is sometimes referred to. I believe there is no need for that and that it can come down, but there will have to be movement on the US side for that.

I think we could reach agreement on a whole range of tariff lines and product areas that would further deepen the trading relationship between ourselves and the US, and that is why we are committed to continuing this conversation. Of course, the UK is not a high-tariff country—as it is, what tariffs we have in place are relatively modest—and we therefore have to make sure that what we agree is in the interests of both countries. However, that will be part of the ongoing conversation, which includes the digital agreement we are seeking to strike and a whole range of other areas of interest to Members across the Chamber.

**Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP):** The Secretary of State spent about five minutes of his response evading the question that was asked: what will the impact of this trade deal be on Northern Ireland? The fact of the matter is—and he has already said it—that this will be difficult and complicated, and we have to remember that the EU has a single market to protect. It seems he is more interested in protecting the EU from the dribble of goods that goes into the EU than protecting the internal market of the United Kingdom. The fact of the matter is this. The Secretary of State may say, “Well, provided that businesses can prove that parts and other things do not go into the EU, they can then get the taxes back.” But the process for doing that is so complicated, so convoluted and so time-consuming that very often businesses are without the money for a long, long time, with all the cash-flow problems. Then the Treasury spends an age getting the taxes—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Caroline Nokes):** Order. We do need to have a question.

**Jonathan Reynolds:** I understand that the right hon. Gentleman feels strongly about this, but I say again to him that any difficulty or complexity is not caused by this trade agreement per se. There is an arrangement in place—one that the Government support and one that, I believe, those on all sides of the House adhere to—that manages the particular situation that Northern Ireland was put in as a result of Brexit. That is the reality.

Where we have a lot of tension in the global trading system and differentials between ourselves and the EU—there are going to be differentials at times—it is

incumbent on us all to manage them and ensure that Northern Irish businesses and consumers are getting the benefits of the trade agreements we are seeking, and that where there is that relationship to the wider European Union, we operate all those schemes in a way that is to their maximum utilisation and efficiency. I recognise that there are complaints about the duty reimbursement scheme, and we have worked with colleagues on that, but it is not these trade deals that caused that complexity; it was the particular situation that the previous Government needed to find a solution to—and, to be fair to them, they did find a solution. We, on all sides, are committed to honouring and making sure it is working.

**Dr Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con):** As skilfully drafted as the Windsor framework certainly was, it could not possibly have fully anticipated President Trump and his tariffs, or the prospect of an EU-US trade and tariff war. Does the Secretary of State understand how concerned small and medium-sized businesses in Northern Ireland are? Suddenly, they are placed, potentially, at the epicentre of that trade war. It is all very well to say that they can claim back the differential in tariffs, but the bureaucracy involved in such an exercise, as the Secretary of State will understand, is substantial and significant. What will he now do to mitigate it?

**Jonathan Reynolds:** I understand the reasonable point the right hon. Gentleman is making—that perhaps large parts of the global trading system did not anticipate the position we find ourselves in today—but I believe it was drafted recognising that there would likely be divergence in trade policy between the United Kingdom and the European Union, and that is what we are seeking to manage. He mentions—I understand this, because it is the feedback we receive in the Department as well—things like the complexity and the functioning of the duty reimbursement scheme, and how it needs to work better. I hear that from businesses in Northern Ireland and I am hearing it very clearly in the Chamber today. Obviously, that relates to His Majesty's Revenue and Customs and a Treasury responsibility, but I give him an absolute assurance that we are listening and we are committed to doing this. But it is incumbent on all of us to make it work.

**Robin Swann (South Antrim) (UUP):** I thank the Secretary of State for his extended answers. In his original answer, he said that he had spoken with the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister twice. Were they supportive of the Government's approach? Did they raise any concerns? How were those concerns mitigated? Did they agree to the final deal? With regard to the EU re-set negotiations of 19 May, are the Government engaging with the Northern Ireland Executive parties?

**Jonathan Reynolds:** I regularly meet all colleagues across the United Kingdom to keep them updated on matters of trade. Those were specific meetings in relation to what was being negotiated with the US. The final decision on any trade agreement is with myself and the Prime Minister. We do not seek formal agreement per se from colleagues in the devolved Governments, but we keep them informed as to what we are negotiating, the kinds of issues coming up on the other side and how we deal with that. It is not for me to reveal the content of those conversations, but the kind of reasonable concerns being aired in the Chamber today, about how things like the reimbursement system works and the feedback from



Northern Ireland businesses, were of course a part of that conversation. We committed again, as I have done here at the Dispatch Box, to work with them on effective solutions to those problems.

**Caroline Voaden** (South Devon) (LD): The Secretary of State says that free trade is essential for growth. What a shame that the trade across the UK is still so badly affected by us not being part of the customs union. When Labour was in opposition, he called for “a proper role for Parliament in how trade deals are ratified”, and argued that there needed to be “a much higher level of scrutiny than we are seeing now” under the previous Government. There are clearly many questions about how the deal will affect businesses in Northern Ireland. We have seen how the Australia trade deal has been allowed to undermine British farmers across the UK, animal welfare and food standards, thanks to a lack of parliamentary scrutiny under the Conservatives. Farmers in my constituency are worried that American agribusiness will undercut them with inferior meat. I hear what the Minister said about upholding SPS—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Caroline Nokes):** Order. Can the hon. Lady get to the question, please?

**Caroline Voaden:** Will the Minister provide reassurance that Members of this House will be given the opportunity to fully scrutinise and vote on the new trade deal with the United States?

**Jonathan Reynolds:** The hon. Member will have heard my earlier answers. I believe that Parliament should play a role in scrutinising trade legislation, and indeed any international agreement, but it is not the case in the United Kingdom that we have formal “up or down” votes on any treaty. We vote on the implementation of those agreements, and the responsibility for negotiating and agreeing those is with the Government, rather than Parliament. I am not aware of any substantive proposal to change that system. It is certainly not something that the UK Government today are committed to doing.

The hon. Member talks about the impact of leaving our existing trade relationships in the customs union. That was part of that referendum. I understand how people feel intensely about that. *[Interruption.]* People have different interpretations of why they voted. We can relive the argument forever or we can focus on the future, on reducing barriers to trade and on the kinds of agreements delivering advantages for every part of the UK, and that is exactly what we are doing. Had we in this case still been part of the customs union, there would be no breakthrough with the US or the India trade deal. All colleagues need to balance up the two things alongside each other. In relation to the automotive

sector, that lack of a breakthrough would have meant significant job losses this week in the United Kingdom, and that would have been very painful for all of us.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Caroline Nokes):** With what I am sure will be a pithy final question, I call Jim Shannon.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): You have set me a challenge, Madam Deputy Speaker. I thank the hon. and learned Member for North Antrim (Jim Allister) for securing this urgent question. It is so important to talk about this issue in this place. It has caused considerable problems for my Strangford constituents. In particular, I mention three distilleries—Echlinville, Rademon and the Hinch—but many other businesses are affected, too. How does the Minister plan to address the tariff differentials that may arise for Northern Ireland following the UK-US trade deal? It may see any EU retaliatory tariffs on US goods being applied to US goods entering Northern Ireland, potentially creating an Irish sea border for US goods.

**Jonathan Reynolds:** There is only one Member for Strangford, and no one could mistake him for anybody else in asking a question of that sort. He asks about the definition of whether goods are at risk of entering the single market when they come into Northern Ireland. That is based on a percentage differential in the tariff between the United Kingdom tariff rate for a good or tariff line and that for the EU. I believe that a 3% differential puts a good coming into Northern Ireland potentially at risk and therefore considered for the higher tariff up front. In this case, that would be the EU one, and it would then be reimbursed. I understand that it is a more complex position for businesses in his constituency than for many other things, but we have to make this work. We have to be committed to working with businesses in his area, in Northern Ireland and in the wider United Kingdom, and specifically with political leaders, to ensure that we are getting this right. I am hearing, and I have heard many times, about how we can make that system smoother, more reliable and more efficient. We will take that away and work with our colleagues to do that.

However, the system in place is balancing many different competing pressures, and there are no obvious or easy solutions. I was a parliamentarian when we went through all the potential outcomes when a different party was in charge. Let us make it work. Let us listen where we need to improve things, but let us recognise that this agreement fundamentally addresses some of the core problems that existed when this country chose to leave the European Union.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Caroline Nokes):** I thank the Secretary of State for his very detailed answers this afternoon.

## Immigration System

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Caroline Nokes):** Before I call the Home Secretary to make her statement, Mr Speaker has noted that details of the White Paper have been reported in the media since Sunday morning. As Mr Speaker has said previously, it is important that these policy announcements are made in the first instance in this House, and not in the media. Mr Speaker does not understand why the Government persist in making announcements in this way, when the ministerial code is absolutely clear:

“When Parliament is in session, the most important announcements of government policy should be made in the first instance in Parliament.”

It is clear to Mr Speaker that, for whatever reason, that principle is no longer routinely observed by the Government, and he will be giving further consideration to what might be possible in order to regularise the situation.

4.54 pm

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Yvette Cooper):** With your permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will make a statement on the Government's White Paper on restoring control over the immigration system.

Five months ago, the figures were published that showed net migration had reached a record high of more than 900,000 under the last Conservative Government—a figure that had quadrupled in the space of just four years. That was the consequence of specific Government choices made from 2020 onwards, including introducing what was effectively a free market experiment on immigration: encouraging employers to recruit from abroad and loosening controls in different areas, but without any requirement to tackle skills and labour shortages here at home. Those choices undermined the immigration system and the economy too.

This Government are making very different choices. We made it clear at that time, just as we set out in our manifesto, that this Government would restore order and control to the immigration system, not only bringing net migration substantially down, but boosting skills and training here at home. The White Paper we are publishing today does exactly that. It is built on five core principles: first, that net migration must come down, so the system is properly managed and controlled; secondly, that the immigration system must be linked to skills and training here in the UK, so that no industry is allowed to rely solely on immigration to fill its skills shortages; thirdly, that the system must be fair and effective, with clearer rules in areas such as respect for family life, to prevent perverse outcomes that undermine public confidence; fourthly, that the rules must be respected and enforced, including tackling illegal and irregular migration and deporting foreign criminals; and finally, that the system must support integration and community cohesion, including new rules on the ability to speak English and the contribution that people can bring to the UK.

Our United Kingdom is an interconnected and outward-looking nation. Our history and our geography mean that for generations, British people have travelled overseas to live and work, and people have come to the UK to study, work, invest or seek refuge. British citizens draw

on heritage from all over the world, and that has made us the country we are today. Through many years, our country has been strengthened by those who have come here to contribute, from the doctors in our NHS to the entrepreneurs founding some of our biggest businesses and those who came through generations to work in jobs from coal mining to caring for our loved ones or serving in our armed forces—people often coming to do some of the most difficult jobs of all.

Our trading nation, global leading universities and strong historical international connections mean that migration will always be part of our country's future as well as our past. But that is exactly why immigration needs to be properly controlled and managed—and it has not been.

Overseas recruitment shot up while training in the UK was cut. Lower skilled migration soared while the proportion of UK residents in work plummeted. In 2019, 10% of skilled work visas went to non-graduate jobs. By 2024, that had risen to 60%. Employers were even given a 20% wage discount if they recruited for shortage jobs from abroad, actively discouraging them from paying the going rate or training here at home. Educational institutions were allowed to substantially expand the number of overseas students without proper compliance checks. Social care providers were encouraged to recruit from abroad with no proper regulation, so we saw a serious increase in exploitation, deeply damaging for those who came to work here in good faith, and for other workers and responsible companies who were being undercut.

The rules and laws that are supposed to underpin the immigration system were too often ignored. By 2024, returns of people with no right to be in the UK were down by more than a third compared with 2010, and of course criminal gangs were allowed to build an entire smuggling industry along our borders, undermining security and creating a crisis in the asylum system. Later this year, we will set out further reforms to asylum and border security, and to tackling illegal and irregular migration, building on the new counter-terrorism powers in the Border Security, Immigration and Asylum Bill that is before the House this evening, because no one should be making these dangerous crossings on small boats.

This White Paper sets out how we restore control to the legal migration system so that it is sustainable and fair, and works for the UK. First, we are overhauling the approach to labour market policy, so that for the first time, we properly link the immigration system to skills and training here in the UK. Where there are skills or labour shortages in the UK, immigration should not always be the answer to which employers turn. The long-term failure to tackle skills shortages, bring in proper workforce planning, get UK residents back into work, or improve pay, terms and conditions here at home is bad for our economy as well as for the immigration system, because it undermines productivity and growth. We will lift the threshold for skilled worker visas back to graduate level and above, removing up to 180 different jobs from the list and increasing salary thresholds. For lower-skilled jobs, access to the points-based system will be limited to jobs that are on a new temporary shortage list, including jobs that are critical to the industrial strategy, but that access will be time-limited; there must be a domestic workforce strategy in place, and employers must act to increase domestic recruitment.



We will also expect workforce strategies to be drawn up more widely in higher-skilled areas where there is overreliance on recruitment from abroad. To support that work, we will establish a new labour market evidence group. It will bring together skills bodies from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; the Department for Work and Pensions; the Industrial Strategy Advisory Council; and the Migration Advisory Committee to gather and share evidence on shortage occupations in different parts of the country, and to highlight the role that skills, training, pay and conditions and other policies can play in improving domestic recruitment, so that increased migration is never again the only answer to the shortages that the economy faces.

This new approach means that we also need to act on social care. The introduction of the social care visa led not only to a huge increase in migration, but to a shameful and deeply damaging increase in abuse and exploitation. When proper checks were finally brought in, 470 care providers had their licence to sponsor international staff suspended, and 39,000 care workers were displaced. Overseas recruitment to care jobs has since dropped, but it must not surge like that again. It is time we addressed the domestic issues, including with a proper fair pay agreement, to show respect to people who do some of the most important jobs in the country. We are therefore ending overseas recruitment of care workers. It will continue to be possible to extend existing visas, and to recruit displaced care workers and people on other visas, with working rights, who are already in the UK.

Alongside the new visa controls and workforce strategies, we will increase by 32% the immigration skills charge paid by employers who recruit from abroad. That money will be invested through the spending review in supporting skills and training here in the UK. We will ensure that Britain continues to attract the brightest and best global talent by enhancing visa routes for very high-skilled individuals, top scientific and design talent, and people with the right experience to support growth in key strategic industries.

International students bring huge benefits to the UK, supporting our world-leading universities and bringing in top talent and investment, but we will strengthen compliance requirements and checks to prevent visa misuse. Too many people on the graduate visa are not doing graduate jobs, so we will reduce the unrestricted period from two years to 18 months. Those who want to stay will need to get a graduate job and a skilled worker visa, so that we ensure that they are contributing to the economy.

Our rules on work visas are based on the contribution we expect people to make when they come to our country, and we will consult later this year on new earned settlement and citizenship rules that apply the same approach. We will extend the principles of the points-based system, doubling the standard qualifying period for settlement to 10 years, but there will be provisions to qualify more swiftly that take account of the contribution people have made. As the ability to speak English is integral to everyone's ability to contribute and integrate, we will introduce new, higher language requirements across a range of visa routes, for both main applicants and their dependants, so that family, too, can work, integrate and contribute.

The system for family migration has become overly complex. Policies have increasingly developed around case law, following court decisions, rather than being part of a co-ordinated framework set out by Parliament. We will set out a new, clearer framework to be endorsed by Parliament, which will include clarification of how article 8 rules should be interpreted and applied, to prevent confusion or perverse conclusions.

We will review current community sponsorship schemes that support recognised refugees, and we will continue to take action against trafficking and modern slavery. We will shortly appoint a new Windrush commissioner to ensure that the lessons from Windrush continue to be learned, and so that the Home Office ensures that its standards are upheld.

The rules must be respected and enforced across the board. We will bring in stronger controls where there is evidence of visa misuse. We are rolling out e-visas and digital ID. There will be better use of technology to monitor when people are overstaying on their visa, and to support an increase in illegal working raids. Already since the election we have increased returns, and we will go further.

Those who come to our country must abide by our laws, so we will develop new procedures to ensure that the Home Office is informed of all foreign nationals who have been convicted of offences—not just those who go to prison—so that we can revoke visas and remove perpetrators of a wide range of crimes who are abusing our system.

We are already reducing the number of visas granted this year; updated figures will be published before the end of the month. We are increasing returns. Over 24,000 people were returned in our first nine months in government; that is the highest number of returns in a nine-month period for eight years. The impact of the changes regarding skilled worker visas, care worker visas, settlement, students and English language requirements is expected to be a reduction in visas of around 100,000 a year. On top of that, the new workforce strategies, immigration skills charge and family and asylum reforms will bring numbers down, too. As the Prime Minister has said, where we need to go further to restore a sustainable system, we will.

Throughout our history, Britain has been strengthened by people coming here to start new businesses, study at universities, contribute to our cultural and sporting excellence and do some of the toughest jobs in our country. However, to be successful, effective and fair, our immigration must be properly controlled and managed. The White Paper sets out how we will restore control, fairness and order to the system, how we will continue to bring net migration down, and how we will turn the page on the chaos and failure of the past. I commend this statement to the House.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Caroline Nokes):** I call the shadow Home Secretary.

5.7 pm

**Chris Philp (Croydon South) (Con):** I thank the Home Secretary for advance sight of her statement—not that it was necessary, given the extensive leaks and pre-briefing. The Prime Minister claimed all of a sudden this morning that he wants to control immigration. I must say, it came as something of a surprise to me.

[Chris Philp]

He seems to have undergone a miraculous conversion, and has apparently repudiated everything he has ever believed. Perhaps he is doing what he always does: saying whatever he thinks people want to hear at any given point in time. Perhaps he sees his minus 36% approval rating, and this White Paper is his desperate response.

We know what the Prime Minister really thinks about immigration, because he has often told us. He once described immigration law and border control as racist. He signed a letter opposing the deportation of dangerous foreign criminals, including murderers and rapists. He pledged that he would reintroduce full free movement of people, and he sermonised enthusiastically about the benefits of migration. He even said that the Yarl's Wood immigration removal centre should be closed down. Perhaps the Home Secretary can tell us if she will be following the Prime Minister's advice on that one.

Given what the Prime Minister really thinks about immigration, it is no surprise that this Labour Government have presided over the worst start to a year for the number of illegal immigrants crossing the English channel in history; that number is up 30% since the election last year. It has been the worst start to a year ever, and it happened under this Labour Government.

It is also no surprise that this plan is so weak that it barely scratches the surface. On its first page, it seeks to create a false impression. It says—the Home Secretary repeated this—that

“visa applications are down...40%”

since the election, implying that that is somehow down to the Government. Why are visa applications actually down by 40%? Because of the changes made by the last Government, which came into force in April 2024. From the previous peak, net migration is already forecast to reduce by about half a million.

If the Home Secretary is all of a sudden so keen on reducing migration, will she explain why she suspended the Conservative plan to increase the family visa threshold to £38,000? That was due to come into force last month. When will that change now be introduced? The truth is that this plan is weak and will have little impact. The Home Secretary admitted on Laura Kuenssberg's programme yesterday that the measures will reduce net migration by only 50,000, which is just one 10th of the impact of the previous Conservative changes.

The honest truth is that we need to go much further than this White Paper does. Immigration needs to come down a lot more. Under new leadership, the Conservative party is taking a new approach. [Interruption.] Labour Members can vote on this later, if they are so keen. High immigration has put pressure on housing, public services, social cohesion and the economy. Mass low-wage, low-skilled migration undermines our economy's productivity and costs other taxpayers money, because low-wage migrants consume services that cost the Exchequer more than they pay in tax, particularly where there are dependants, so we need to go much further.

That is why later today the House will vote on two Conservative proposals in amendments to the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill. [Interruption.] I can see Labour Members are excited about the prospect. The first amendment would create a binding annual

cap on migration, to be set and voted on democratically by this Parliament. It would allow full democratic parliamentary control over migration numbers, deliver complete transparency and ensure that immigration is drastically reduced. I see the Minister for Border Security and Asylum talking enthusiastically on the Front Bench; I assume that means that she will support the measure.

The second amendment would repeal the Human Rights Act 1998 from all immigration matters. We would not just tinker with article 8, as the Home Secretary says she will, but stop foreign criminals, and others who have no right to be here, abusing human rights laws in UK courts, including article 3. I have a simple question for the Home Secretary.

**Paul Holmes** (Hamble Valley) (Con): She won't answer it.

**Chris Philp:** I will try anyway. If the Home Secretary is really serious about controlling immigration, will she vote later today for the immigration cap, and will she vote to repeal the Human Rights Act for all immigration matters?

**Yvette Cooper:** I must have missed a bit of the shadow Home Secretary's response—the bit, maybe at the beginning, when he apologised to the House and the country for his party's policies, which quadrupled net migration in just four years. He tells us his concerns about the level of migration; his party is responsible for that huge increase in net migration.

I must have also missed the bit when the shadow Home Secretary confessed that from the point at which he became an immigration Minister in 2020—when all these policies were introduced—to the point at which the shadow Justice Secretary, the right hon. Member for Newark (Robert Jenrick), finished being immigration Minister in 2023, net migration rose from 170,000 a year to 870,000 a year. I must have missed that confession, and that apology, which the shadow Home Secretary should have made. Until he admits his failure and apologises for the damage and chaos that he and his party caused, no one will take seriously a single word that he says.

The shadow Home Secretary referred to visa changes that were made before the election. We supported changes made by the right hon. Member for Braintree (Sir James Cleverly), but he had to reverse some of the changes that the shadow Home Secretary made when he was an immigration Minister.

As for a cap, the White Paper provides for caps on low-skilled migration on the temporary shortage list. The right hon. Gentleman's targets and caps are as meaningless as all the other ones that his party introduced when they were in government. Indeed, let me quote from the time of the Conservative Government's reforms that caused a lot of these problems:

“I especially thank the Home Secretary for removing the annual limits on work visas and on international students: I lobbied for both”.—[*Official Report*, 19 December 2018; Vol. 651, c. 815.]

That was the current Leader of the Opposition, so the idea that that lot have anything to offer is like people who burgle your house and then turn up the next day and offer to sell you a dog. If the Conservatives are serious about making the changes and serious about tackling small boats, they should vote for our counter-terrorism powers to tackle the smuggler gangs that the

right hon. Gentleman and the other right-wing parties have repeatedly voted against. That is not serious. This Government are.

**Florence Eshalomi** (Vauxhall and Camberwell Green) (Lab/Co-op): I am proud to represent the diverse and vibrant constituency of Vauxhall and Camberwell Green—a place where so many people from around the world have chosen to make their home and a place where so many people contribute to our community, day in, day out. Since this announcement, I have been contacted by several constituents who are currently on a work visa and looking at their path for a way towards indefinite leave to remain. They are understandably worried about where this uncertainty leaves them. They are worried about their future plans. One even told me that they were so worried that they were considering leaving the UK, because their settled status here is in jeopardy, so can the Home Secretary please outline whether this policy applies to people who are already living and working in the UK, or will it apply just to new visa applicants?

**Yvette Cooper:** My hon. Friend is right to say that there are people working in all kinds of jobs across the country and contributing to our economy and to our communities who have travelled here from all over the world, and that is hugely important. We will set out further details of the earned settlement and citizenship reforms later this year, and we will consult on them. There will be plenty of opportunity for people to comment on and consider the detail, but it is important that we extend the sense of contributions and the points-based system to those reforms as well. We have also said that we will maintain the current five-year route for those who have come on a dependant visa or a family visa, as part of maintaining families.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Caroline Nokes):** I call the Liberal Democrat spokesperson.

**Lisa Smart** (Hazel Grove) (LD): Immigration is personal to all of us, whether we are immigrants ourselves, the descendants of immigrants, or benefit from the skills, talents and cultural richness that immigrants bring. I am immensely proud that our country took in my nan, aged 18, when she was fleeing the Nazis in 1939. I am also hugely grateful that the senior surgeon who did my dad's kidney transplant operation brought his skills and talents to our country, having been born elsewhere.

Yes, the Conservative Government made a total mess of our immigration system. Their chaotic and dishonest approach of making and breaking headline-grabbing targets shattered public trust and left the system in tatters. The line I agree with most in the Government White Paper published this morning is that the immigration system must be “fair and effective”. What the Conservatives left behind was nowhere close to either. Change is needed, and that means rebuilding an immigration system that works for our country and our economy, while treating everyone with dignity and respect.

Of course, that must be coupled with a clear plan to make it easier to recruit British workers to fill those vacancies instead, and I would welcome more details from the Home Secretary on how her Government will achieve this to ensure that these changes do not have unintended consequences for our economy and, in

particular, for our health and social care systems. Will this include finally implementing the Lib Dem proposals for a higher minimum wage for carers to reflect the skill levels really involved in caring professions?

We also need to move away from the chaotic chopping and changing of immigration rules that we saw under the Conservatives, so will the Home Secretary provide further clarity on when these changes will be brought forward, including a clear timetable for any changes to visa rules, so that employers—and the workers and their families, who we are talking about today—can plan for their future?

**Yvette Cooper:** The hon. Member is right that we need to boost training and skills here in the UK alongside these stronger controls. On social care, we will introduce a fair pay agreement. It is important that the vital jobs of those who look after our loved ones in social care are properly respected. On the timetable, some of these measures will require primary legislation and further consultation, while others will be brought in more swiftly—including, for example, some of the changes to the skilled worker thresholds. To give her an example of the approach we want to take, construction workers will be on the temporary shortage list because they are clearly crucial to growth in our economy. However, that has to happen alongside respect for the workforce strategy, which is why the Education Secretary has set out proposals to train 60,000 more construction workers here in the UK.

**Shaun Davies** (Telford) (Lab): This Labour Government inherited disorder at the border: a broken system where criminal gangs, dodgy employers and fake colleges too often decided who came into this country. Will the Home Secretary give the courts the powers to deport and the universities and colleges the resources to train our young people, and will she have a system that encourages the brightest and the best to come to this country and rebuild Britain?

**Yvette Cooper:** My hon. Friend makes an important point. We want to make the procedures easier for the deportation of foreign criminals and for increasing returns of those who have no right to be in the UK. That is why we will change the procedures that we inherited. He is also right that we need to ensure that the best international talent can come swiftly to the UK. That is why we will be setting out further reforms for the highest talent routes as well.

**Sir James Cleverly** (Braintree) (Con): The Home Secretary, in her statement, said that the visa changes she is putting in place will reduce net migration by 100,000 people a year. The House of Commons Library has figures that say the visa changes that I brought in would reduce net migration by 300,000 people per year—so would she concede that her proposals are only a third as effective as mine?

**Yvette Cooper:** Nice try! The right hon. Member was in the Cabinet that massively increased net migration and pushed the numbers up. He then belatedly had to attempt to restrict and reverse some—but just some—of the changes that he and his colleagues had previously endorsed and put before the country. The fact is he still never tackled the Conservatives' fundamental approach: the free market experiment of encouraging people to



[Yvette Cooper]

recruit from abroad but never supporting training and conditions here in the UK. Fundamentally, that meant that he was desperately trying to close the door and deal with the problems without any proper strategy and without understanding why we needed those links with skills and training in the first place. We have to recognise the important way in which migration has always supported our economy, and that it will continue to do so, but it has to be properly controlled and managed—he did not do that.

**Chi Onwurah** (Newcastle upon Tyne Central and West) (Lab): The Tories promised net migration in the tens of thousands and left it at about 1 million. Reform's predecessor, the UK Independence party, promised that Brexit would fix immigration—that didn't work out, did it? The Home Secretary is therefore absolutely right to take a reasoned, evidence-based approach to fixing the immigration system. I welcome her emphasis on the contribution that immigrants make—national health service workers in Newcastle from different backgrounds and those starting up great businesses in this country must still feel welcome—but she is also right to critique our country's dependence on immigration for growth and the impact that has on productivity. Will she say a little more about how she will break that link?

**Yvette Cooper:** My hon. Friend makes an important point. If the response to any labour or skills shortages is too often simply to turn to migration without addressing their causes—which might relate to pay and conditions, lack of training, lack of workforce planning and a whole series of different things—all that happens is that UK productivity falls. Alongside ensuring that we get the skills we need and that we benefit from international talent, we must invest to tackle domestic training and skills failures. That is what the increase in the immigration skills charge will help us to do.

**Sir Andrew Mitchell** (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): Surely the most immediate challenge is illegal migration across the channel, which is enraging our constituents, but the Home Secretary's Government have kicked away the tough deterrent measures that they inherited from the previous Government. There are three critical measures that she should take: the first is to work incredibly closely with all our European partners; the second is to look hard at international conventions, particularly the 1951 Geneva convention; and the third—and in many ways the most important—is to work on the upstream problems at source. Increasingly, people are migrating in large numbers from the Sahel in north Africa, fleeing violence, starvation and extreme poverty. Does she accept that she and her European counterparts must lift their ambition and move towards a modern-day equivalent of a Marshall plan if we are to solve this long-term and increasingly serious issue?

**Yvette Cooper:** I agree with the right hon. Member that we must do more upstream to tackle some of the causes of dangerous journeys. We clearly need to act on the criminal smuggler gangs who are exploiting people and undermining our border security—that is why the legislation on counter-terrorism powers that we will debate tonight is so important—but we also need to do

much more work with European partners. We have been working with France, for example, to get it to agree to change its rules so that, for the first time, it will start to intervene in French waters to prevent dangerous boat crossings. I agree with him about the importance of the Sahel and working upstream. We have established a new joint unit between the Home Office and the Foreign Office in order to do some of the work to which he refers.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Caroline Nokes):** If I am to get in as many Members as possible, we will need pithy questions and short answers, please. For a masterclass in that, I call the Chair of the Education Committee.

**Helen Hayes** (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): I represent a constituency that is enriched and sustained every day by people who have come from overseas to make their home here, especially those who came as members of the Windrush generation. It is important that they hear from this place that they are not only valued and appreciated but part of us. Last week, the Office for Students published another report on the precarious situation facing our universities. This announcement includes a levy on universities in relation to their international students. What engagement has the Home Secretary had with her counterpart at the Department for Education on the impact of her measures on the financial sustainability of universities?

**Yvette Cooper:** My hon. Friend is right. British citizens have heritage from all over the world, and people came here as part of the Windrush generation. We will shortly appoint the Windrush commissioner to ensure that Home Office standards are upheld and that that contribution, through generations, is properly recognised and respected in our country. The White Paper sets out that we will explore the international student levy. That work, which is being led by the Education Secretary, will consider how we can ensure that investment goes into supporting skills in the UK.

**Christine Jardine** (Edinburgh West) (LD): The Home Secretary spoke about attracting the best and the brightest to this country. One area in which our universities do that is the medical profession. During the covid crisis and the rebuilding after it, a lot of the people on the frontline were immigrants. When she looks at the resettlement and reassurance of existing migrants, will she consider indefinite leave to remain for those who worked through that crisis?

**Yvette Cooper:** The hon. Member makes an important point about the contribution made by those who saved lives and cared for our loved ones during the pandemic—one of our most difficult periods. We need to respect and recognise those contributions. There will be plenty of opportunity for everyone to contribute to the consultation on changes to the earned settlement and citizenship rules.

**Tracy Gilbert** (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab): A report on the economic impact of the University of Edinburgh found that its education exports alone amounted to £1.8 billion in the 2021-22 academic year. What engagement will my right hon. Friend have with the university to ensure that the proposals brought forward today do not have any adverse impact on our world-class universities and their local economic impacts?

**Yvette Cooper:** My hon. Friend is right that international students make a huge contribution to our country and our economy and that universities are often very important to the local economy as well, but it is really important that proper standards are met. There have been cases of some institutions not meeting the right high standards of compliance, and evidence that recruitment was not meeting high standards and people were misusing the visas, coming for other reasons and not completing courses. We need those standards to be met, because that is how we will underpin and maintain confidence in international students and in our world-class universities, which is hugely important to our economy.

**Dr Andrew Murrison** (South West Wiltshire) (Con): There was very little of substance in the details of the Government White Paper that came out over the weekend, and the Home Secretary has rather confirmed that impression today, but there are two big-ticket items on which my local authority and my local training providers would like some answers. First, from where will the uplift in training be financed and when will that money arrive? I am sure Trowbridge college in my constituency will be very interested to hear about that. Secondly, does the Home Secretary anticipate that authorities providing statutory services will pay for the fair pay agreement, which presumably means council tax payers, or will she be providing the money out of the block grant?

**Yvette Cooper:** On training, this Government are already going considerably further than the previous Government, who allowed training to be cut, including in adult education and adult skills, at the same time as net migration figures were substantially increasing. Already we are funding training for 60,000 more construction workers as part of our growth plans and workforce strategies, and the White Paper—I am sure the right hon. Gentleman will love the chance to read it and see all the substance in it—sets out proposals for a 32% increase in the immigration skills charge that will go into skills and training in the UK.

**John McDonnell** (Hayes and Harlington) (Ind): When serious legislation that could be contentious is being introduced, it is critically important that Ministers use language carefully. The Prime Minister referred to “an island of strangers”, reflecting the language of Enoch Powell. Does the Home Secretary realise how shockingly divisive that could be?

**Yvette Cooper:** The point that the Prime Minister has repeatedly made is that people need to be able to integrate, to become part of our communities and to share with our neighbours, and that means being able to speak English. That is very important, and it is why we are increasing the English language standards, not just for main visa applicants but for partners, spouses and adult dependants, because too often people unable to speak English have been isolated in communities, and that can also lead to greater exploitation.

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and Kinross-shire) (SNP): Today's announcement, with all that appalling, dehumanising language from the Prime Minister, could not be more contrary to Scotland's national interest. We have a population and demography crisis just now. We cannot get an adequate working-age population to look after

our older cohort. Why is the Home Secretary introducing an immigration system that is contrary to everything that we need in Scotland? Why does she not give us the powers to grow our economy and public services, and why does she not give a jot about Scotland?

**Yvette Cooper:** I gently say to the hon. Member that a series of labour market issues needs to be addressed. As he will know, Scotland's labour market faced challenges when net migration was at 900,000—that level of net migration did not solve the issues across Scotland's labour market. There is a serious issue about what should happen about skills, training and different workforce strategies across Scotland. We have been clear that the skills' bodies and the devolved Governments from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland need to be part of the labour market evidence group, so that we can have a broad strategy that will properly deal with the labour market challenges that we face.

**Dan Carden** (Liverpool Walton) (Lab): I welcome the Home Secretary's emphasis on the contribution of migrants; historically, the city of Liverpool has been made up of migrants. I welcome the White Paper and her statement today, in particular linking migration to labour market strategy, because migration is a key economic lever of the state. Does she agree with me that it is not a left or right issue, but part of the loss of trust in democratic politics, and that we need an asylum and immigration system that has, most importantly, democratic consent?

**Yvette Cooper:** My hon. Friend is right to raise the issue of trust and confidence, because when people feel that the system is not working or is not under control, or that there is a huge gap between rhetoric and reality, trust is undermined. For generations, people have valued the work of those who have come to the UK in order to work, contribute, study and be part of communities, but it has to be controlled and managed. It has not been controlled and managed, and that has undermined confidence too.

**Wendy Morton** (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con): I know a gimmick when I see one, and we have seen one here today. The Home Secretary says that net migration must come down, but she does not say to what level or by when. What does she think the cap should be?

**Yvette Cooper:** I am not sure the right hon. Lady's Front-Bench team can answer that question. We have made clear that net migration needs to reduce substantially. We had years of targets from the previous Government which all failed and were all over the place, which undermines confidence. We should address the issue of confidence by taking a different approach: step by step, we will make progress and deliver, rather than just adding to the talk and the rhetoric.

**Cat Smith** (Lancaster and Wyre) (Lab): Lancaster University, like all of the leading universities in the UK, relies on operating in a global market, not just for international students, but for academic staff. Many of those staff have been in touch with me already today and they are feeling upset by some of the language that has been used, particularly around the use of the phrase “island of strangers”. Will the Home Secretary say something to my constituents who very much contribute to the economy of Lancaster and to our cultural enrichment?

**Yvette Cooper:** I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the words in my statement: in recent years and through many generations, people have come to the UK, contributed to and built our communities, and they are part of the country that we are today. That is who we are and it is important. It is important that we ensure that when people come to the UK, they can speak English so that they can talk to each other and be part of a community, because in areas where people have not been able to speak English, we have often seen some of the worst exploitation. This is about recognising the importance of migration, but ensuring that the system is fair.

**Nigel Farage** (Clacton) (Reform): The Home Secretary will be aware that five years ago I warned that if we did not leave the European convention on human rights and immediately deport those who arrived in Dover via small boats, there would be an invasion. Sure enough, I was right. Already today, a further 600 young men have been processed through Dover, perhaps the odd Iranian terrorist among them—who knows? *[Interruption.]* Does the Home Secretary accept that the Government's policy of "smash the gangs" is a complete and total failure? If that is the case, why should we believe anything else that they say?

**Yvette Cooper:** No one should be making these dangerous boat crossings: they undermine our border security and put lives at risk. Criminal gangs are making a fortune, profiting from organising these dangerous boat crossings. That is why we need counter terrorism-style powers to be able to go after the gangs. There is the opportunity for the hon. Gentleman and his party to vote for those counter-terrorism powers tonight, so that we can strengthen our border security. Previously, he and his party voted against those counter-terrorism powers. I think we need counter terrorism-style powers to strengthen our border security in order to be able to go after those criminal gangs. Does he?

**Mike Tapp** (Dover and Deal) (Lab): The Opposition like to talk about and obsess over caps. Does the Home Secretary agree that it might have been sensible for the previous Government to place a cap on the number of Home Secretaries they had to churn through to deliver their failed open-border project?

**Yvette Cooper:** My hon. Friend is right. I think the previous Government had eight Home Secretaries in the space of eight years, and two of them were the same person.

**Esther McVey** (Tatton) (Con): Without a third country such as Rwanda, can the Home Secretary tell the House where illegal immigrants whose country of origin cannot be established, because they have destroyed their documentation, will be deported to? Is it the case that they cannot be deported, and anyone who exploits that loophole can stay here with impunity?

**Yvette Cooper:** This Government have increased returns since the election; there have been 24,000 returns since the election. That includes an increase of more than 20% in failed asylum cases. It also includes action we are taking to deal with people who claim to have lost their papers and to ensure that we can deliver those returns. We will continue to support other policies,

including working with the EU on issues around returns hubs. The Conservatives had two years to run their Rwanda scheme. They spent £700 million and sent four volunteers. That was a waste of money, a failure for the taxpayer and a failed delivery.

**Luke Akehurst** (North Durham) (Lab): I welcome this statement, particularly the measures outlined to streamline deportation processes and ensure that they are fast, fair and effective. Can the Secretary of State remind the House what happened to levels of removals, including of foreign national offenders, on the Conservatives' watch?

**Yvette Cooper:** Returns dropped by around a third under the previous Conservative Government. I think that is very damaging; I think the rules should be respected and enforced. We have inherited a system in which it seems the only people they tried to remove or to get information on were those who had been convicted and had prison sentences. We believe that we need information much more widely and a faster process to ensure that the rules and the laws are upheld.

**Tim Farron** (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): Given that lengthy A&E, cancer treatment and ambulance waiting times in Cumbria are a direct result of the lack of social care workers, meaning that our hospitals are full to bursting, what assessment has the Home Secretary made of the damage that this policy could do to patients and NHS workers in my communities, where the most regular experience we have of migrants is that they care for us and our loved ones?

**Yvette Cooper:** We need to support social care and recognise the importance of that job. That means tackling the long-term recruitment issues here in the UK, not simply always thinking that we can ignore those problems and turn to migration instead. The hon. Gentleman will know that there have been huge problems, including abuse and exploitation, as a result of that route. Some 39,000 people who came here on a care worker visa, often in good faith, ended up being displaced when checks were finally introduced. That is why regional hubs have been introduced to ensure that employers can still recruit from those displaced workers, rather than continuing to recruit from abroad.

**Nadia Whittome** (Nottingham East) (Lab): Migrants are being scapegoated for problems they did not cause. To be truthful, these arbitrary measures will not fix those problems, but they will harm migrants, people who need social care, our economy and anyone who fears racial abuse, which the rhetoric surrounding this issue emboldens. Why are we trying to ape Reform, when that will do nothing to improve our constituents' lives and will just stoke more division?

**Yvette Cooper:** In the space of just four years, we saw a huge increase in overseas recruitment at exactly the same time that training in the UK fell. It is a real problem in the UK labour market to have such steep increases in overseas recruitment at the same time as we have such deep problems with training. That is why it is so important to ensure that for the first time, we link the immigration system with training and skills. That has not happened before; we have had the wrong approach



to the labour market, and it is right that we bring in these reforms. Of course, my hon. Friend is right that we should also recognise the huge contribution that people make as part of our country. Respecting people for the contribution they make should be embedded in our system, but we have to change this broken approach to the labour market.

**Carla Denyer** (Bristol Central) (Green): The Prime Minister's "island of strangers" speech sounded like something straight out of the Reform-Trump playbook. Rather than alienating and devaluing migrants, and recognising the need to increase the number of Brits who want to work in our health and care sectors, would the Home Secretary not prefer to support Unison's campaign for a certificate of common sponsorship? Such a certificate would protect the working rights of migrant workers who are working in unacceptable situations of exploitation that border on slavery and who are at threat of deportation. As a Labour Member, would she not prefer to support that campaign?

**Yvette Cooper:** In the White Paper, we highlight the importance of tackling exploitation, which is deeply damaging for those who have come to the UK in good faith, as well as for other employers. We want to explore how we can make it easier for people to not be held to a single employer when there are problems with the sponsorship arrangements. We want to make that system more effective so that it can tackle exploitation.

**Sally Jameson** (Doncaster Central) (Lab/Co-op): I welcome today's White Paper, which brings substantive reforms to our immigration system after over a decade of expensive rhetoric. Can the Home Secretary set out what further reforms to our asylum and appeals system the Government are considering to deal with the ludicrous hotels situation that the last Government left us with?

**Yvette Cooper:** My hon. Friend is right; we need to end asylum hotels, which means that we have to clear the shocking backlog that the previous Government left us with—they just stopped taking asylum decisions in the last few months in the run-up to the election. Another measure we are introducing is new statutory timetables for appeals, because the appeals system is causing a lot of the hold-ups in the backlog. We need that measure; it is part of the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill that Members will be able to vote on tonight. That is why I hope all parties in the House will support that Bill.

**Mark Pritchard** (The Wrekin) (Con): I welcome the Home Secretary's statement. It is in the national interest that the Government get this right; I hope that that will happen, but to be honest I am not convinced yet, and we have not seen much of the detail. I also support the hon. Member for Clacton (Nigel Farage) and his concerns about national security, which is something that should be taken more seriously.

This year, 10,500 people—illegal migrants—have crossed the English channel. That is a record number for this period of time compared with any previous year, and I saw nothing in the Prime Minister's earlier leaked statement or, indeed, in the Home Secretary's statement about a deterrent. Without a deterrent, we can have all the

counter-terrorism commands, all the new laws and all the great statements in the world, but nothing is going to change.

**Yvette Cooper:** This evening, Members will be able to vote for a border security Bill that includes counter-terrorism powers to tackle criminal smuggler gangs. When we hosted the Interpol conference before Christmas, the Prime Minister said that border security is a national security issue, and needs to be taken seriously as such. That is why we need those counter-terrorism powers—it is why we need our police, the National Crime Agency, Border Force and border authorities to be able to intervene much earlier to take action against this dangerous trade in people that undermines our national security as well as our border security. I hope the right hon. Gentleman will vote for the Bill tonight.

**Chris Murray** (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab): The public have been waiting for 15 years to hear a Government set out a serious strategy to get a grip on the legal migration system so that it works for public confidence, for the economy and for migrants themselves. I welcome the measures that the Home Secretary has announced in relation to the health and social care visa, because this has not only been very disruptive for the labour market but has led to instances of extreme exploitation and modern slavery. Will she commit herself to ensuring that these new measures are fully modern-slavery-proofed in the White Paper?

**Yvette Cooper:** I welcome what my hon. Friend has said. There have been shameful examples of exploitation, which all of us have probably come across in our constituencies, involving the social care visa and the way in which it was introduced. People have come here to work incredibly hard in our care homes, which is why it is so important for us to tackle that exploitation and ensure that standards are met. We must ensure that we have a fair pay agreement, and, certainly, that we maintain the standards relating to tackling trafficking and modern slavery.

**Ben Lake** (Ceredigion Preseli) (PC): The Home Secretary will be aware of the funding crisis that affects many of the UK's universities. Last year, when the Migration Advisory Committee reviewed the graduate visa route, it concluded that it should be retained, stating:

"Under the current higher education funding model, closure or additional restrictions could put many universities at financial risk."

What is the Home Secretary's assessment of the impact that these changes will have on the financial sustainability of our universities?

**Yvette Cooper:** Where universities are already meeting high standards of compliance, as most of them are, that is very welcome, but those that do not currently meet them will need to raise their compliance standards to ensure that we have a proper, robust system. The graduate visa will enable people to stay on for the unrestricted 18 months, but if they want to stay longer they will need to be contributing in graduate jobs. Too often people have stayed without doing that, although they have degrees and should therefore be obtaining graduate jobs, which they can also do through the skilled worker visa.

**Steve Yemm** (Mansfield) (Lab): Does the Secretary of State agree that the best way in which to address the soaring level of migration for work purposes is to properly train and up-skill our domestic workers in constituencies such as mine? How will these measures contribute to the achievement of that aim?

**Yvette Cooper:** My hon. Friend is exactly right. In Mansfield and throughout the country, we need training and skills. The immigration skills charge proposals mean that employers who recruit from abroad will have to contribute more towards training and skills in the UK. As well as being part of the temporary shortage list, sectors in which there are persistent shortages—and there will be such sectors, which are still crucial to the economy—will, for the first time, need to have proper workforce strategies in place setting out what action they are taking to improve and increase domestic recruitment and training so that it benefits UK residents who need to be part of our labour force.

**Monica Harding** (Esher and Walton) (LD): A care provider in my constituency has already been in touch, saying that a third of his workers are from overseas and are delivering about 60% of the work. He will be unable to care for 80 of his 120 clients. He has been hit by horrendous national insurance contributions, and has invested thousands of pounds in the model. In the absence of any adult social care plan, the Government are now effectively capping the number of workers. How can we plug the gap very quickly, and will care providers be properly supported with funding to allow these changes to happen?

**Yvette Cooper:** The care provider in the hon. Member's constituency will be able to extend the care visas and will also be able to recruit displaced care workers, of whom there were 39,000 when the proper new checks and standards were introduced. He will also be able to recruit from the local community, with a proper fair pay agreement in place. We must have a strategy that values social care and deals with some of the historical causes of recruitment, rather than the social care visa leading to recruitment from abroad at a scale that led to significant exploitation.

**Olivia Blake** (Sheffield Hallam) (Lab): Does the Secretary of State agree that far from being strangers, migrants are our neighbours, friends and family and an integral part of our community, and that moves to cast them as strangers are divisive and hostile and risk legitimising the same far-right violence that we saw in last year's summer riots? Have we learnt nothing?

**Yvette Cooper:** As I said in my statement, people have come here from abroad through many generations, contributing to our economy, being part of our community and making our country what it is. That is who we are as a country because of that history, and it will continue to be important to our future. We want people to be able to integrate and share with neighbours, and that is why some of the provisions to ensure that we support integration and the use of the English language are also important.

**Ben Obese-Jecty** (Huntingdon) (Con): How does the immigration White Paper address the significant number of pull factors currently advertised online? The Government's

own website [www.gov.uk/asylum-support/what-youll-get](http://www.gov.uk/asylum-support/what-youll-get) is there for any aspirational English-speaking asylum seeker to see just why it is worth running the risk of crossing the channel. It states:

"You'll be given somewhere to live if you need it. This could be in a flat, house, hostel or bed and breakfast... You'll usually get £49.18 for each person in your household. This will help you pay for things you need like food, clothing and toiletries... Your allowance will be loaded onto a debit card...each week."

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Caroline Nokes):** Order. Please can we get to the question?

**Ben Obese-Jecty:** What are the Government doing to address the online advertising of this incredibly generous package?

**Yvette Cooper:** We inherited an asylum system that was in complete chaos. That is why we are reducing the backlog, and why we have taken action to tackle instances of visa misuse. In a number of countries there has been an increase in asylum applications, although people have come here lawfully on visas as well. We will continue to tackle that, and we will introduce new reforms alongside the White Paper on legal migration.

**Becky Gittins** (Clwyd East) (Lab): Last year, the now Home Secretary visited the Betty Berkins café in my constituency to discuss the very matter of the massive increase in overseas recruitment while the investment in our domestic workforce was falling drastically, contributing to the quadrupling of the net migration figures between 2019 and 2023. Does she agree that the best way in which to address soaring migration specifically for work purposes is to train and upskill our domestic workforce properly through measures that already exist in our groundbreaking Employment Rights Bill? How will the measures proposed today contribute to that work, and to the achievement of the overall aim?

**Yvette Cooper:** My hon. Friend is right: we need proper training and skills. A system in which the number of engineering visas could rise while the number of engineering apprenticeships fell does not make any sense to anyone, which is why we must ensure that we not only have the training and skills but link them with the shortages and with the immigration system as well.

**Sammy Wilson** (East Antrim) (DUP): The House is right to be sceptical about a policy on a toxic issue that has been announced after the Government have suffered a significant electoral defeat in which the main issue was immigration. Can the Home Secretary tell us how deliverable many elements of this policy are? What will happen to the hundreds of thousands who are currently in graduate-level employment? How will the gap between recruiting and training people and getting them into jobs be filled? Given that the courts will not even allow the deportation of people who have served long prison sentences, how does the Home Secretary expect them to comply with her wish to deport people who have served no prison sentence?

**Yvette Cooper:** We are implementing the policies and commitments made in our manifesto to restore control and order to the immigration system so that we can bring net migration down and ensure that the system is fair. As part of the changes that we are introducing as a result of the White Paper, we have identified up to



180 lower-skilled occupations that should not be recruiting from abroad and should not be part of the temporary shortage list either, so that we can reduce the lower-skilled migration that has increased so substantially over the last four years, support skills and training, and tackle those labour market challenges.

**Jo White** (Bassetlaw) (Lab): With net migration at 1.7 million over the last two years of the previous Government, people in Bassetlaw tell me that they are fed up with the pressures that uncontrolled immigration has put on our local infrastructure. The Prime Minister has recognised this today, with a clear commitment to reduce net migration and take back control of our borders. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on this landmark cross-Government White Paper, which will fix the mess left by the Conservative party. Does she agree that we need to stop the reliance on imported workers from abroad and focus on properly training British people instead?

**Yvette Cooper:** My hon. Friend is right to say that this is a cross-Government approach. It links to the work that the Work and Pensions Secretary is doing on helping people back into work, the work that the Education Secretary is doing on boosting training, and the work that the Business Secretary is doing on building up our industrial strategy so that we can plan for the workforce of the future. This is a cross-Government approach, which is how we will make sure that we have control of our migration system and boost the productivity of the economy.

**Lincoln Jopp** (Spelthorne) (Con): What was it about the local election results that first attracted the Home Secretary to the idea of rushing out an immigration White Paper?

**Yvette Cooper:** Even I could not draw up a White Paper in the space of two weeks. This White Paper was announced by the Prime Minister before Christmas when we saw the scale of the huge increase in net migration that the hon. Gentleman's party had presided over. It is implementing the policies that we set out in our manifesto to properly link the immigration system with training and skills in the UK.

**Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): I am proud to represent this country's only human rights city, where everybody is welcome and every life is of equal worth. Our economy depends very much on our universities, and our universities depend on international students—in fact, employers come to our country because of the diversity of our students. Will the Home Secretary properly consult the higher education sector—the second biggest export from my constituency is higher education—to ensure that we do not harm our local economy and the opportunities for both international and home students?

**Yvette Cooper:** I strongly value international students' contribution to our economy. My hon. Friend is completely right to say how important international students are, but we also need to make sure that universities uphold standards by ensuring that systems are not misused, so that we can continue to support international students. It will benefit our economy if students who stay on afterwards are also doing graduate jobs.

**Max Wilkinson** (Cheltenham) (LD): One of the things I have appreciated about this Government's approach is the moderate tone of language that they have taken on really divisive cultural issues, but I am afraid I was disappointed to hear the Prime Minister use the phrase "island of strangers" today. We all remember the deleterious effect on public debate after the "citizen of nowhere" speech, and I am concerned that we are going in the same direction. Can the Home Secretary offer me any reassurance?

**Yvette Cooper:** The approach that we set out in our manifesto, and that we have set out in this White Paper, is about how we properly control and manage the migration system so that it benefits the UK and supports community cohesion by supporting integration, ensuring that people can speak English and, as a result, challenging exploitation. The approach that we are taking is about embedding fairness and community cohesion at the heart of our immigration system. Too often, integration and community cohesion have not been part of the immigration system, and this White Paper makes sure that they are.

**Jacob Collier** (Burton and Uttoxeter) (Lab): I recently visited a care company that expressed serious concerns about bogus organisations registering as care providers in order to sponsor individuals through the health and care visa. This not only undercuts legitimate care providers that pay and treat their staff properly, but raises significant concerns about the potential exploitation of workers entering the UK. What steps is the Home Secretary planning to take to clamp down on fraudulent practices and support reputable British care companies?

**Yvette Cooper:** My hon. Friend is right to say that the kind of exploitation that we have seen has been deeply damaging for people who have come to this country in good faith. Like him, I have spoken to people who travelled from far overseas, only to discover that there was no job for them when they arrived. They had sometimes been charged money and were at a huge risk of exploitation. As well as taking action with the Fair Work Agency and others to tackle exploitation more widely, we think it is right to end the overseas recruitment of care workers, and to support the care sector through the fair pay agreement and through improving support here in the UK.

**Several hon. Members rose—**

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Caroline Nokes):** Order. I intend to allow this statement to continue until 6.15 pm. I appreciate that many Members might be disappointed.

**Lewis Cocking** (Broxbourne) (Con): My constituency of Broxbourne has a hotel that is used to house illegal asylum seekers. This has placed huge pressure on local GP surgeries and schools, which are already overstretched, and my constituents and I have had enough. Will the Secretary of State meet me to discuss this issue, and can she tell me when the hotel housing illegal asylum seekers in my constituency of Broxbourne will close?

**Yvette Cooper:** The hon. Member will know that the previous Government introduced asylum hotels because they had lost control of the asylum system. This Government are clear that we need to end asylum hotels. To do that, we need to clear the backlog and

[Yvette Cooper]

make reforms to the appeals system. Again, we inherited a broken system for dealing with asylum appeals, and we are taking through reforms tonight as part of the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill. I hope he will vote for those reforms so that we can end asylum hotels.

**Tulip Siddiq** (Hampstead and Highgate) (Lab): My constituency of Hampstead and Highgate has a proud history of welcoming refugees, whether it is migrants from Ireland back in the day or people fleeing political persecution in Nazi Germany. More recently, they opened their doors to refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine. I welcome the Government's measures to enable refugees to access skilled worker visas. However, what are the Home Secretary's plans for refugees whose work visas will expire, but who cannot return to their countries of origin? Will they be eligible for settled status, and how will the Government guarantee their safety in the UK?

**Yvette Cooper:** My hon. Friend is right to say that we have supported people from Ukraine, Hong Kong and Afghanistan who have fled persecution or conflict—or, in the case of Afghans, those who supported and worked with our armed forces. That will continue to be important. We want refugees to be able to apply for the skilled worker visa in the way that other people are able to do. As she rightly says, there are people who will be in this country when the circumstances in their home country change. In those circumstances, there needs to be provision either through the asylum system or through their being able to reapply for their visas.

**Stephen Gethins** (Arbroath and Broughty Ferry) (SNP): The Home Secretary will be aware that our higher education sector is world leading because it brings in the brightest and the best from around the world, including researchers, scientists and medical staff. She will also be aware that universities are struggling because of Home Office rules—not least Dundee University, which has suffered millions of pounds-worth of losses. Will she please take my invitation to come to Dundee so that she can see the direct consequences that her Department's policies are having on that university?

**Yvette Cooper:** International students have brought huge benefits. They contribute by bringing investment, as well as skills and talent, and universities are important parts of local economies right across the country. However, it is important that all universities meet the proper standards of visa compliance. The vast majority do, but some have not met the compliance standards, and we urge them to do so. We will work with them, including by setting out action plans. We also want students who stay in this country after they finish their course to get graduate jobs, so that they can properly contribute to our economy.

**Andrew Pakes** (Peterborough) (Lab): Peterborough is a generous and warm place, and our city and public services have been made richer by the peoples who have come and made their homes in communities alongside me and others. However, too many people and too many working-class families often feel that the system is rigged against them when it comes to skills and wages.

Will my right hon. Friend tell us a bit more about the work she will do on the White Paper with Skills England, the Department for Education and others to ensure we boost apprenticeships? Will she also keep high on her mind and reiterate to this House the desire to tackle illegal immigration, and to ensure that hotels such as the Dragonfly in my constituency are stood down as soon as possible?

**Yvette Cooper:** We do need to increase apprenticeships and training, which is why we are supporting 60,000 more construction workers to go through training to support our economy, alongside, as my hon. Friend rightly says, plans to make sure we end asylum hotels.

**Nick Timothy** (West Suffolk) (Con): In answer to the hon. Member for Vauxhall and Camberwell Green (Florence Eshalomi), the Home Secretary refused to say whether her proposals to reform indefinite leave to remain, briefed to the media as a tough new crackdown, will apply to immigrants who are already here. If it does not apply to people already here, it makes a mockery of the very idea of reform, so will the Home Secretary answer very clearly: will the new rules apply to existing immigrants or just those coming in in future?

**Yvette Cooper:** We want the settlement rules to be amended as swiftly as possible and to apply widely, but we will consult on the detail, and it is right that we do so. I say to the hon. Member that this is just one of the many things we need to do to clear up the chaos that his party left.

**Jon Pearce** (High Peak) (Lab): After 14 years of broken promises, I warmly welcome the Home Secretary's statement on bringing down net migration. With one in eight young people not in education, employment or training, will she set out to the families and young people in my constituency what this White Paper will do for them?

**Yvette Cooper:** One of the most important aspects of the White Paper will be the increase in the immigration skills charge, meaning that where employers are recruiting from abroad and there are shortage occupations, they will be contributing more to support skills and training here in the UK, including support for our young people to get the apprenticeships and jobs they need.

**Alison Bennett** (Mid Sussex) (LD): The announcements today will deepen social care workforce shortages and risk harm to those who receive care. Have the Government considered the impacts on the sick, the frail and the elderly who rely on care workers to provide vital support? Will the Government publish an impact assessment setting out the effect of their reforms, and what will they do for the quality and availability of care and about the work of the Casey commission?

**Yvette Cooper:** As I pointed out in my statement, the number of care workers recruited from abroad has fallen since the initial big increase, and it is important to prevent such an increase taking place again, because we have seen significant exploitation. As a result of introducing higher standards, 39,000 care workers were displaced: they came here to do jobs that either did not exist or did not meet the right standards. We urge care providers to recruit from the pool of people who are already here.

**Dr Scott Arthur** (Edinburgh South West) (Lab): I thank the Home Secretary for her statement and for the steps she is taking to bring order to the chaotic immigration system we inherited. I want to ask a question in the context of my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. Universities in Edinburgh are on their knees because of changes the Tory Government made to immigration and because of SNP cuts to the sector. The staff are keen to contribute to economic growth in the UK, but they are concerned that what is in the White Paper may make that harder. Can she commit to working across Government to ensure that our universities come out of this stronger so that they can contribute to economic growth?

**Yvette Cooper:** My hon. Friend may be aware that the biggest increases in the number of student visas were often for lower-ranking universities in the league tables, and people often did not do graduate jobs afterwards. We hugely support international students, and he is right to refer to Edinburgh University and other universities across the country. We want to work with universities to ensure that high standards of compliance are met, and that when international students stay in the UK they are doing graduate jobs.

**Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington North) (Ind): Could the Home Secretary explain why, in the introduction of this White Paper, the language of Enoch Powell was used by the Prime Minister? There has been no speaking up about the enormous value of migration to this country, which has kept our NHS running, our education service running and so much more, and that there are already 130,000 vacancies in the care sector. Does anything in her White Paper do anything to improve community relations or deal with the labour shortage now in the NHS and the care service, or is it all about trying to please these people—Reform Members—who unfortunately sit in front of me?

**Yvette Cooper:** At the very beginning of my statement to this House, I talked about the importance of those who have come to work in our NHS, to serve in our armed forces, to work in constituencies like mine in coalmining jobs, and to do some of the most difficult jobs of all. However, it is because migration is important

that it needs to be controlled and managed, and we need to tackle the underlying problems in the labour market. Net migration quadrupled in four years at a time when domestic training was cut, and when we did not have support for skills and training in the UK. I think that shows a system that just is not working. We have to tackle training and skills shortages, alongside bringing down net migration.

**Rachel Taylor** (North Warwickshire and Bedworth) (Lab): My constituents are sick and tired of broken promises on immigration. Five Conservative Prime Ministers promised to cut arrivals while deliberately letting numbers reach record highs. Can the Secretary of State confirm to the people of North Warwickshire and Bedworth that the broken promises are over, and that when this Government say that we will cut immigration levels and invest in skills and training, and in good jobs for my constituents, that is exactly what we will do?

**Yvette Cooper:** My hon. Friend makes a really important point. We are setting out practical plans on the skilled worker visa, construction training jobs, and an immigration skills charge, so that we can invest in training. It is through those practical, common-sense plans that, step by step, we will restore order to the immigration system and bring down net migration.

**Greg Smith** (Mid Buckinghamshire) (Con): The White Paper talks in vague terms about potential changes that build on and learn from the displaced talent programme. Will the Home Secretary be really clear with the House about where she sees those changes going? More importantly, what safeguards will she put in place to ensure that any such changes do not act as a massive magnet for those who wish to illegally enter our country?

**Yvette Cooper:** I think the opposite of what the hon. Member said is true. We have talked about capped and limited schemes. At the moment, it is possible for people from other parts of the world to apply for a skilled worker visa if they have the talent—for example, if they are an engineer or a scientist—but recognised refugees are often not able to apply for skilled worker visas as scientists, doctors and so on, even though they have that skill and talent. We should ensure that we do our bit to help refugees, who should be able to come in on a skilled worker visa when they have the skills to do so.



## Points of Order

6.18 pm

**Dawn Butler** (Brent East) (Lab): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Can I seek advice on how I can withdraw my ten-minute rule Bill on protecting the job title of “nurse”, which is due for its Second Reading? Today, on International Nurses Day, the Government have announced that they will adopt my Bill, and will indeed protect the title of nurse, which has made me extremely happy. As I will not have another opportunity to do so, I thank Francis Fernando, Professor Alison Leary from the #ProtectNurse campaign, Paul Trevatt, former Minister Ann Keen, Anna Lynch, the Royal College of Nursing and Unison.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Judith Cummins):** I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving notice of her point of order. The Public Bill Office will be able to advise her on how to withdraw her Bill. It is not a matter for the Chair, but she has put on record her reason for withdrawing the Bill.

**Ben Obese-Jecty** (Huntingdon) (Con): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. On 10 February 2025, the Minister for Border Security and Asylum inadvertently misled the House. She stated:

“The latest figures show that 18,987 people with no right to be here have been deported since we came into government.”—[*Official Report*, 10 February 2025; Vol. 762, c. 131.]

The Home Office clearly defines deportations as

“a specific subset of returns which are enforced either following a criminal conviction or when it is judged that a person’s removal from the UK is conducive to the public good.”

The latest figures available state that in the year ending 2024, there were just 4,428 enforced returns since Labour came into government. The rest were, in fact, voluntary returns, nearly 50% of which are classified as other verified returns in which the Government played no active role. Will you please ask the Minister to correct the record in accordance with 1.6.c. of the “Ministerial Code” during her next appearance at the Dispatch Box?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for notice of that point of order. It is not a matter for the Chair, but those on the Government Front Bench will have heard his point.

**John McDonnell** (Hayes and Harlington) (Ind): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. By the way, it would be useful to know from the hon. Member for Brent East (Dawn Butler) how she pulled that one off.

Last week, a number of hon. Members wrote to the Foreign Secretary after published research demonstrated, despite the Government’s assurances that arms sales to Israel had ended, that there has been a large-scale export of arms to Israel since those assurances were given. We asked the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs to come to the House and make a statement. A statement has not been made, and I do not believe that an indication has been given to Mr Speaker that a statement will be made. We have not even received a response to the letter. I wonder whether we could, through your good offices, impress upon the Government the fact that a response is required, and that it would best be given to the House.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving notice of his point of order. I have had no indication that a Minister intends to come to the House to make a statement on the matter, but the Foreign Secretary will be in the House tomorrow for questions to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, so hon. Members will have a chance to raise the issue then.

**Jen Craft** (Thurrock) (Lab): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. In last Wednesday’s Adjournment debate on Essex devolution, the hon. Member for South Basildon and East Thurrock (James McMurdock) stated that it was his understanding that

“there have been conversations between local councils about Thurrock joining London.”—[*Official Report*, 7 May 2025; Vol. 766, c. 813.]

I believe he is aware that Thurrock council has made it abundantly clear, in response to a freedom of information request, that no such discussions have taken place. These rumours have caused considerable concern locally. As a lifelong Thurrock resident who agrees that our borough is Essex through and through, I would be grateful for your advice, Madam Deputy Speaker, on how the hon. Member for South Basildon and East Thurrock can correct the record.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving notice of her point of order. Did she notify the hon. Member for South Basildon and East Thurrock (James McMurdock) that she intended to raise the matter in the House?

**Jen Craft:** I did.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** The Chair is not responsible for the substance of hon. Members’ speeches, but the hon. Lady has put her point on the record.

**James McMurdock** (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Reform): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I will correct the record very briefly now. As the hon. Member for Thurrock (Jen Craft) is aware, I had received multiple verbal notices that discussions were being had between Thurrock and other councils in the area, so I put in a freedom of information request, which concluded that there had been discussions. It turned out that it was only due to an administrative error that they said there had not been. I had received verbal information and written confirmation that there had been, which is why I gave the speech I did. I would point out that in the speech I gave, I even referred to the fact that the conversations had been denied; again, I also explained that to the hon. Member for Thurrock. I believe I have done all I can on that, but given the number of strained relationships in this place, I certainly hope that this does not strain ours, and that we can continue to work constructively together.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I thank the hon. Member for his point of order. He has put his point on the record. I remind hon. Members that points of order should be brief.

## BORDER SECURITY, ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION BILL (WAYS AND MEANS)

*Resolved,*

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill, it is expedient to authorise the charging of fees by the Immigration Services Commissioner.—  
(*Dame Angela Eagle.*)



## Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill

*Consideration of Bill, as amended in the Public Bill  
Committee*

### New Clause 5

#### EXTENSION OF PROHIBITION ON EMPLOYMENT TO OTHER WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

“(1) The Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 is amended as follows.

(2) In the italic heading before section 15, after “Employment” insert “and other working arrangements”.

(3) Before section 15, after the italic heading insert—

*“14A Application of sections 15 to 24 to other working arrangements*

(1) In sections 15 to 24, a reference to a person employing another person includes a reference to—

- (a) a person (“person A”) engaging an individual (“individual A”) under a worker’s contract,
- (b) a person (“person B”) engaging an individual sub-contractor (“individual B”), and
- (c) an online matching service (“person C”) providing the details of an individual who is a service provider (“individual C”) to potential clients or customers.

(2) Accordingly—

- (a) references in sections 15 to 24 to employment include engagement of the kind mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b) of subsection (1) or the provision of details as mentioned in paragraph (c) of that subsection;
- (b) references in those sections to an employer include person A, person B or person C;
- (c) references in those sections to an employee include individual A, individual B or individual C.

(3) In this section—

“worker’s contract” means a contract, other than a contract of service or apprenticeship, under which—

- (a) individual A undertakes to do or perform personally work or services for person A or another person (whether or not that other person is specified in the contract), and
- (b) person A is neither a client nor customer of any profession or business undertaking carried on by individual A;

“individual sub-contractor” means an individual (“individual B”) who has entered into a contract with person B to provide work or services in circumstances where person B has entered into a contract with a third party to provide, or arrange for the provision of, the work or services but individual B has not;

“online matching service” means a person who, in the course of a business—

- (a) keeps a register of service providers for the purpose of matching them with potential clients or customers,
- (b) provides an online service by which potential clients or customers can submit enquiries for the purpose of being matched with suitable service providers, and
- (c) charges a fee or commission in return for making such matches;

“service provider” means a person providing, or seeking to provide, work or services for remuneration.

(4) Subsection (1)(a), and subsection (2) so far as it has effect in consequence of subsection (1)(a), do not apply if and to the extent that—

- (a) under the worker’s contract, individual A undertakes to do or perform personally work or services for a person other than person A (whether or not that other person is specified in the contract), and

(b) the status of a person for whom individual A does or performs work or services under the contract is that of a client or customer of a profession or business undertaking carried on by individual A.

(5) In this section a reference to a contract includes a contract that is express or implied and (if it is express) whether oral or in writing.

(6) This section is subject to subsection (2) of section 15A (which provides for subsection (1)(a) of that section not to apply to in relation to an online matching service).”

(4) After section 15 insert—

*“15A Extension of liability under section 15*

(1) Subsection (4) applies where a person (“A”)—

- (a) employs an individual to provide work or services, or
- (b) is contracted to provide, or arrange for the provision of, work or services and enters into a contract under which another person is to provide, or arrange for the provision of, the work or services (or part of the work or services).

(2) The reference in subsection (1)(a) to A employing an individual does not include A doing so as mentioned in section 14A(1)(c) (online matching services).

(3) Subsection (4) also applies where—

- (a) a person (“A”) is an online matching service who provides the details of another person who is a service provider to potential clients or customers, and
- (b) as result of being matched by person A, the service provider enters into a contract with a client or customer for the provision of work or services.

(4) For the purposes of section 15, and where this would not otherwise be the case, A is to be treated as employing any individual (“B”) who personally provides the work or services (or any part of the work or services), including where—

- (a) A is not in a contractual relationship with B, or
- (b) A does not know that B is providing the work or services (or part of the work or services).

(5) Subsection (4) applies where A is contracted to provide, or arrange for the provision of, the work or services regardless of whether that contract is the first or any other contract in a chain of contracts to provide, or arrange for the provision of, the work or services (or part of the work or services).

(6) This section does not affect the liability of any other employer under section 15.

(7) In sections 15, 16, 17, 23 and 24 a reference to a person employing another person includes a reference to a person who is treated as doing so by virtue of subsection (4); and references in those sections to employment, employers and employees are to be construed accordingly.

(8) In this section “online matching service” and “service provider” have the same meaning as in section 14A.”

(5) In section 25—

- (a) in paragraph (b), at the beginning insert “subject to sections 14A and 15A,”,
- (b) in paragraph (b), leave out from “whether” to the end of the paragraph, and
- (c) after that paragraph insert—

“(ba) a reference to a contract includes a contract that is express or implied and (if it is express) whether oral or in writing.”—(*Dame Angela Eagle.*)

*This new clause amends the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 to extend the obligations currently placed on employers to other arrangements.*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

6.24 pm

**The Minister for Border Security and Asylum (Dame Angela Eagle):** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Judith Cummins):** With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

Government new clause 6—*Timeframe for determination of appeal brought by appellant receiving accommodation support.*

Government new clause 7—*Timeframe for determination of certain appeals brought by non-detained appellants liable to deportation.*

Government new clause 8—*Refugee Convention: particularly serious crime.*

New clause 1—*Duty to report and publish data on deaths in the asylum system and small boat crossings—*

“(1) The Secretary of State must, on a quarterly basis, publish and lay before Parliament a report that includes the number of deaths that have occurred in relation to the UK asylum system in the three months preceding the date specified in that report.

(2) The specified date under subsection (1) must be no more than six months prior to the date of publication.

(3) A report under subsection (1) must include

(a) The total number of deaths occurring, during the specified period, of persons who were, at the time of death

(i) in receipt of accommodation under sections 4, 95 or 98 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999; or

(ii) awaiting the outcome of a claim for asylum while residing in other forms of accommodation or at no fixed abode; or

(iii) undertaking an unauthorised crossing of the English Channel;

(b) the cause of death for each person reported, if known; and

(c) the locations in which each death occurred, if known.

(4) The first report under this section must be made published no later than one year after the passing of this Act.

(5) For the purposes of this section

(a) A “claim for asylum” is defined in accordance with section 167 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999; and

(b) an “unauthorised crossing” is a sea crossing made by an individual without leave to enter the United Kingdom, made from dry land in France, Belgium or the Netherlands for the purpose of reaching dry land in the United Kingdom.”

*This new clause would require the Home Office to publish quarterly statistics and information on deaths in the asylum system and in small boat channel crossings.*

New clause 2—*Reports on restrictions on asylum seekers engaging in employment—*

“(1) The Secretary of State must publish a report explaining what progress has been made towards providing asylum applicants with the right to take up employment whilst their application is being determined.

(2) A report under subsection (1) must be published—

(a) by 31 December 2025, or

(b) within three months of the passing of this Act, whichever is earliest

(3) The Secretary of State must make a further report under subsection (1) at least every twelve calendar month after the publication of the first report, until the restrictions on asylum seekers engaging in employment are removed.

(4) Any report under subsection (1) must include a review of—

(a) the current 12 month waiting period attached to the permission to work, and

(b) the restriction of roles to the Immigration Salary List.

(5) The Secretary of State must make arrangements for—

(a) a copy of any report published under subsection (1) to be laid before both Houses of Parliament before the end of the day on which it is published, or the next sitting day if it is published on a non-sitting day;

(b) the House of Commons to debate a motion, made by a Minister of the Crown, to the effect that the House of Commons has considered the report; and

(c) the House of Lords to debate a motion, made by a Minister of the Crown, to the effect that the House of Lords has considered the report.

(6) The debates required under subsections (5)(b) and (c) must take place within 25 sitting days of the day on which the report is laid before Parliament.”

*This new clause would require the Secretary of State to report back to Parliament annually on the Government’s working rights policies for people in the asylum system, and for both Houses of Parliament to debate a motion on the report.*

New clause 3—*Duty to publish a strategy on safe and managed routes—*

“(1) The Secretary of State must, within six months of the passing of this Act, publish a strategy on the Government’s efforts to establish additional safe and legal routes for persons to seek asylum in the United Kingdom.

(2) A report under subsection (1) must be laid before Parliament.”

*This new clause would require the Secretary of State to publish and lay before Parliament a strategy on the development of safe and managed routes for people to seek asylum in the UK.*

New clause 4—*Repeal of certain provisions of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022—*

“The following provisions of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 are repealed—

(a) sections 58 to 65, and

(b) sections 68 and 69.”

*This new clause would repeal specified provisions of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022, relating to modern slavery victims.*

New clause 9—*Humanitarian Assistance—*

“A person (“P”) does not commit an offence under section 13 (supplying articles for use in immigration crime), section 14 (handling articles for use in immigration crime), or section 16 (collecting information for use in immigration crime) if P’s action was for the purposes of providing humanitarian assistance.”

*This new clause would ensure that individuals who provide humanitarian assistance would not be considered as having committed the new criminal offences created by clauses 13, 14 and 16 of this Bill.*

New clause 10—*Functions of the Commander in relation to sea crossings to United Kingdom—*

“(1) In exercising the Commander’s functions in relation to sea crossings to the United Kingdom, the Commander must have regard to the objectives of—

(a) preventing the boarding of vessels, with the aim of entering the United Kingdom, by persons who require leave to enter the United Kingdom but are seeking to enter the United Kingdom—

(i) without leave to enter, or

(ii) with leave to enter that was obtained by means which included deception by any person;

(b) ensuring that a decision is taken on a claim by a person under subsection (1)(a) within six months of the person’s arrival in the United Kingdom; and

- (c) making arrangements with a safe third country for the removal of a person who enters the United Kingdom without leave, or with leave that was obtained by deception.

(2) The Commander must include, in the strategic priority document issued under section 3(2), an assessment of—

- (a) the most effective methods for deterring illegal entry into the United Kingdom;
- (b) the most effective methods for reducing the number of sea crossings made by individuals without leave to enter the United Kingdom; and
- (c) the most effective methods for arranging the removal, to the person's own country or a safe third country, of a person who enters the United Kingdom illegally.

(3) For the purposes of this section—

- (a) “sea crossings” are journeys from dry land in France, Belgium or the Netherlands for the purpose of reaching dry land in the United Kingdom; and
- (b) illegal entry to the United Kingdom is defined in accordance with section 24 of the Immigration Act 1971 (illegal entry and similar offences)."

*This new clause sets out objectives and strategic priorities for the Border Security Commander in relation to sea crossings and arrangements with a safe third country for the removal of people who enter the UK illegally.*

**New clause 11—Qualification period for Indefinite Leave to Remain in the United Kingdom—**

“(1) The minimum qualification period for applications for indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom is a period of ten years.

(2) The qualification period in subsection (1) applies to a person who has—

- (a) a tier 2, T2, International Sportsperson or Skilled Worker visa,
- (b) a Scale-up Worker visa,
- (c) a Global Talent, Tier 1 Entrepreneur or Investor visa,
- (d) an Innovator Founder visa,
- (e) a UK Ancestry visa, or
- (f) a partner holding UK citizenship.

(3) A person who has lived in the United Kingdom for ten years or more but does not meet the criteria in subsection (2) cannot apply for indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom.”

*This new clause would extend the qualification period for applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK to ten years and abolish the long-stay route, through which a person can apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain based on having lived in the UK for ten years or more.*

**New clause 12—Age assessments: use of scientific methods—**

“The Secretary of State must, within six months of the passing of this Act, lay before Parliament—

- (a) a statutory instrument containing regulations under section 52 of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 specifying scientific methods that may be used for the purposes of age assessments, and
- (b) a statutory instrument containing regulations under section 58 of the Illegal Migration Act 2023 making provision about refusal to consent to scientific methods for age assessments.”

*This new clause would require the Secretary of State to make regulations to specify scientific methods for assessing a person's age and to disapply the requirement for consent for scientific methods to be used.*

**New clause 13—Revocation of indefinite leave to remain in certain circumstances—**

“(1) Indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom is revoked with respect to a person (“P”) if any of the following conditions apply.

(2) Condition 1 is that P is defined as a “foreign criminal” under section 32 of the UK Borders Act 2007.

(3) Condition 2 is that P was granted indefinite leave to remain after the coming into force of this Act, but would not be eligible for indefinite leave under the requirements of section [Qualification period for Indefinite Leave to Remain in the United Kingdom].

(4) Condition 3 is that P, or any dependents of P, have been in receipt of any form of “social protection” (including housing) from HM Government or a local authority, where “social protection” is defined according to the Treasury’s Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses, subject to any further definition by immigration rules.

(5) Condition 4 is that P’s annual income has fallen below £38,700 for six months or more in aggregate during the relevant qualification period, or subsequent to receiving indefinite leave to remain.

(6) A person who has entered the United Kingdom—

- (a) under the Ukraine visa schemes;
- (b) under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme;
- (c) under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy; or
- (d) on a British National Overseas visa,

is exempt from the requirements of Condition 2, Condition 3, and Condition 4.

(7) For the purposes of subsection (5)—

- (a) the condition applies only to earnings that have been lawfully reported to, or subject to withholding tax by, HM Revenue and Customs; and
- (b) the relevant sum of annual income must be adjusted annually by the Secretary of State through immigration rules to reflect inflation.

(8) The Secretary of State may by immigration rules vary the conditions set out in this section.”

*This new clause would revoke indefinite leave where a person is a foreign criminal, has been in receipt of benefits, earns below the national median income, or (for those granted indefinite leave after the coming into force of this Act) would not meet the requirements sought to be imposed by NC11.*

**New clause 14—Borders legislation: Human Rights Act—**

“(1) This section applies to any provision made by or by virtue of this Act, the Illegal Migration Act 2023, the Immigration Acts, and any legislation relating to immigration, deportation, or asylum, including the Immigration Rules within the meaning of the Immigration Act 1971.

(2) The legislation identified in subsection (1), including in relation to the enforcement of immigration policy, deportation, the granting, removal, revocation or alteration of immigration status, or asylum, or other entitlements, must be read and given effect to disregarding the Human Rights Act 1998.

(3) In the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993, omit section 2.

(4) In the Immigration Act 1971—

- (a) in section 8AA—
  - (i) in subsection (2), omit “Subject to subsections (3) to (5)”; and
  - (ii) omit subsections (2)(a)(ii) and subsections (3) to (6);
- (b) in section 8B, omit subsection (5A).

(5) In section 84 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002—

- (a) in subsection (1), after “must” insert “not”;
- (b) in subsection (2), after “must” insert “not”;
- (c) in subsection (2), for “section 6” substitute “any section”; and
- (d) in subsection (3) after “must” insert “not”.



(6) Where the European Court of Human Rights indicates an interim measure relating to the exercise of any function under the legislation identified in subsection (1)—

- (a) it is only for a Minister of the Crown to decide whether the United Kingdom will comply with the interim measure under this section; and
- (b) an immigration officer or court or tribunal must not have regard to the interim measure.”

*This new clause would disapply the Human Rights Act and interim measures of the European Court of Human Rights in relation to this Bill and to other legislation about borders, asylum and immigration.*

#### New clause 15—Offences and deportation—

“(1) The UK Borders Act 2007 is amended as follows.

(2) In section 32—

- (a) in subsection (1)(a), at the end insert “and”;
- (b) in subsection (1)(b) leave out “and” and insert “or”;
- (c) leave out subsection (1)(c) and substitute—  
“(c) who has been charged with or convicted of an offence under section 24 of the Immigration Act 1971”
- (d) leave out subsections (2) and (3).

(3) In section 33, leave out subsections (1), (2), (3) and (6A).

(4) The Illegal Migration Act 2023 is amended as follows.

(5) Leave out subsection (5) of section 1 and insert—

- “(5) The Human Rights Act does not apply to provision made by or by virtue of this Act or to—
- (a) the Immigration Act 1971,
  - (b) the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999,
  - (c) the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002,
  - (d) the Nationality and Borders Act 2022, or
  - (e) the Immigration Act 2016.”

(6) In section 6 of the Illegal Migration Act 2023, leave out subsections (4) and (5).

(7) In section 24 of the Immigration Act 1971, leave out all instances of “knowingly”.

*This new clause would prevent a foreign national who is convicted of any offence from remaining in the UK, as well as anyone who has been charged with or convicted with an immigration offence under section 24 of the Immigration Act 1971.*

#### New clause 16—Restrictions on visas for spouses and civil partners—

“(1) The Secretary of State must make regulations specifying the maximum number of persons who may enter the United Kingdom annually as a spouse or civil partner of another (the sponsor).

(2) Before making regulations under subsection (1), the Secretary of State must consult—

- (a) in England and Wales and Scotland, such representatives of local authorities as the Secretary of State considers appropriate;
- (b) the Executive Office in Northern Ireland; and
- (c) any such other persons or bodies as the Secretary of State considers appropriate.

(3) But the duty to consult under subsection (2) does not apply where the Secretary of State considers that the maximum number under subsection (1) needs to be changed as a matter of urgency.

(4) The Secretary of State must commence the consultation under subsection (2) in relation to the first regulations to be made under this section before the end of the period of three months beginning with the day on which this Act is passed.

(5) The regulations must specify that the number of persons from any one country who enter as a spouse or civil partner of a sponsor cannot exceed 7% of the maximum number specified in the regulations under subsection (1).

(6) If, in any year, the number of persons who enter the United Kingdom as a spouse or civil partner of a sponsor exceeds the number specified in regulations under this section, the Secretary of State must lay a statement before Parliament—

- (a) setting out the number of persons who have, in that year, entered the United Kingdom as a spouse or civil partner of a sponsor; and
- (b) explaining why the number exceeds that specified in the regulations.

(7) The statement under subsection (6) must be laid before Parliament before the end of the period of six months beginning with the day after the last day of the year to which the statement relates.

(8) Within six months of the passing of this Act, the Secretary of State must by immigration rules make the changes set out in subsections (9) to (11).

(9) The requirements to be met by a person seeking leave to enter the United Kingdom with a view to settlement as the spouse or civil partner of a person present and settled in the United Kingdom or who is on the same occasion being admitted for settlement includes that—

- (a) the applicant is married to, or the civil partner of, a person who has a right of abode in the United Kingdom or indefinite leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom and is, on the same occasion, seeking admission to the United Kingdom for the purposes of settlement;
- (b) the applicant provides evidence that the parties under subsection (9)(a) were married or formed a civil partnership at least two years prior to the application;
- (c) each of the parties intends to live permanently with the other as spouses or civil partners and the marriage or civil partnership is subsisting;
- (d) the salary of the person who has a right of abode in the United Kingdom or indefinite leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom equals or exceeds £38,700 per year; and
- (e) the applicant and the person who has a right of abode in the United Kingdom are both at least 23 years old.

(10) Leave to enter the United Kingdom as a spouse or civil partner under subsection (9) is to be refused if the parties concerned are first cousins.

(11) For the purposes of this section, “local authority” means—

- (a) in England and Wales, a county council, a county borough council, a district council, a London borough council, the Common Council of the City of London or the Council of the Isles of Scilly, and
- (b) in Scotland, a council constituted under section 2 of the Local Government etc (Scotland) Act 1994.”

*This new clause would require the Secretary of State to specify a cap on the number of spouses or civil partners who may enter the UK, and on the number that may enter from any one country. It would also amend the immigration rules to set a salary threshold.*

#### New clause 17—Restrictions on visas and grants of indefinite leave to remain—

“(1) Within six months of the passing of this Act, the Secretary of State must by immigration rules provide for all visa grants, including spousal visas, to be conditional on the following—

- (a) the requirement that the applicant or their dependents will not apply for any form of “social protection” (including housing) from the UK Government or a local authority, where “social protection” is defined according to the Treasury’s Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses, subject to any further definition by immigration rules; and
- (b) the requirement that the applicant’s annual income must not fall below £38,700 for six months or more in aggregate during the relevant qualification period.



(2) Immigration Rules made under subsection (1) must ensure that any breach of the conditions set out in that subsection will render void any visa previously granted.

(3) The Secretary of State is not permitted to grant leave outside the immigration rules or immigration acts.

(4) A person is not eligible to apply for indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom if any of the following conditions apply.

(5) Condition 1 is that a person is a “foreign criminal” under section 32 of the UK Borders Act 2007.

(6) Condition 2 is that a person, or any of their dependents, has been in receipt of any form of “social protection” (including housing) from the UK Government or a local authority, where “social protection” is defined according to the Treasury’s Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses, subject to any further definition by immigration rules.

(7) Condition 3 is that a person’s annual income has fallen below £38,700 for six months or more in aggregate during the relevant qualification period.

(8) A person who has entered the United Kingdom—

- (a) under the Ukraine visa schemes;
- (b) under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme;
- (c) under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy; or
- (d) on a British National Overseas visa,

is exempt from the requirements of Condition 2 and Condition 3.

(9) For the purposes of subsections (1)(b) and (7)—

- (a) the condition applies only to earnings that have been lawfully reported to, or subject to withholding tax by, HM Revenue and Customs; and
- (b) the relevant sum of annual income must be adjusted annually by the Secretary of State through immigration rules to reflect inflation.

(10) The Secretary of State may by immigration rules make further provision varying these conditions, including by way of transitional provisions.”

*This new clause would place certain restrictions on the granting of visas or indefinite leave to remain. It would require migrants to be self-sufficient and not to require state benefits, and would deny indefinite leave to remain to foreign criminals.*

#### New clause 18—*Cap on the number of entrants—*

“(1) Within six months of the passing of this Act, the Secretary of State must make regulations specifying the total maximum number of persons who may enter the United Kingdom annually across all non-visitor visa routes, with such regulations subject to approval by both Houses.

(2) The Secretary of State may by regulations also specify a maximum number of entrants for individual visa routes, subject to the overall total.

(3) No visas may be issued in excess of the total maximum number specified in subsection (1).

(4) Any visas issued in excess of the number specified in subsection (1) must be revoked.”

*This new clause would provide a mechanism for a binding annual cap on the number of non-visitor visas issued by the UK.*

#### New clause 19—*Removals from the United Kingdom: visa penalties for uncooperative countries—*

“(1) The Nationality and Borders Act 2022 is amended as follows.

(2) In section 70, omit subsections (4) and (5).

(3) In section 72—

- (a) subsection (1), after “A country”, for “may” substitute “must”.
- (b) In subsection (1)(a) omit “and” and insert “or, (ab) is not cooperating in relation to the verification of identity or status of individuals who are likely to be nationals or citizens of the country, and”

(c) in subsection (1)(b), after “citizens of the country” insert “or individuals who are likely to be nationals or citizens of the country”,

(d) omit subsections (2) and (3), and

(e) in subsection (4), omit from “70” to after “subsection (1)(a)”.

(4) Omit section 74.”

*This new clause would require the Secretary of State to use a visa penalty provision if a country is not cooperating in the removal of any of its nationals or citizens from the UK, or in relation to the verification of their identity or status.*

#### New clause 20—*Exemptions from the UK GDPR: illegal migration and foreign criminals—*

“(1) The Data Protection Act 2018 is amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (2)(b) of section 15 (Exemptions etc), at end insert “, and makes provision about the exemption from all GDPR provisions of persons who entered the United Kingdom illegally and foreign criminals;

(3) In paragraph (2) of Schedule 2, after sub-paragraph (1) insert—

“(1A) GDPR provisions do not apply if the data subject entered the United Kingdom illegally or is a foreign criminal.

(1B) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (1A)—

- (a) a person “entered the United Kingdom illegally” if they entered the United Kingdom—
  - (i) without leave to enter, or
  - (ii) with leave to enter that was obtained by means which included deception by any person; and
- (b) “foreign criminal” is defined in accordance with section 32 of the UK Borders Act 2007.”

*This new clause would disapply data protection laws from data on people who have entered the UK illegally or are Foreign National Offenders.*

#### New clause 21—*Removal of restrictions on asylum seekers engaging in employment—*

“The Secretary of State must, within three months of the date on which this Act is passed, lay before Parliament a statement of changes in the rules (the “immigration rules”) under section 3(2) of the Immigration Act 1971 (general provisions for regulation and control) to make provision for asylum applicants to take up employment whilst their application is being determined, if it has been over three months since the application was made, with no decision made.”

*This new clause would remove the restriction on working for asylum seekers, if it has been over three months since they applied.*

#### New clause 22—*Additional safe and legal routes—*

“The Secretary of State must, within six months of the passage of this Act, make regulations specifying safe and legal routes through which refugees and other individuals requiring international protection can enter the UK lawfully.”

*This new clause would require the Secretary of State to make regulations specifying additional safe and legal routes, under which refugees and others in need of international protection can come to the UK lawfully from abroad.*

#### New clause 23—*Duty to meet the director of Europol—*

“The Border Commander must meet the director of Europol, or their delegate, no less than once every three months.”

*This new clause would require the Border Commander to meet with the Executive Director of Europol every three months.*

#### New clause 24—*Duty to establish a joint taskforce with Europol—*

“(1) The Secretary of State must seek to establish a joint taskforce with Europol for the purposes of cooperation on the matters set out under subsection (3).

(2) The Secretary of State must, within six months of the passage of this Act, make a report to Parliament on progress made to date on establishing a joint taskforce under subsection (1).

(3) Any joint taskforce established pursuant to the Secretary of State's activities under subsection (1) has a duty to promote cooperation on—

- (a) the disruption of trafficking operations;
- (b) the enhancement of law enforcement capabilities;
- (c) the provision of specialised training for officials involved in border security and immigration enforcement; and
- (d) any other matters which the Secretary of State or Director of Europol deem appropriate.”

*This new clause would require the Secretary of State to seek a joint taskforce with Europol for the purposes of disrupting trafficking operations, enhancing law enforcement capabilities, and providing specialised training to officials involved in border security and immigration enforcement.*

**New clause 25—Participation in Europol's anti-trafficking operations—**

“(1) The Secretary of State must provide adequate resources to law enforcement agencies for the purpose of enhancing their participation in Europol's anti-trafficking operations.

(2) The resources provided under subsection (1) must include technology for conducting improved surveillance on, and detection of, smuggling networks.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (1), “law enforcement agencies” include—

- (a) the National Crime Agency
- (b) police forces in England and Wales; and
- (c) the British Transport Police.”

*This new clause would require the Government to allocate adequate resources to law enforcement agencies to enhance their participation in Europol's anti-trafficking operations, including through technological tools for better surveillance and detection of smuggling networks.*

**New clause 26—Requirement to produce an annual report on cooperation with Europol—**

“(1) The Secretary of State must, within one year of the passage of this Act, lay before Parliament an annual report on cooperation between UK law enforcement agencies and Europol.

(2) A further report must be published and laid before Parliament at least once per year.

(3) An annual report under this section must include—

- (a) actions taken during the previous year to cooperate with Europol;
- (b) progress in reducing people smuggling and human trafficking; and
- (c) planned activities for improving future cooperation with Europol.”

*This new clause would require the Government to provide an annual report to Parliament detailing the UK's efforts to cooperate with Europol, its progress in reducing levels of people smuggling and human trafficking, and its plans to improve future cooperation.*

**New clause 27—Reuniting unaccompanied child refugees with family members—**

“(1) Within six months of the passing of this Act, the Secretary of State must by immigration rules make the changes set out in subsections (2) to (6).

(2) The requirements to be met by a person seeking leave to enter the United Kingdom as a child relative of a person or persons given limited leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom, as a refugee or beneficiary of humanitarian protection, are that the applicant—

- (a) is the child, grandchild, sister, brother, nephew or niece of a person or persons granted limited leave to enter or remain as a refugee or beneficiary of humanitarian protection granted as such under the immigration rules; and
- (b) is under the age of 18; and

(c) can, and will, be accommodated adequately by the person or persons the child is seeking to join without recourse to public funds in accommodation which the person or persons the child is seeking to join, own or occupy exclusively; and

(d) can, and will, be maintained adequately by the person or persons the child is seeking to join, without recourse to public funds; and

(e) if seeking leave to enter, holds a valid United Kingdom entry clearance for entry in this capacity.

(3) The requirements to be met by a person seeking leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom as the close relative of a child with limited leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom as a refugee or beneficiary of humanitarian protection are that the applicant is—

- (a) a parent, grandparent, sister, brother, aunt or uncle of a child with limited leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom as a refugee or beneficiary of humanitarian protection; and
- (b) joining a refugee or beneficiary of humanitarian protection with limited leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom who is under the age of 18 and not living with a parent or grandparent; and
- (c) can, and will, be accommodated adequately, together with any dependants, without recourse to public funds.

(4) Limited leave to enter the United Kingdom as an applicant under subsection (2) or (3) may be granted for five years provided that, on arrival, a valid passport or other identity document is produced to the Immigration Officer and the applicant has entry clearance for entry in this capacity. Limited leave to remain in the United Kingdom as an applicant under subsections (2) or (3) may be granted provided the Secretary of State is satisfied that each of the requirements of subsections (2) or (3) is met.

(5) Limited leave to enter the United Kingdom as an applicant under subsection (2) or (3) is to be refused if, on arrival, a valid passport or other identity document is not produced to the Immigration Officer and the applicant does not have entry clearance for entry in this capacity. Limited leave to remain in the United Kingdom as an applicant under subsection (2) or (3) is to be refused if the Secretary of State is not satisfied that each of the requirements of subsections (2) or (3) is met.

(6) Civil legal services are to be provided to an applicant under subsections (2) or (3) in relation to rights to enter, and to remain in, the United Kingdom pursuant to schedule 1, subsection 30(1) of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012.”

*This new clause would require changes to the immigration rules to extend the family members that could apply to join an unaccompanied child refugee in the UK, to include parents, grandparents, sisters, brothers, uncles and aunts, and to allow unaccompanied child refugees to sponsor close adult family members to join them in the UK. It also provides for legal aid to be available in such cases.*

**New clause 28—Good character requirement: illegal entry—**

“The Secretary of State must, within three months of the passing of this Act, ensure that illegal entry to the UK is disregarded as a factor for the purposes of assessing whether a person applying for British citizenship meets the good character requirement.”

*This new clause would require the Secretary of State to change current Home Office guidance stating that individuals who enter the UK illegally, regardless of how long ago, will “normally be refused” citizenship (if they applied after 10 February 2025).*

**New clause 29—Report on impact of carers' minimum wage on net migration—**

“The Secretary of State must, within 12 months of the passage of this Act, lay before Parliament a report on the impact of introducing a minimum wage for carers on levels of net migration.”

*This new clause would require the Government to publish a report on how implementing a carers' minimum wage would impact on levels of net migration.*

New clause 30—*A three-month service standard for asylum casework—*

“(1) The Secretary of State must, within six months of the passage of this Act, implement a three month service standard for asylum casework.

(2) The service standard must specify that 98% of initial decisions on all asylum claims should be made before the end of three months after the date of claim.”

*This new clause would require UK Visas and Immigration to reintroduce a three month service standard for decisions on asylum cases.*

New clause 31—*Exemption of NHS workers from immigration skills charge—*

“The Secretary of State must, within six months of the passing of this Act, implement an exemption for National Health Service workers from the immigration skills charge for sponsoring a Skilled Worker or a Senior or Specialist worker.”

*This new clause would require the Secretary of State to apply an exception to the NHS as an employer from having to pay the immigration skills charge when sponsoring skilled employees.*

New clause 32—*Repeal of certain provisions of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 (No. 2)—*

“(1) The following provisions of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 are repealed—

- (a) sections 12 to 65; and
- (b) sections 68 and 69.”

*This new clause would repeal specified provisions of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022.*

New clause 33—*Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings—*

“The Secretary of State must—

- (a) within six months of the passing of this Act, introduce legislation to ensure the United Kingdom’s full compliance with the 2009 Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings; and
- (b) within 18 months of the passing of this Act, lay before Parliament a report on how the Government is ensuring full compliance with the Convention under this section.”

*This new clause would require the Secretary of State to introduce legislation which incorporates the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings into UK law and report on compliance with the Convention.*

New clause 34—*Victims of slavery or human trafficking: protection from immigration offences—*

“(1) The Modern Slavery Act 2015 is amended as follows.

(2) In section 52 (Duty to notify Secretary of State about suspected victims of slavery or human trafficking), after subsection (2), insert—

“(2A) The Secretary of State must make such arrangements as the Secretary of State considers reasonable to ensure that notification under this section does not include the supply of information to relevant persons or authorities that might indicate that—

- (a) the victim has committed an offence under sections 24 to 26 of the Immigration Act 1971, or
- (b) the victim might otherwise meet the requirements for removal from the United Kingdom or for investigation pending removal.

(2B) For the purposes of subsection (2A), “relevant persons or authorities” include—

- (a) a Minister of the Crown or a government department;
- (b) an immigration officer;
- (c) a customs official;
- (d) a law enforcement officer;
- (e) the Director of Border Revenue;
- (f) the Border Security Commander;

- (g) a UK authorised person; and
- (h) the government of a country or territory outside the United Kingdom.”

*This new clause would prevent a public authority, when determining whether a person is a victim of slavery or human trafficking, from sharing information with immigration authorities and other public authorities that might result in deportation or prosecution for an immigration offence.*

New clause 35—*Humanitarian travel permit—*

“(1) On an application by a person (“P”) to the appropriate decision-maker for entry clearance, the appropriate decision-maker must grant P entry clearance if satisfied that P is a relevant person.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), P is a relevant person if—

- (a) P intends to make a protection claim in the United Kingdom;
- (b) P’s protection claim, if made in the United Kingdom, would have a realistic prospect of success; and
- (c) there are serious and compelling reasons why P’s protection claim should be considered in the United Kingdom.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (2)(c), in deciding whether there are such reasons why P’s protection claim should be considered in the United Kingdom, the appropriate decision-maker must take into account—

- (a) the extent of the risk that P will suffer persecution or serious harm if entry clearance is not granted;
- (b) the strength of P’s family and other ties to the United Kingdom;
- (c) P’s mental and physical health and any particular vulnerabilities that P has; and
- (d) any other matter that the decision-maker thinks relevant.

(4) For the purposes of an application under subsection (1), the appropriate decision-maker must waive any of the requirements in subsection (5) if satisfied that P cannot reasonably be expected to comply with them.

(5) The requirements are—

- (a) any requirement prescribed (whether by immigration rules or otherwise) under section 50 of the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006; and
- (b) any requirement prescribed by regulations made under section 5, 6, 7 or 8 of the UK Borders Act 2007 (biometric registration).

(6) No fee may be charged for the making of an application under subsection (1).

(7) An entry clearance granted pursuant to subsection (1) has effect as leave to enter for such period, being not less than six months, and on such conditions as the Secretary of State may prescribe by order.

(8) Upon a person entering the United Kingdom (within the meaning of section 11 of the Immigration Act 1971) pursuant to leave to enter given under subsection (7), that person is deemed to have made a protection claim in the United Kingdom.

(9) For the purposes of this section—

- (a) “appropriate decision-maker” means a person authorised by the Secretary of State by rules made under section 3 of the Immigration Act 1971 to grant an entry clearance under paragraph(1);
- (b) “entry clearance” has the same meaning as in section 33(1) of the Immigration Act 1971;
- (c) “protection claim”, in relation to a person, means a claim that to remove them from or require them to leave the United Kingdom would be inconsistent with the United Kingdom’s obligations—
  - (i) under the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees done at Geneva on 28th July 1951 and the Protocol to that Convention (“the Refugee Convention”);



- (ii) in relation to persons entitled to a grant of humanitarian protection; or
- (iii) under Article 2 or 3 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms agreed by the Council of Europe at Rome on 4th November 1950 (“the European Convention on Human Rights”);
- (d) “persecution” is defined in accordance with the Refugee Convention; and
- (e) “serious harm” means treatment that, if it occurred within the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom, would be contrary to the United Kingdom’s obligations under Article 2 or 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (irrespective of where it will actually occur)."

*This new clause would create a new “humanitarian travel permit”.*

**New clause 36—Refugee family reunion—**

“(1) The Secretary of State must, within 6 months of the date on which this Act is passed, lay before Parliament a statement of changes in the rules (the “immigration rules”) under section 3(2) of the Immigration Act 1971 (general provisions for regulation and control) to make provision for refugee family reunion, in accordance with this section, to come into effect after 21 days.

(2) Before a statement of changes is laid under subsection (1), the Secretary of State must consult with persons as the Secretary of State deems appropriate.

(3) The statement laid under subsection (1) must set out rules providing for leave to enter and remain in the United Kingdom for family members of a person granted refugee status or humanitarian protection.

(4) In this section, “refugee status” and “humanitarian protection” have the same meaning as in the immigration rules.

(5) In this section, “family members” include—

- (a) a person’s parent, including adoptive parent;
- (b) a person’s spouse, civil partner or unmarried partner;
- (c) a person’s child, including adopted child, who is either—
  - (i) under the age of 18, or
  - (ii) under the age of 25 but was either under the age of 18 or unmarried at the time the person granted asylum left their country of residence to seek asylum;
- (d) a person’s sibling, including adoptive sibling, who is either—
  - (i) under the age of 18, or
  - (ii) under the age of 25, but was either under the age of 18 or unmarried at the time the person granted asylum left their country of residence to seek asylum; and
- (e) such other persons as the Secretary of State may determine, having regard to—
  - (i) the importance of maintaining family unity,
  - (ii) the best interests of a child,
  - (iii) the physical, emotional, psychological or financial dependency between a person granted refugee status or humanitarian protection and another person,
  - (iv) any risk to the physical, emotional or psychological well being of a person who was granted refugee status or humanitarian protection, including from the circumstances in which the person is living in the United Kingdom, or
  - (v) such other matters as the Secretary of State considers appropriate.

(6) For the purpose of subsection (5)—

- (a) “adopted” and “adoptive” refer to a relationship resulting from adoption, including de facto adoption, as set out in the immigration rules, and

- (b) “best interests” of a child must be read in accordance with Article 3 of the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.”

*This new clause would make provision for leave to enter or remain in the UK to be granted to the family members of refugees and of people granted humanitarian protection.*

**New clause 37—Children born in the UK: British citizenship—**

“(1) The British Nationality Act 1981 is amended as follows.

(2) After section 1(3A) insert—

“(3B) A person (“P”) born in the United Kingdom on or after the relevant day who is not a British citizen by virtue of subsection (1), (1A) or (2) or section 10A shall be entitled to be registered as a British citizen if, when P was born, P’s father or mother—

- (a) had previously entered the UK whilst holding leave to enter the UK; and
- (b) was subsequently, and at the time of P’s birth, subject to UK immigration control.”

(3) The Immigration and Nationality (Fees) Regulations 2018 are amended as follows.

(4) In Schedule 1, Table 20A, insert—

“No fee is payable in respect of an application for registration as a British citizen under the 1981 Act where the application is made under section 1(3B) of that Act.””

*This new clause would ensure citizenship for children born in the UK whose parents had leave to enter the UK but were not British citizens or had settled status at the time of their child’s birth, and for fees for that registration to be waived.*

**New clause 38—Repeal of certain provisions of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 (No. 3)—**

“(1) The following provisions of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 are repealed—

- (a) section 12,
- (b) section 16,
- (c) sections 30 to 38, and
- (d) section 40.”

*This new clause would repeal provisions of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 concerning: the creation of two separate groups of refugees, subject to differential treatment; the inadmissibility of asylum claims by persons with a connection to a safe third State; the interpretation of the Refugee Convention; and the creation of offences relating and similar to illegal entry to the UK.*

**New clause 39—Duty to deport in accordance with the Refugee Convention—**

“(1) The Secretary of State must seek to remove anyone who, based on Article 1F and Article 33(2) of the Refugee Convention, does not have the benefit of the non-refoulement provisions of the Refugee Convention.

(2) This duty does not apply in relation to persons who would face a real risk of capital punishment or extra-judicial killing or whose removal would contravene the United Kingdom’s obligation under Article 3 of the United Nations Convention against Torture.

(3) If a domestic court or tribunal has ruled that a person’s removal would not contravene subsection (1) and (2), the court or tribunal may—

- (a) Consider whether removal would be contrary to the Human Rights Act 1998,
- (b) But if it considers that removal would be contrary to the Human Rights Act 1998, the Secretary of State may seek the removal of that person, notwithstanding the Act.

(4) The Secretary of State may delay the removal of an individual where subsection (3)(b) applies, until the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights has ruled on the compatibility of that removal.

(5) The Secretary of State must argue before the European Court of Human Rights that the European Convention on Human Rights cannot be interpreted as preventing the removal of an individual if such removal is compatible with the Refugee Convention and the United Nations Convention against Torture.

(6) If the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights rules that the European Convention on Human Rights takes precedence over the Refugee Convention and United Nations Convention against Torture, the Secretary of State may decide to comply with that Grand Chamber decision.

(7) If the Secretary of State decides to comply with a ruling of the Grand Chamber, they must publish a quarterly report setting out the anonymised details of those individuals who could be deported subject to subsections (1) and (2) but have not been deported because of a decision by the Secretary of State to comply with a decision of the Grand Chamber of the European Court on Human Rights.”

#### New clause 40—*Detention of illegal migrants*—

“(1) The Secretary of State must, within six months of the passing of this Act, set out plans to detain illegal migrants in secure accommodation.

(2) Detention under subsection (1)—

- (a) must occur immediately upon a person’s arrival into the UK without leave to enter the UK;
- (b) must be in accommodation with requisite security, not including hotels or residential accommodation; and
- (c) must be for no more than 24 hours, during which any asylum claim must be assessed and decided.

(3) Any person whose asylum claim under this section is refused must be deported within 24 hours of refusal.

(4) A plan under subsection (1) must be—

- (a) laid before Parliament, and
- (b) implemented within twelve months of the passing of this Act.”

*This new clause would require the Government to set up secure accommodation to detain illegal migrants as soon as they arrive in the UK, assess any asylum claim with 24 hours of detention, and deport any failed applicants.*

#### New clause 41—*Impact of European Convention on Human Rights on border security*—

“(1) The Secretary of State must, within six months of the passing of this Act, publish an assessment of the impact of the UK’s commitment to the European Convention on Human Rights on the UK’s border security.

(2) An assessment under this section must be laid before Parliament and must include—

- (a) the number of additional persons likely to be deported from the United Kingdom annually if the UK were to depart from the European Convention on Human Rights, and
- (b) of those, the number of foreign criminals likely to be deported annually.”

*This new clause would require the Government to assess the impact of the ECHR on the UK’s border security.*

#### New clause 42—*Transparency in age dispute decision-making*—

“(1) The Secretary of State must, within six months of the passing of this Act, and on a quarterly basis thereafter—

- (a) prepare and publish a report on age assessments conducted for the purposes of immigration control, and
- (b) lay a copy of the report before Parliament.

(2) The report must include—

- (a) the total number of age disputes raised during the reporting period,
- (b) the number of individuals who were initially treated as adults but were subsequently assessed to be under the age of 18,

(c) the number of individuals who were initially treated as children but were subsequently assessed to be 18 or over,

(d) the number and percentage of individuals referred for a formal Merton-compliant age assessment,

(e) the number of safeguarding referrals made as a result of age misclassification, and

(f) the number of legal challenges brought in relation to age assessments, and the outcome of those challenges.

(3) The report must also include an assessment of the impact of age dispute procedures on unaccompanied children, with particular regard to—

- (a) the duration of time spent in adult accommodation, detention, or prison,
- (b) any effect on access to education, healthcare, and social care services,
- (c) any risks to mental and physical health arising from misclassification, and
- (d) any referrals to or findings made by safeguarding professionals or regulatory bodies in relation to such cases.

(4) In this section—

“child” means a person who is under the age of 18,

“Merton-compliant” means compliant with the principles established in *R (B) v Merton LBC* [2003] EWHC 1689 (Admin),

“age dispute” means any case in which the claimed age of an individual for immigration purposes is challenged or reassessed by the Home Office or a relevant authority.”

*This new clause would require the Home Office to publish a detailed analysis which includes the outcomes on age assessments. It aims to increase transparency in the current process and to support policy reform that better safeguards children at risk of being misclassified as adults. Its aim is to ensure a more transparent, and accountable approach to age disputes.*

#### New clause 43—*Management of immigration removal centres and asylum accommodation*—

“(1) The Secretary of State must, within six months of the passing of this Act, make by regulations a register of prohibited providers of immigration removal centres and other forms of asylum accommodation.

(2) The register under subsection (1) must include all companies or persons—

- (a) found guilty of or fined for—
  - (i) gross misconduct,
  - (ii) abuse,
  - (iii) overcharging, or
  - (iv) fraud

in relation to their operation of immigration removal centres and other forms of asylum accommodation, or

(b) who have not, following inspection by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI), met the recommendations of the subsequent report within 6 months.

(3) The Secretary of State or department must not enter into further contracts or renewal of contracts with any prohibited provider.”

*This new clause would require the Home Office to make a register of prohibited providers of immigration removal centres and other forms of asylum accommodation who have been convicted of gross misconduct, abuse, overcharging or fraud, or have not met the recommendations of an inspection report. The Home Office cannot renew or enter into further contracts with prohibited providers on the register.*

#### New clause 44—*National Referral Mechanism: duty to create a new visa scheme*—

“(1) The Secretary of State must, by immigration rules, create a new visa scheme for persons who—

- (a) are regarded by a first responder organisation as eligible for referral into the National Referral Mechanism for modern slavery; and
- (b) are in receipt of an Overseas Domestic Worker visa under the terms of the Immigration Rules Appendix Overseas Domestic Worker; or
- (c) have been in receipt of such a visa within the six months prior to a referral under paragraph (a).

(2) Immigration rules under subsection (1)—

- (a) must be laid before Parliament within six months of the passing of this Act; and
- (b) must be commenced within six months of being laid before Parliament.

(3) Immigration rules under subsection (1) must—

- (a) enable an eligible person to remain in the UK until the later of—
  - (i) the date on which a conclusive grounds decision is made; or
  - (ii) the date on which any reconsideration or judicial review of a conclusive grounds decision has concluded; or
  - (iii) for persons recognised as a victim of modern slavery through a positive conclusive grounds decision, the date on which the person is granted either Discretionary Leave under the Immigration Act 1971 or Temporary Permission to Stay under section 65 of the Nationality and Borders and 2022; and
- (b) enable the eligible person to work as a domestic worker for any eligible employer during the period specified by this subsection.

(4) For the purposes of this section—

“first responder organisation” is to be defined by immigration rules under this section;

“National Referral Mechanism” means the national framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery and ensuring they receive appropriate support;

“conclusive grounds decision” means a decision by a competent authority as to whether a person is a victim of slavery or human trafficking.”

*This new clause would require the Secretary of State to introduce a new visa scheme for victims of modern slavery who have been granted an Overseas Domestic Worker visa, to avoid visa concerns acting as a deterrent against referral for support under the National Referral Mechanism.*

**New clause 45—Good character requirement—**

“(1) The British Nationality Act 1981 is amended as follows.

(2) In section 41A, (Registration: requirement to be of good character), after subsection (4), insert—

“(4A) The good character requirement under this section must not be applied in a manner contrary to the United Kingdom’s obligations under any international agreement to which the United Kingdom is a party.

(4B) The Secretary of State must ensure any guidance issued regarding the good character requirement reflects the following—

- (a) any assessment of good character may only take into account the illegal entry, arrival or presence of a person (P) in the United Kingdom if at the time of P’s entry to or arrival in the UK—
  - (i) P was aged 18 years or over,
  - (ii) P would have been given leave to enter under the immigration rules, if P had sought it, and
  - (iii) the assessment of P’s good character is made on the basis of guidance, which was published.
- (b) It is for the Secretary of State to prove, on the balance of probabilities, that—

- (i) P would have been given leave to enter under the immigration rules, if P had sought it; and
- (ii) it would have been reasonable to expect P to have sought and obtained such leave to enter.

(4C) In this section—

“the good character requirement” refers to the provision regarding a person being of good character in section 41A (Registration: requirement to be of good character), section 4L (Acquisition by registration: special circumstances), and paragraphs 1 and 5 of Schedule 1 to the British Nationality Act 1981.

“immigration rules” means rules under section 3(2) of the Immigration Act 1971.’

*This new clause would ensure the good character requirement is not applied contrary to the UK’s international legal obligations. It also ensures that guidance would only take into account a person’s illegal entry, arrival or presence, if they arrived as an adult, when there was a safe route under the Immigration Rules available to them, and it would have been reasonable to expect them to have used that route.*

**Amendment 1, clause 3, page 2, line 28, after “such threats”, insert—**

“including the threats posed to UK biosecurity by illegal meat imports.”

*This amendment requires the Border Security Commander (“the Commander”), to have regard to the threats posed to UK biosecurity by illegal meat imports.*

**Amendment 31, page 2, line 36, at end insert—**

“(2A) The strategic priority document issued under subsection (2) must support the Home Office’s UK Border Strategy.”

*This amendment would require that the Border Security Commander’s strategic priority document supports the UK Border Strategy.*

**Amendment 2, page 3, line 2, after “borders”, insert “, including biosecurity”.**

*This amendment is consequential on Amendment 1, and clarifies that UK biosecurity is an element of border security.*

**Amendment 4, page 7, line 12, at end insert—**

“(1A) For the purposes of subsection (1), P cannot commit an offence if P is—

- (a) an individual forced or coerced into criminal activities,
- (b) a parent, family member or guardian accompanying minors,
- (c) a victim of human trafficking or modern slavery,
- (d) a survivor of torture, gender-based violence or severe trauma,
- (e) an unaccompanied child,
- (f) a person at risk of persecution,
- (g) a pregnant woman, or
- (h) a person holding refugee status.”

*This amendment would specify that the offence created by clause 13 (supplying articles for use in immigration crime) cannot be applied to certain categories of individual.*

**Amendment 36, in clause 14, page 8, line 21, at end insert—**

“or,

- (c) their action was—
  - (i) solely as part of their own journey, and
  - (ii) they did not gain financially from the action.”

*This amendment seeks to ensure that the new criminal offence is targeted at people smugglers rather than those seeking asylum by amending the statutory defence.*

**Amendment 30, page 8, line 26, at end insert—**

“(6) For the purposes of subsection (1), P cannot commit an offence if P is—

- (a) an individual forced or coerced into criminal activities,



- (b) a parent, family member or guardian accompanying minors,
- (c) a victim of human trafficking or modern slavery,
- (d) a survivor of torture, gender-based violence or severe trauma,
- (e) an unaccompanied child,
- (f) a person at risk of persecution,
- (g) a pregnant woman, or
- (h) a person holding refugee status.”

*This amendment would specify that the offence created by clause 14 (Handling articles for use in immigration crime) cannot be applied to certain categories of individual.*

Amendment 37, in clause 15, page 9, line 2, at end insert—

- “(i) a telephonic device
- (j) means for charging a telephonic device”

*This amendment adds to the list of articles that aren't included as relevant articles for the purposes of the new criminal offences of supplying or handling items to be used by people making a dangerous journey.*

Amendment 38, in clause 16, page 9, line 38, leave out from “journey” to end of line 39 and insert—

“that they would not benefit from financially.”

*This amendment seeks to ensure that the new criminal offence is targeted at people smugglers rather than those seeking asylum by amending the statutory defence.*

Amendment 5, in clause 18, page 11, line 36, at end insert—

- “(E1C) For the purposes of subsections (E1A) and (E1B) a person cannot commit an offence if the person is—
- (a) an individual forced or coerced into criminal activities,
- (b) a parent, family member or guardian accompanying minors,
- (c) a victim of human trafficking or modern slavery,
- (d) a survivor of torture, gender-based violence or severe trauma,
- (e) an unaccompanied child,
- (f) a person at risk of persecution,
- (g) a pregnant woman, or
- (h) a person holding refugee status.”

*This amendment would specify that the offence created by clause 18 (Endangering another during sea crossing to United Kingdom) cannot be applied to certain categories of individual.*

Government amendments 6 to 12.

Amendment 32, page 30, line 29, leave out clause 37.

*This amendment would remove the clause relating to the repeal of the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Act 2024.*

Amendment 33, page 30, line 31, leave out clause 38.

*This amendment would remove the clause relating to the repeal of immigration legislation.*

Amendment 35, in clause 38, page 30, line 34, leave out “11” and insert “12”.

*This amendment would add section 12, concerning the Secretary of State's powers to detain people under the Immigration Act 1972, to the list of sections of the Illegal Migration Act 2023 to be repealed.*

Amendment 34, page 31, line 1, leave out “28” and insert “29”.

*This amendment would repeal Section 29 of the Illegal Immigration Act 2024, which requires the Secretary of State to remove people who have sought to use modern slavery protections in “bad faith”.*

Amendment 3, page 31, line 5, at end insert—

- “(i) sections 29 and 59.”

*This amendment would add sections 29 and 59 to the list of sections of the Illegal Migration Act 2023 to be repealed.*

Government amendments 13 to 29.

**Dame Angela Eagle:** Before I speak about the key Government amendments tabled on Report, I would like to recall why the Government have brought forward the Bill. We are working to take the necessary actions to secure our borders, bring order to the chaotic immigration and asylum system we inherited, and go after the dangerous criminal gangs that undermine our border security. This legislation is part of that plan for change.

For six years, the organised gangs behind small boat crossings have been allowed to take hold, so we are strengthening international partnerships, enhancing enforcement operations nationally and internationally, and equipping ourselves with the tools we need to identify, disrupt and dismantle criminal gangs, while strengthening the security of our borders. The organised immigration crime summit hosted by the Government in London last month mobilised over 40 countries and organisations to launch an unprecedented global fight against the ruthless people-smuggling gangs. The new landmark measures in the Bill will provide law enforcement agencies working across the border security system with stronger powers to pursue, disrupt and deter organised immigration crime.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Minister for giving way. I have asked questions in this Chamber—to be fair to the Minister, she has answered in a positive fashion—on border security in Northern Ireland; people can come from the Republic of Ireland into Northern Ireland and can then cross into the UK. It is so important that the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland is closed. What in-depth discussions have taken place between the Garda Síochána, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the security forces to ensure that that avenue of illegal immigration is closed for good?

**Dame Angela Eagle:** As I have before, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the border security force in this country works very closely with the PSNI and the Garda Síochána to deal with all potential threats in the common travel area. I assure him that we keep a very close eye on what is going on there to ensure that the hon. Gentleman's worries are properly addressed.

The Bill strengthens the immigration and asylum system. We are repealing the costly and unworkable legislation introduced by the previous Government, and are introducing new provisions to address shortcomings, tackle harm, and build a more efficient and robust system. The Bill is about making changes to enable a properly functioning immigration and asylum system that ensures that those with a genuine right to be here are properly supported, while those who have no legal right to remain in the UK do not abuse the system and undermine the protections the UK has a history of providing for those in need.

**Chris Vince** (Harlow) (Lab/Co-op): I thank the Minister for giving way; she is giving a really important speech on a very important subject. Does she agree that part of the issue with the asylum system is the backlog created by the previous Government, who wrongly decided that the best way to deal with the issue was to make the process take longer, as some sort of deterrent? That meant there was a huge backlog, which this Government have to tackle.

**Dame Angela Eagle:** My hon. Friend is right. We inherited a system in total chaos; asylum decision making had all but ground to a halt. Many, many tens of thousands of people were left having claimed asylum, as the law allowed them to, but unable to be processed because the previous Government passed a law that made it illegal for them to be processed. They were left in limbo. The cases were just piling up and costing the taxpayer a fortune. We have had to untangle the situation.

**Lee Anderson (Ashfield) (Reform):** I thank the Minister for giving way; she is being most generous with her time. She will be aware that more than 600 illegal migrants have entered this country today. They could get up to all sorts of mischief, and commit crimes and maybe even acts of terrorism. Does she agree that these young men crossing the channel should be immediately detained and deported, along with the right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn)?

6.30 pm

**Dame Angela Eagle:** I certainly hope that that kind of comment might be a joke. I wonder whether that kind of arbitrary treatment of people who are in this country would become the norm for Reform, if we came out of the European convention on human rights, as the hon. Member wants. We are a law-abiding Government. The right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) has a complete right to his opinions and a complete right to express them, from whichever side of the House he sits. I have personally worked with him and have a great deal of respect for him, so I am shocked that the hon. Member for Ashfield (Lee Anderson) thinks that an appropriate thing to say in this place.

**Luke Taylor (Sutton and Cheam) (LD):** On a slightly more constructive point, does the Minister agree that calls for the process to allow asylum seekers to work after they have been in the country for three months would allow them to integrate more closely with their communities and to earn money to support themselves? A measure to change the arrangement from 12 months to three months would make a massive difference to asylum seekers, reduce the bill for hotels and allow people to contribute to the communities they want to be a part of.

**Dame Angela Eagle:** We will come to these debates when we get on to debating the new clauses to which the hon. Gentleman is referring. We have been clear from the Government Benches about the balance between respecting work visas, which people have to apply for if they are coming to work here, and allowing asylum seekers who have not applied for work to come and work at that sort of length. The change that he suggests would risk undermining the system. We have a disagreement about timing. The answer to his question is that at the moment an asylum seeker can work if their case has not been heard after 12 months, if that is through no fault of their own. We are talking about time here, and the balance between not undermining our work visa system and having a pull factor for more people to come across illegally.

**Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Ind):** I thank the Minister for the remarks she just made. Would she accept that people who make an incredibly dangerous journey and are exploited in doing so are often totally desperate, are victims of human rights abuse and war,

and have been through horrendous journeys to get there? One day, they will find somewhere where they will be able to live their lives and make a contribution to our society. As a world, do we not need to look at the plight of refugees as a whole and do much more to try to bring an end to the conditions that force people to seek these desperate journeys in the first place?

**Dame Angela Eagle:** I agree that we in this place have to always think about the humanity involved and not try to label everybody who comes into our country when they are claiming asylum as some kind of threat or, even worse, as a terrorist or something, as was done by the hon. Member for Ashfield. We have to treat every case on its merits, and we have to treat every person as an individual human being, but we also have to recognise—the right hon. Member for Islington North needs to recognise this too—that not everybody who comes across on a boat is the kind of person he describes; some are the people running the people-smuggling gangs. A variety of humanity comes across on the boats, just as one can discover a variety of humanity if one comes across a pool of human beings anywhere.

**Several hon. Members rose—**

**Dame Angela Eagle:** I wish to get on with discussing the amendments, but because I served with him on the Intelligence and Security Committee, I will give way to the right hon. Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Sir John Hayes).

**Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con):** Is not the truth of the matter that showing humanity means recognising, as the Minister has implied, that some people are coming, perfectly understandably, for entirely economic reasons? If you thought you could get a better deal in Britain for you and your family, you would turn up and say you were claiming asylum on all kinds of grounds. That is the real truth of it. The system is being gamed and it has to stop being gamed.

**Dame Angela Eagle:** Yes in some circumstances, but no in others, because some people who come over are genuine asylum seekers. Even under the right hon. Gentleman's Government—when he, too, was in the Home Office—such people were granted asylum. As always, there are many different circumstances and each case has to be looked at and judged on its merits.

**Dr Luke Evans (Hinckley and Bosworth) (Con) rose—**

**Dame Angela Eagle:** I am sorry, but I need to get on, because we do not have a lot of time and I think I have been generous.

The Government have tabled further amendments, to which I now wish to turn, to strengthen the Bill. First, new clause 5 extends right-to-work checks. Preventing illegal working forms a critical part of the Government's plan to strengthen the immigration system and restore tough enforcement of the rules, undermining the proposition sold by unscrupulous criminal gangs that individuals can work in the UK. In reality, such work is illegal and puts individuals in a vulnerable position and at risk of exploitation. Legitimate businesses are undercut and the wages of lawful workers are negatively impacted, with links to other labour market abuse such as tax evasion, breach of the national minimum wage and exploitative working conditions.

Those working illegally in the UK are exploiting a loophole in the existing right-to-work scheme, whereby only those organisations that engage individuals under a contract of employment are required to carry out right-to-work checks. Government new clause 5 means that those who engage individuals to work as casual or temporary workers under a worker's contract, individual subcontractors, and online matching services that provide details of service providers to carry out work or services for potential clients or customers for remuneration, will be legally required to check a person's right to work. Individuals who are self-employed in the traditional sense, and who contract directly with clients, will not be in scope of new clause 5, ensuring that a member of the public directly engaging a tradesperson or business will not have to carry out a right-to-work check. That is a long overdue extension of right-to-work checks to include sectors that were previously out of scope and to crack down on the unscrupulous exploitation of employment law loopholes.

I note new clause 2 tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central and Headingley (Alex Sobel) and new clause 21 in the name of the hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Lisa Smart) on the Government's policy on the right to work for asylum seekers, but it is important, as I said earlier, to distinguish between those who need protection and those seeking to come here to work. Although pull factors to the UK are complex, the perception of easy access to the labour market is among the reasons that people undertake dangerous journeys to the UK.

I turn to Government new clauses 6 and 7. First, asylum appeals in the first-tier tribunal of the immigration and asylum chamber currently take an average of nearly 50 weeks, according to the latest published statistics. That is because of the huge backlogs we inherited when we came into government. Government new clauses 6 and 7 seek to set a 24-week statutory timeframe, requiring the first-tier tribunal of the immigration and asylum chamber to decide supported accommodation cases and non-detained foreign national offender cases within 24 weeks from the date the appeal is lodged, as far as is reasonably practicable.

There are no easy or perfect choices here, but the Government have to take action, and we are focusing in the first instance on measures that will allow us to get people out of costly hotels and to facilitate the swift deportation of non-detained foreign national offenders, where that is in the public interest. While implementing the 24-week timeframe for supported asylum appeals and appeals from non-detained foreign national offenders, it is our expectation that the judiciary will continue to prioritise appeals lodged by detained foreign national offenders and the most vulnerable. We are working at pace in the Home Office and with the Ministry of Justice and His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service to look at all possible improvements to the end-to-end immigration and appeals system and to the speed and efficiency of decision making and appeals, while continuing to guarantee access to justice. We will set out further reforms to the asylum system later this summer.

**Jim Shannon:** The Minister will know that I chair the all-party parliamentary group for international freedom of religion or belief. An important thing for us is those of a Christian faith and other faiths who come here.

The Government have been incredibly generous in giving them the opportunity of asylum and positions here; schemes of both the previous Government and this Government are to be commended, and I thank them. Can the Minister today assure this House, the people I represent here in this United Kingdom and those from overseas that there will still be the opportunity for those who are persecuted because of their faith to come here and claim asylum?

**Dame Angela Eagle:** None of the changes that I have talked about in the new clauses will impinge at all on the criteria currently used to determine whether somebody has a need for protection under the refugee convention. Clearly, in certain circumstances that includes the reality of religious persecution in the homeland. I hope that reassures the hon. Gentleman.

Government new clause 8 redefines how the UK interprets the phrase "a particularly serious crime" for the purpose of excluding refugees from the protection against refoulement. Under existing arrangements, anyone convicted of any offence that attracts a custodial sentence of 12 months or more will have committed a particularly serious crime for these purposes. Those arrangements remain unchanged, but new clause 8 goes further and will mean that a particularly serious crime will now include individuals who have received a conviction for a sexual offence listed in schedule 3 to the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Importantly for these cases, the fact that a particularly serious crime has been committed will be a presumption that can, obviously, be rebutted by the individual in question so that they get a fair hearing.

Schedule 3 to the 2003 Act lists the offences that automatically make an offender subject to notification requirements, meaning that they have to notify the police of personal details annually, or whenever their details change. Failure to do so is a criminal offence and the system is sometimes known as the sex offenders register. The Government recognise the devastating impact of sexual violence on victims in our communities and are fully committed to tackling sexual offences and halving violence against women and girls in a decade. To achieve that, a broad set of the right powers must be available for authorities to tackle sexual crimes, bring perpetrators to justice and manage sex offenders.

**Sir Christopher Chope** (Christchurch) (Con): I accept the wisdom behind this new clause, but will the Minister go further and comment on new clause 39, in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh)? That new clause is designed to put an end to another mischief affecting the non-refoulement rules; it would ensure that primacy was given to the torture convention and the refugee convention, and that it was not possible for the European Court of Human Rights to interpret the European convention on human rights in such a way as to exclude those provisions.

**Dame Angela Eagle:** I commend the hon. Gentleman for his creativity in asking that question when I am talking about this particular Government new clause. I think we had a debate in Committee on the amendment in the name of the Father of the House, and I certainly intend to come on to it later in our proceedings—hopefully, when he is here.



[*Dame Angela Eagle*]

As part of our efforts to halve violence against women and girls, it is important that the small number of asylum seekers and refugees who have been convicted of particularly serious crimes do not benefit from protection status. Not only have they failed to respect the laws of the UK by committing sexual crimes, but they have undermined public confidence in the system. New clause 8 changes the law to deny refugee status to those convicted of the abhorrent crimes listed in schedule 3 to the Sexual Offences Act 2003, treating them with the seriousness they deserve and supporting our wider mission to halve violence against women and girls in a decade.

**Dr Andrew Murrison** (South West Wiltshire) (Con): The Minister is being very generous in giving way. The trouble is that, when the judiciary get hold of this and there is an appeal, they very often cite exceptional circumstances, which are cited in the original legislation but have been interpreted over the years in a very liberal way—so much so as to be almost meaningless. Will the Minister define more clearly what exceptional circumstances are, so that there can be no doubt in the minds of lawyers about who might be eligible for appeal against decisions made by the Home Office, and who is not?

**Dame Angela Eagle:** Certainly we will come into the detail of how this works once it is on the statute book, in the guidance that is issued, but I am making it very clear to the House tonight that the Government wish those few people—the very small number of asylum seekers and refugees who have been convicted of serious sexual offences such that they have been put on the sex offenders register—to be denied refugee status. We will also deny refugee status where we are able to show that an individual has been convicted in a foreign court for a crime that would have fallen under schedule 3 to the 2003 Act if they had been convicted in the UK. Those convicted and made subject to the notification requirements have committed the most serious of sexual offences, which should be included in the definition of a particularly serious crime.

6.45 pm

I shall move on to the amendments relating to the Immigration Services Commissioner. The Government are seeking new powers for the Immigration Advice Authority to clamp down on malpractice in the provision of immigration advice. Building on clause 40 and schedule 1, these new measures will extend the powers of the Immigration Services Commissioner to ensure effective, modern regulation and enforcement of immigration advice and services.

Government amendment 24 creates the power to amend the definition of “relevant matters” for the different types of immigration advice that can be brought in and out of the Immigration Services Commissioner’s regulatory oversight. It will introduce greater flexibility to keep pace with wider modernisation and transformation of the immigration system. Currently those definitions are in primary legislation, but this amendment moves them into secondary legislation.

Government amendment 25 allows for a person’s registration as a provider of immigration advice or immigration services to be cancelled or suspended with

immediate effect where serious concerns are raised regarding their actions or behaviour. Government amendment 26 establishes that persons who have received certain severe disciplinary sanctions cannot continue to provide immigration advice under the supervision of a person regulated by the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

Government amendment 27 introduces additional sanctions, specifically monetary penalties, and the ability to amend the amount of fines, enhancing the range of tools available to the commissioner to tackle inappropriate or unlawful practice by unregistered advisers and to shore up standards. Monetary penalties may be imposed up to a maximum of £15,000 on each regulated organisation that has breached the commissioner’s codes of standards, obstructed an inspection or failed to comply with regulations.

Government amendment 28 provides the Home Secretary with the power to specify a non-exhaustive list of fees that the Immigration Services Commissioner can charge for the exercise of their regulatory functions. Having the ability to charge for services such as competence assessments and training will enable the Immigration Services Commissioner to provide more of those services, helping to drive up competence, capability and capacity in the sector.

Finally, Government amendment 29 makes provision to expand the existing complaints scheme to include unregulated advisers and organisations and to create a civil recovery scheme where the Immigration Services Commissioner can order the refund of fees or the repayment of compensation to the victims of poor practice.

The final Government amendments relate to serious crime prevention orders and electronic devices. To support operational efficiency, Government amendments 6 to 11 will enable an inspector to authorise a constable to use the powers to access, examine, copy, retain or use information under clauses 20, 21 and 23 of the Bill. That is thought to be more operationally effective than the current measures in the Bill, which place that authorisation at superintendent level, as I am sure the hon. Member for Stockton West (Matt Vickers) will remember from our long discourse on these matters in Committee.

**Mike Martin** (Tunbridge Wells) (LD): Does the Minister find it strange that in a debate on a Bill so important to Reform UK—indeed, it is the party’s *raison d’être*—80% of Reform UK MPs have left the Chamber and are, presumably, in the pub?

**Dame Angela Eagle:** I think they probably call that campaigning, but it is up to them to justify how long they spend in the pub, or indeed in this Chamber.

Moving to serious crime prevention orders and interim serious crime prevention orders, Government amendments 14 to 19 will remove Scotland and Northern Ireland from clause 48, which allows electronic monitoring as a condition of serious crime prevention orders and interim serious crime prevention orders in terrorism-related cases. The amendments will ensure that the devolved Governments retain full legislative competence over their existing electronic monitoring regimes.

For now, I commend all the Government amendments to the House and look forward to contributions from

other right hon. and hon. Members on the gargantuan group of amendments we are dealing with tonight.

**Chris Philp** (Croydon South) (Con): I rise to speak to new clauses 14 and 18, and to various other new clauses and amendments that stand in my name and those of my right hon. and hon. Friends. Let me start by paying tribute to my hon. Friends the Members for Weald of Kent (Katie Lam) and for Stockton West (Matt Vickers), who are sitting beside me. They toiled with enormous fortitude and patience through 12 Committee sittings. They did extremely diligent and good work, and I put on record my thanks to them both.

The new clauses and amendments that we have tabled are made necessary by the Government's abject and appalling failure, since they came to office last July, to control small boat crossings of the English channel. They came to office saying that they would "smash the gangs", a claim that is now in tatters. Let us take a look at what they have done since 4 July last year. Since the election, 35,048 people have illegally crossed the English channel. That is a 29% increase on the same period the previous year.

This year—2025—how is smashing the gangs going so far? Well, 11,806 people have crossed, which is the worst start to a year in history. That is an appalling and abject failure, for which this Government are responsible. Yesterday alone, 232 people crossed, and we understand that today, as we stand here, several hundred more people have made that illegal crossing. There is no control over who they are. There are suggestions that some of the suspects in the recent Iranian terror case were living in asylum accommodation and may therefore have crossed by small boat. I certainly recall that some people crossing the channel had very serious prior convictions. The Government have no idea who these people are, and they certainly have no control.

The people crossing are almost entirely young men. They have pushed themselves to the front of the queue by paying people smugglers. I do not see them as victims; they are committing a criminal offence by entering the United Kingdom in this way. It is a criminal offence contrary to section 24 of the Immigration Act 1971, as I am sure everybody knows.

**Tim Farron** (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD) *rose*—

**Chris Philp:** If the former leader of the Liberal Democrats wants to say something to the contrary, I would be glad to give way.

**Tim Farron:** I could not help myself, I'm afraid. Some 87% of Eritreans coming over are refugees. The right hon. Gentleman talks about young men. The refugees are young men, because Christian young men in Eritrea are conscripted to murder their own communities, so of course they are disproportionately represented. Why does he not take part in this debate on the basis of evidence, rather than playing tabloid nonsense?

**Chris Philp:** The hon. Gentleman will know that around the world, there are very many female and child refugees. The last Government welcomed many of them here under the UK resettlement scheme from Syria. The young men who push themselves to the front of the queue in Calais are displacing potentially more deserving

applicants. They are embarking from France, which is a manifestly safe country with a well-functioning asylum system. Nobody—including young men from Eritrea—needs to leave France to seek sanctuary when they can perfectly well claim asylum in France. Article 31 of the refugee convention, which in general terms prohibits the criminalisation of refugees, expressly says that that only applies if someone comes "directly" from a place of danger. France is not a place of danger. Much better that we choose the deserving cases, rather than having people pay criminal gangs to enter this country illegally from a place, namely France, which is safe.

**Dr Luke Evans:** The last Government introduced the idea of having age verification. That is important, because the evidence supports the suggestion that some young men claim to be younger than they are. Many other countries use medical age verification systems. Does my right hon. Friend have a reason why the Government decided not to take our amendments forward in Committee, and why they are not considering implementing them now?

**Chris Philp:** My hon. Friend raises an excellent point. In fact, he draws me to new clause 12, which we tabled. It mandates the Government to get on with implementing scientific age assessments, which scientifically verify if someone is or is not over the age of 18. Every other European country uses these tests. It could be, for example, an X-ray of the wrist.

**Mike Tapp** (Dover and Deal) (Lab): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Chris Philp:** I will give way in a minute. There are more complicated techniques these days, such as testing DNA methylation, and other less intrusive tests. We are the only country not to use them.

Many people who illegally cross the channel claim to be under 18—they usually claim to be 17—when common sense would often suggest that they are far older. There are documented cases where men with beards have ended up in schools with teenage girls. [*Interruption.*] I am going to give way to the hon. Member for Dover and Deal (Mike Tapp) in a moment. I ask the Minister, when she replies, to explain to the House her plans for introducing these tests. We are an outlier in Europe; we are the only country not to use them. It is important from a safeguarding perspective to make sure that people who claim to be 17 really are 17, and not in their mid-20s. The hon. Member for Dover and Deal was very keen to intervene, and I think enthusiasm deserves its reward.

**Mike Tapp:** I thank the shadow Home Secretary for his condescending tone after his deluded rant. I must say to him that he is misleading the House: 400 crossed in 2018, and more than 150,000 have crossed since. The majority of those were on the Conservative Government's watch, so how they can claim that that happened on Labour's watch is beyond me. As the new expert—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Judith Cummins):** Order. I think the hon. Gentleman has had long enough for his very brief intervention.

**Chris Philp:** I certainly agree that the hon. Gentleman has had long enough, and his constituents may well agree in a few years' time. I gave the figures very clearly: since the election, 35,000 people have crossed the channel. That is a 29% increase on the same period a year before. So far, this year has been the worst year on record—the worst year in history—for illegal channel crossings. The claims to smash the gangs lie in tatters.

**Dame Angela Eagle:** We missed the right hon. Gentleman in the Committee. Given the sophistication of the organised immigration crime threat to the country, will he explain why he plans on voting against the Bill tonight when it provides counter-terrorism style powers that the National Crime Agency and our security services have told us they want to be able to bring to bear on this serious question?

**Chris Philp:** I missed being in Committee as well, and I missed the prospect of spending hours and hours in the hon. Lady's company. Perhaps on some other occasion an opportunity will present itself.

The hon. Lady invites me to comment on a Third Reading matter, but since she asked the question, when we vote on a Bill at Third Reading—a yes or no vote—we are voting on it in its totality. While the counter-terror measures may have a very marginal benefit—it will be no more than marginal, as she should know—the Bill will also do some extremely damaging things that will make it a lot harder to control our borders. For example, clause 38 repeals pretty much the entirety of the Illegal Migration Act 2023.

**Jo White (Bassetlaw) (Lab):** Will the right hon. Member give way?

**Chris Philp:** I will answer the question first.

Among other things, the Illegal Migration Act requires the Government to remove people who arrive here illegally, and it says there is no path to citizenship for somebody who comes to this country illegally, which is a very sensible measure. This Bill repeals almost all of that. The Bill also removes from the statute book the legislative basis to implement a removals deterrent. One of the first things the Government did on coming into office was cancel the Rwanda scheme.

7 pm

**Oliver Ryan (Burnley) (Ind):** Will the right hon. Member give way?

**Chris Philp:** No, I will answer the question first.

The Government cancelled the Rwanda scheme before it even started. The first flight had been due to take off on 24 July. Everybody, including the National Crime Agency, has warned that without a removals deterrent we are not going to stop the boats. Law enforcement alone—important though it is—is not enough, and a border security commander with no powers is certainly not enough.

Experience from around the world shows that we need a removals deterrent. If people enter the UK illegally from France and are rapidly removed to somewhere else, be it Rwanda or elsewhere, others will not attempt the crossing because they know that removal will follow.

Australia tried something very similar about 10 years ago—it was called Operation Sovereign Borders. Australia had a bigger problem than we did—at that time there were 50,000 people a year crossing—and within the space of only a few months, the removals deterrent it used stopped the illegal maritime arrivals, as Australia called them, entirely. The number went to zero, and it saved lives in the process. Australia used an island called Nauru rather than Rwanda, but the principle is the same.

Home Office Ministers must by now be regretting their hastiness, because in the absence of any removals deterrent, the numbers have gone through the roof. As I said already, this year so far has been the worst in history. Without a removals deterrent, there is no hope of stopping the crossings.

Clause 37 of the Bill repeals the entirety of the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Act 2024, and amendment 32 seeks to remove clause 37. There will probably come a time—if not today, then in six months; and if not in six months, then in 12 months—when Labour Ministers will realise that their plans are not working, that the numbers are getting worse, and that without a removals deterrent they are not going to stop the boats. That is why this Bill and their policy is so misguided, and it is why the numbers this year have been the worst in history.

**Jo White:** I wonder whether the shadow Home Secretary could comment on the views of his colleague the hon. Member for Stockton West (Matt Vickers), who said during the Public Bill Committee that

"immigration is too high. Previous Governments have failed to solve it."—[*Official Report, Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Public Bill Committee*, 18 March 2025; c. 347.]

I wonder whether he could also comment on the remarks of the hon. Member for Weald of Kent (Katie Lam), who said in Committee:

"The system is broken. It has been broken for many decades, and that is now plain to see."—[*Official Report, Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Public Bill Committee*, 18 March 2025; c. 335.]

**Chris Philp:** I agree with both my colleagues, and that is why we have tabled amendments and new clauses to address this issue. I will come on to those in a moment.

It was a Labour Government that chose to cancel the removals deterrent before it started, and that is why the numbers are higher than they have ever been in history. It is a result of their choices.

**Iqbal Mohamed (Dewsbury and Batley) (Ind):** Talking of the Rwanda scheme, the previous Tory Government spent £700 million on a scheme that saw four volunteers removed. That figure included £290 million given to Rwanda for nothing in return and £134 million on IT systems that were never used. Can we get a refund?

**Chris Philp:** As I said already, the plan was never started. The first plane was due to take off on 24 July, but the Labour Government cancelled it within days of coming to office. The money would have been extremely well spent had the scheme started, because the deterrent effect would have stopped the boats, meaning that we would not have tens of thousands of people in hotels costing billions and billions.



While we are on the topic of hotels, let us look at how the Labour Government's pledge during the election to end the use of asylum hotels is going. The numbers in asylum hotels have gone up by 8,000 so far under this Labour Government. Speaking of removals deterrents, I was in Berlin four or five weeks ago talking to members of the CDU party, which is now in Government. The incoming German Government intend to implement a removals deterrent very similar in concept to the Rwanda scheme. So other Governments around the world have realised that they have to do this; it worked in Australia, and the new German Government will be doing something very similar. It is just our Government who are going headlong in the opposite direction.

**Mike Martin:** Will the shadow Secretary of State give way?

**Chris Philp:** I will make some progress.

Turning to the amendments on indefinite leave to remain, new clause 11 would limit eligibility for ILR to 10 years, and new clause 17 would set various conditions on ILR. New clause 17 essentially says that to get ILR after 10 years a person has to have made an economic contribution, and cannot be a burden on other taxpayers. Those strike me as very fair measures.

I notice that in the immigration announcement by the Prime Minister this morning, he made reference to 10 years for ILR, despite the fact that the Minister and her colleagues voted against that measure just a few weeks ago. I wonder what has magically changed their minds. If they are serious about such a measure, will they support new clause 11, which would implement what the Prime Minister announced this morning, and vote for it later today?

If I understand the Prime Minister's announcement correctly, he said that when someone reaches 10 years of residence, they automatically qualify for indefinite leave to remain under the Government's proposals. What we propose in new clause 17 is that there should be conditionality, even after 10 years. The person should be making some kind of contribution to the country in order to qualify for indefinite leave to remain. Will the Minister take the opportunity to agree with that approach and therefore support new clause 17?

I will turn now to the two new clauses that we intend to push to a vote this evening. First, new clause 18 would establish a binding cap on immigration numbers each year, to be voted on in Parliament. It would be democratically accountable and completely transparent. It will be up to Parliament to debate what the number should be, but I would argue that it should be a lot lower than any recent number we have seen, and indeed a lot lower than the recent forecasts from the Office for National Statistics and the Office for Budget Responsibility.

**Phil Brickell** (Bolton West) (Lab): Will the right hon. Member give way?

**Chris Philp:** Let me finish my point.

The critical point is that whatever one's views on the number, it would be Parliament that voted to cap migration every year. Never again would we see immigration rise to levels far higher than anyone intended. We would never again see unintended consequences, where visa rules are set up but numbers end up being much higher.

A good example of that is the health and social care visa, which was initially supposed to be for only a few thousand people but ended up being for hundreds of thousands. With a cap mechanism in place, that would never happen again.

I invite the Minister to tell me, when she responds, whether she would support a binding annual cap, decided by this Parliament. Will she support democratic accountability for that number, and if not, why on earth not? I can see no reason at all why this elected Parliament should not set the limit each year and why we should instead end up with numbers that many of us would think are far too high.

**Dr Scott Arthur** (Edinburgh South West) (Lab): The right hon. Gentleman is speaking with great confidence, as ever—and great volume, I have to say. He is very clear about having the cap, but it is less clear what level he believes it should be set at. He says that it should be lower than the current numbers, but from his experience and with his confidence, what level does he feel it should be set at? What would his first proposal be for the cap?

**Chris Philp:** How about the hon. Gentleman votes for the cap this evening, and then we can debate what level it should be set at? We are not going to debate the level of a cap that currently does not even exist. His own Front Benchers are trying to deny him and every Member of this House a voice on this issue. If Labour Members believe in Parliament deciding these issues and in democratic accountability, they will vote for new clause 18 and let Parliament decide what the cap should be.

**Dr Luke Evans:** The cap idea builds on work that the last Government wanted to bring forward in relation to refugees and asylum seekers. The last Government asked councils to work out how many they could accommodate. It seems remarkably practical to say that while we are a generous nation able to look after people in need, that comes with a capacity. The whole idea would be to implement a cap and for all councils in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to say what number they could hold, and for us to vote on it as a nation. Is that something my right hon. Friend would consider when it comes to dealing with asylum seekers?

**Chris Philp:** My hon. Friend makes a good point, and it is germane to the earlier discussion about people crossing the channel illegally. So long as we have 11,000 or 12,000 people crossing the channel a year—as I said, this is the worst year ever—it is very difficult to create safe and legal routes, because our capacity is completely taken up by people entering the country illegally.

If we can stop illegal migration by using the measures I suggested, and a removals deterrent in particular, that will create capacity for a limited safe and legal route for people who we—the Government and Parliament—judge to be deserving. We did that for the Syria crisis, where the UK resettlement scheme went to refugee camps on the Syrian borders, identified the most vulnerable refugees—often women and children—and brought them to the UK, instead of having people crossing the channel illegally and pushing their way to the front of the queue. That is exactly what a new, tougher approach on illegal immigration would facilitate.

**Chris Murray** (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab): Will the right hon. Member give way?

**Chris Philp:** I am going to make a bit of progress.

The second amendment that we intend to put to a vote, new clause 14, concerns the Human Rights Act. The Government, through the Home Secretary in her statement and the Minister in her remarks a few moments ago, talked about tinkering with article 8, but the truth is that that will not make any meaningful difference.

It is worth reminding ourselves of the history of this. The European convention on human rights is an international treaty that we entered into—indeed, we helped to draft it—in 1950. In 1998 the Blair Government passed the Human Rights Act, which essentially incorporated the ECHR into domestic law. So UK courts, when making any immigration decisions, or indeed any other decisions, can use their interpretation of the ECHR when interpreting legislation passed by this House and to prevent the Government from taking a particular executive action that might include removing or deporting someone.

The Act empowered UK judges to use the ECHR however they saw fit. The problem with the ECHR is that it is not like a piece of domestic legislation such as the Bill we are considering, which is detailed and has everything precisely defined. The ECHR is vaguely worded. For example, article 3 is on freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment and article 8 is on the right to a private and family life. There is nothing objectionable about those articles in themselves; the problem is that, over the years, judges have expanded their interpretation of them in ever more extraordinary ways, which defy common sense. Let me just give the House a couple of examples of such judgments.

A paedophile of Zimbabwean nationality quite rightly fell for deportation under section 32 of the UK Borders Act 2007. He should have been deported, but a UK judge—not a Strasbourg judge—said “No, no.” They said that, under their interpretation of the ECHR, that convicted paedophile might face “some hostility” if they were returned to Zimbabwe in a manner that breached their article 3 rights—not their article 8 rights—so they said that that convicted paedophile could stay here in the UK. What about the human rights of British children to be protected from paedophiles like that? What about the rights of British citizens to be protected from foreign offenders?

In another case, an Iraqi drug dealer rightly fell for deportation back to Iraq, but a judge found that he had become too westernised and therefore could not be returned to Iraq, his country of nationality and country of origin. Those are just two examples of thousands where domestic UK judges have stretched the definition of ECHR articles in a way that defies all common sense, and certainly goes far beyond anything the original framers of the ECHR had in mind when they signed up to it in 1950.

That is why, as a first step, we propose to repeal the Human Rights Act in relation to all immigration matters so that domestic UK judges would no longer be able to apply their own creative and expansive interpretations of the ECHR when making immigration decisions; instead, they would have regard solely and exclusively to domestic legislation that we have passed in this House. That strikes

me as a common-sense measure that would end the handing down of ridiculous judgments and enable the Government to ensure that people with no right to be here and dangerous foreign criminals could be removed. At the moment, judges are preventing that, using interpretations that completely defy common sense.

**Tom Hayes** (Bournemouth East) (Lab): The right hon. Member is clearly concerned about child protection. Did he read the testimony of the Children’s Commissioner about the children who made their way to our country and went missing in the system? They were victims of rape, sexual abuse and exploitation—some of the most horrendous things that can happen. Does he regret the role of his Government in facilitating such abuse?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Judith Cummins):** Order. I am sure the shadow Home Secretary is aware that time is running on.

**Chris Philp:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I will follow your injunction to wind up. Of course, we need to pay attention to the rights and protection of children, but having people smuggled across the English channel on boats does not in any way help with that.

If the Government are serious about getting back control of the immigration system and stopping illegal immigration, they will support our measures that would put a cap on migration and repeal the Human Rights Act in relation to immigration matters.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. We will start with an immediate four-minute time limit, with the exception of Front-Bench speeches and any maiden speeches.

7.15 pm

**Kim Johnson** (Liverpool Riverside) (Lab): The intention to repeal much of the Illegal Migration Act 2023 through this Bill, and the scrapping of the Rwanda scheme in particular, are extremely welcome. Years of brutal Tory policies that have criminalised, persecuted and scapegoated migrants and those seeking safety on our shores must be unravelled by this Labour Government, but we must go further, faster, and turn our back entirely on the politics of hate and division if we are to avoid repeats of the recent election results.

The riots that took place in my city last year, which targeted asylum accommodation and organisations and visibly black people and businesses, did not emerge from nowhere; they were the result of the myths and misinformation perpetuated by media and social media. For our Prime Minister to say today that unfettered immigration risks the UK becoming “an island of strangers” is deeply concerning. We cannot concede to the anti-migrant agenda promoted by those who thrive on division. It is simply dishonest to suggest that migration causes falling living standards. It is not migrants but political decisions that have hollowed out our communities, brought public services to their knees and allowed inequality to run rampant.

I am proud of my African and Irish heritage, and proud that my home, Liverpool, is a city of sanctuary. However, I am not proud of some of the language being used today, particularly the phrase, “island of strangers,”

which echoes the devices and cruel politics of our past. I have had constituents say that it is reminiscent of the “rivers of blood” speech. Mine is a port city, where people arrive from all over the globe, and our city is far better for it. These people are neighbours and friends. Liverpool has a world-leading higher education sector; thousands of international students want to train there. I have spoken to the vice-chancellors of Liverpool Hope University and Liverpool John Moores University, who are both concerned about the announcements made today.

The Labour Government must unequivocally make the case that the fight against racism and scapegoating is the same fight as that against low pay, poor housing and crumbling public services. We cannot defeat one without the other. While the Bill goes some way towards repairing the damage done by the previous Government, the overall approach remains punitive, particularly in clause 41, which will expand the Home Office’s power of detention retrospectively. The new criminal offences in parts 1 and 2 are deeply concerning, as is the retention of section 29 of the Illegal Migration Act, which removes protections for victims of modern slavery, and section 59 of that Act, which makes asylum and human rights claims from a list of countries inadmissible. Instead, we should focus on restoring the right to seek asylum in the UK, opening up safe routes, abandoning offshore processing, resolving the legal aid crisis, restoring the right to work, increasing support rates for asylum seekers and ending the use of immigration detention and harmful, destructive rhetoric—in short, we should focus on building a compassionate, rights-based and evidence-led approach to immigration and asylum.

I am proud to have added my name in support of new clause 1, which would enshrine in law a duty on the Home Office to publish quarterly statistics—detailed information—on deaths in the asylum system and on small boat channel crossings. We know that lives are being lost, but we do not know how many, which makes our system an outlier. I call on the Home Secretary to take on board those comments.

**Lisa Smart** (Hazel Grove) (LD): I rise to speak to new clause 21 and other new clauses in my name and those of other hon. Members. I put on record my particular thanks to my hon. Friends the Members for Woking (Mr Forster), and for Mid Dunbartonshire (Susan Murray), for the sterling shifts they put in on the Bill Committee.

We can all agree on the need to stop these perilous channel crossings, but under the Conservatives, safe and legal routes were dismantled, forcing vulnerable people into the hands of criminal gangs. Meanwhile, the asylum system was left to rot, and a staggering backlog grew year after year. Now we have thousands of people stuck in limbo, unable to work, rebuild their life or contribute to the UK economy, while taxpayers foot the bill for hotel accommodation in communities like mine.

**Nick Timothy** (West Suffolk) (Con): Does the hon. Lady accept that, despite what she has just said, under the last term of the Conservative Government, record numbers of people came here through resettlement schemes, which are safe and legal routes?

**Lisa Smart:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for intervening on me in debates on immigration; this is not the first time we have had a conversation of this nature. Ukrainians and Hongkongers came here under the previous Government, and that is to be welcomed—

**Nick Timothy:** And Afghans.

**Lisa Smart:** And Afghans; the hon. Gentleman makes a valid point. But there are countries in the world—Eritrea, Sudan and others—from which there are no safe and legal routes, and that is what new clause 21 is about.

The Home Secretary said in the White Paper published this morning that we need an immigration system that is “fair and effective”, and I strongly agree with her. The current system is neither, and I would have liked to have seen more in the Bill to change that. The Liberal Democrats believe in a common-sense immigration and asylum system that treats people with dignity. That means scrapping headline-chasing gimmicks, such as the Conservatives’ Rwanda plan, investing in swift decision making, and tackling the problem of criminal gangs at its root. We welcome some of the measures in the Bill to achieve those ends, but one of the most glaring injustices of our system is the ban on work for people seeking asylum. Right now, those who have been waiting months and months for a decision are barred from working to support themselves and their family, and from contributing to the economy. That is wasteful and demoralising; it is a lose-lose for everyone. New clause 21 in my name would change that. It proposes that if someone has been waiting for more than three months, they should be able to pay their fair share.

I know from those seeking asylum in my area that these are people who want to pay their way, contribute their skills and taxes and be part of the local community. We should not be stopping them. This is about common sense. Giving people the right to work will ease the pressure on public finances and give dignity back to those caught up in the system. It will help employers to fill vacancies at a time of work shortages, and allow asylum seekers to build the foundations of a new life. I urge colleagues across the House to support this new clause. It is the fair and practical thing to do, and it benefits us all.

Any Government serious about tackling the smuggling gangs—and I believe that this Government are—must cut off the gangs’ business model at the source. New clauses 22 and 36 would require the Government to set out new safe and legal routes, giving those fleeing persecution a proper alternative to dangerous crossings. The lack of these routes is a direct cause of the current crisis. We cannot keep saying that we want to stop the boats while slamming shut every door to safety for those who need it. There must certainly be greater scope for family reunion. No child should have to face the trauma of fleeing war or persecution alone, only to be denied proper contact with their loved ones. New clause 27 would widen family reunion rules, so that unaccompanied child refugees could be joined by their closest relatives.

**Edward Morello** (West Dorset) (LD): On the point about reuniting families, the shadow Minister seemed to be utterly bemused as to why so many migrants and illegal immigrants are male. I wonder whether my hon. Friend is aware of the Doctors without Borders report



[Edward Morello]

that showed that a large number of sub-Saharan African women were being injected with such high levels of contraceptive as to make them permanently infertile, because they were being raped so many times on their way here that they could not then work to pay off their debt, because they were pregnant. A fairer system would allow more women and children to come to the UK.

**Lisa Smart:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point. That is one of a number of utterly hideous stories that any of us could hear through any of the wonderful bodies and non-governmental organisations working with asylum seekers and refugees who are coming to this country. I put on record my thanks to my hon. Friend from the other place, Baroness Hamwee, who has done a huge amount of work on family reunification. This is about basic humanity. These children need safety and the support of their families to truly rebuild their life.

People smuggling of the type that this Government are trying to crack down on is an international problem, and we cannot solve it by going it alone. New clauses 23 to 26 will bolster our co-operation with Europol, encourage regular meetings with its leadership and establish joint taskforces, ensure more resources and provide a transparent system of reporting back to Parliament. To dismantle these smuggling networks, we need to work hand in glove with our European allies. This Bill could go further to strengthen those vital ties. The UK should be leading on this, not lagging behind.

The Liberal Democrats will keep fighting for a system that is fair, fast and humane, in which there are safe routes, families can be reunited, and those who come here are treated with dignity and can contribute to their new communities. Our new clauses offer practical steps to rebuilding an asylum system that works for all of us, and I urge the House to back them today for practical, humane and effective solutions.

**Tony Vaughan** (Folkestone and Hythe) (Lab): I refer the House to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests, and to the support provided to my office by the Refugee, Asylum and Migration Policy Project. I also chair the all-party parliamentary group on refugees. I thank the Ministers and members of the Public Bill Committee for their work on this Bill, which I continue to support as a whole.

My constituents in Folkestone and Hythe want to see Parliament give our law enforcement agencies the powers that they need to tackle these highly sophisticated, organised criminals. The small boats industry, which was allowed to run for years under the Conservatives, flourished in part because of the lack of powers for the National Crime Agency and the lack of co-ordination with our European partners. We absolutely do not need the performative politics of the Conservatives, including their new clause 14 to disapply the Human Rights Act from immigration functions.

We have just had the VE Day 80th anniversary, and it was that fundamentally important victory over tyranny in Europe that led to European democracies uniting to safeguard the rights of everyone living in Europe. When I met Ukrainian politicians at the Council of Europe in January this year, they were very clear that they need

human rights, the rule of law, democracy and unity of values in Europe, and they need us, the United Kingdom, to help them in their fight against an enemy that lacks those principles.

We are at a point in history when it is more important than ever to be clear about our values, what makes our society one to be proud of, and what we have in common with our neighbours and friends. Rightly, the Government will not disapply the Human Rights Act from one group today; maybe the Conservatives would want to deprive another group of it tomorrow. The Opposition's new clause, which I will oppose, is a reminder of this important dividing line in our politics.

I also want to comment on new clause 3 on safe and managed routes to asylum. I raised this issue in the Chamber on Second Reading. I fully accept that safe routes will not, on their own, stop small boat crossings; that is why we need the enforcement measures in this Bill. However, it is unsustainable to continue to make it virtually impossible to claim asylum lawfully, and then criminalise those who have made valid claims, but who have no lawful means of accessing the asylum system. I am grateful to the Minister for Migration and Citizenship, the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, my hon. Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Seema Malhotra), for agreeing to meet me next week to discuss this issue. A recent report by the APPG on refugees proposed a pilot system for those from specific conflict zones who have strong claims to be allowed to travel here, so that their claim could be fully examined on UK soil. That would build an evidence base on the issue, to inform future policy.

Finally, on British citizenship, though the Government are repealing the measure that bars citizenship for those arriving unlawfully, they have effectively reintroduced it via policy. I would ask them to rethink their approach. By the time a person in that situation applies for citizenship, they will have been granted asylum, having a well-founded claim. They will have been here for over five or six years; they will be of entirely good character; and they may be making a valid contribution to our society. However, because of their method of entry all those years ago, they could be prevented from accessing citizenship and integrating in this country. We need measures to promote, rather than hinder, the integration of those lawfully present here. Despite these points, I support the Bill, and thank the Government and Members for their work on it.

**Tim Farron** (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): I draw Members' attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests, including my work with the Refugee, Asylum and Migration Policy Project.

New clause 21 would help the Government to tackle poverty, prevent homelessness and demonstrate competence. Enabling asylum seekers to work would reduce the asylum support budget because they could instead support themselves. It would help cohesion between host communities and asylum seekers if asylum seekers were seen to be paying their way. It would also reduce the need to use hotels to house asylum seekers. Those seeking asylum should have the dignity of being able to work, and the taxpayer should get the benefit of the massively reduced costs that that would bring.

7.30 pm

I turn to new clauses 22 and 35 on safe routes and humanitarian visas. As things stand, desperate people choose unsafe journeys to uncertain destinations, delivered by those who care nothing for their welfare and who continue to cash in while people continue to die in terror in the Mediterranean and in the channel. For people escaping tragedy and terror in Eritrea, Sudan and elsewhere who have passed through the lawless horror that is Libya and have crossed the Mediterranean, the channel holds fewer fears than it would do for the likes of us, so we need an intervention that will change people's decisions. New clause 35 suggests a pilot visa scheme to authorise people who meet the criteria to travel to the United Kingdom safely in order to claim asylum. The proposal would mean a controlled, ordered, planned, dignified and humane process.

Talk of "strangers", "invasions" and "swarms of migrants" is despicable. The implication that not just refugees but diaspora communities here in the UK are somehow lesser citizens, not really British, is utterly shameful language and I condemn it. Politicians and commentators who use such language are guilty, frankly, of spending too much time online and too little time on the doorstep, in market squares, in churches, in communities and even in the pubs. The reason the Rwanda scheme was so unpopular was not—shockingly—because every Brit is a bleeding-heart liberal, but because the scheme was unfair and ineffective. The British people just want fairness and competence, so I urge the Government not to fall into the Tory trap of making ludicrous promises they cannot keep and I counsel other Opposition parties not to make ludicrous promises that they would not be able to keep either, because one day they may find themselves in power and face the wrath of an electorate for their failure to deliver.

In these discussions on migration, I have read and heard far too many references to the apparent threat to Britain's Christian heritage. Well, let me finish by saying this: the Bible does not tell us what our policy should be, but it definitely tells us what our posture and attitude should be. I am afraid that the Prime Minister made awful remarks today about an "island of strangers". Leviticus 19 rebukes him:

"the stranger who resides with you shall be to you like someone native-born among you; and you shall love him as yourself."

As the socially conservative American theologian, Russell Moore, says,

"Yes, Jesus was a refugee. And he is still in their camp. We should be too."

**Ms Stella Creasy** (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): I represent Walthamstow; once upon a time, the architect of the ECHR, Winston Churchill, was our constituency next-door neighbour. But let us be under no illusions and let us be frank, because people in this Chamber will write off my corner of London as some nirvana of good relations and say that we do not get issues or challenges with immigration: we have people in our community who judge people on the basis of their skin colour and who listen to the social media tropes; and we have people who seek division, who share that common aim and who will find somebody to blame rather than a solution for the challenges we face. Legislation needs to counter that, not facilitate it, because the reality is that across this country there are too many people with too

much money at the end of their money, and it is too easy to tell those people that immigrants are the reason why, rather than telling them the truth.

The people in my community are not woke; they are wise. They get that some are trying to tell them that immigrants are the problem, when the truth is that it is actually politicians who do not face up to the challenges we have. People in my community, like those across this country—whether they are old friends or strangers, incomers from Hackney or even further afield—can all find common ground if they do not get their bins collected, if they cannot park their cars or if they feel that their children are at risk. In this country, people find humanity in each other—in our common grumbles. That is what it means to be British: to have a moan about the reality of daily life. Those who want to divide us—who tell us the way forward is finding somebody to blame rather than a solution to the challenges—do nobody a service.

Let us talk about what we could do in this Bill to make things better. I support new clause 37, in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Clapham and Brixton Hill (Bell Ribeiro-Addy) from the other end of the Victoria line. We should not be making a profit from children who are seeking to be citizens who have the right to remain here.

I draw the Minister's attention to new clause 44, which I have tabled. We could learn from Australia and New Zealand—those bastions of progressive immigration policy—and introduce a worker's justice visa. We really need to help overseas workers in our communities who are at the behest of their sponsors. It is outrageous that there are people in this country whose future relies on somebody else's largesse, rather than their basic human rights. We can learn from Australia and New Zealand in introducing such a visa in order to correct the issue whereby somebody who is clearly a victim of modern slavery cannot stay in the country to pursue that claim, so the person making them a slave cannot be held to account.

**Chris Murray:** Does my hon. Friend agree that we have significant problems in this country as the system to address modern slavery has degraded? Will she join me in pushing for the national referral mechanism to be reviewed, as the Government promised, to tackle exactly what she is talking about?

**Ms Creasy:** Absolutely. Let me be clear: I recognise that my suggestion will not address all the issues with overseas domestic workers, but a worker's justice visa could be the start of ensuring that our immigration system is more functional.

I also draw the Minister's attention to new clause 45, which is about the "good character requirement". It makes no sense to those of us concerned about integration to say to somebody that they may stay in this country—that they have a well-founded fear of persecution—but that they will never be able to make a life here, that they will always end up paying more for their mortgage because they will not be able to get a proper income, and that they will never be able to get jobs as easily as others, so they might be more dependent on benefits. That is what happens when we start denying citizenship to people who have the right to be here.

[*Ms Creasy*]

The Refugee Council recognises that the requirement will affect 71,000 people because it is retrospective. It is little wonder that a court case is now in train. Bad policymaking in the face of social media tropes does nobody any favours, and I urge Ministers to look again at the provision. New clause 45 is simple: it is about us upholding our international obligations. It is about saying that if there was a safe route, absolutely it would be bad character not to use it, but I would love some Opposition Members, who are no longer in their place, to tell me what the safe route from Iran is, when many people on the boats are from Iran.

We have to get immigration policy right. I stand here as somebody who does not want open borders. I want a fair and just immigration service. I learned in my first year in this place from the former Home Secretary Jack Straw, who told me there were two divides: left and right, and those people who had to deal with the UK Border Agency and those who did not. The legislation before us does many welcome things, but it also does things that I fear we will come to regret in future—just as we will come to regret pandering to those who wish to divide us, rather than getting on and sorting out why we still have a cost of living crisis.

The Government will have my support if they want to do more to bring people together, not just by sorting out bin collections—that perennial challenge—but by investing in everybody, whether they were born here or have come here to make a contribution. After all, those of us with refugee heritage—whether we were Huguenots, Farages or Creasys—deserve and need better.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Judith Cummins):** We will now start a three-minute time limit.

**Mr Will Forster (Woking) (LD):** My constituency has a proud and long history of supporting those fleeing persecution. It was home to the Ockenden Venture, a trailblazing charity founded in the 1950s to help resettle refugees from post-war Europe, Vietnam and beyond. Humfrey Malins, the former Conservative MP for Woking even set up a national immigration service. That legacy reminds us of the best of British values. It is important, especially today, that we reflect on that and on what makes Britain great. However, this Bill falls far short of those values—it is not very great at all. I sat on the Public Bill Committee, where I tabled 15 amendments. Although I support the parts of the Bill that seek to tackle the cruel trade of people smuggling, I am deeply concerned that once again this Government are prioritising punitive-sounding headlines over practical solutions.

The Bill completely fails to lift the ban on asylum seekers working while they await a decision. That is why I support new clause 21. People spend years in limbo waiting for their application to be processed, with no right to contribute, no right to earn and no hope of building their lives. We heard in Committee that, as a result of the Conservative Government's mishandling of the situation, 19 people have waited 10 years or more for their claim to be settled. They are capable adults who should have been contributing to the economy. Letting people work is the right thing to do. That is why Australia lets people work straightaway, why Canada allows

refugees to apply for a work permit while their applications are being processed, and why the United States allows people seeking asylum to work after six months. Human beings are amazing creatures, capable of so much. It is waste for people essentially to be kept away from society. We want to support them; that is what new clause 21 would do, by giving people the right to work after three months. I urge colleagues to support it.

I will briefly address safe and legal routes. Ukraine has shown us that providing safe and legal routes takes away the people smuggling and illegal immigration. That is why I support Liberal Democrat new clauses 22 and 36, and SNP new clause 3. Those vital measures would tackle the root causes of dangerous crossings, and I hope that Members will support them.

Critically, we talked in Committee about Interpol. We are turning our backs; we are not asking Europe to help us with this problem—the Government refuse to do so. Instead of isolating ourselves, we should be leading the efforts to tackle people-smuggling gangs. We cannot solve the global crisis without resolving those main issues, but we can do better. Britain has a proud history, and this Bill should be a lot better.

**Olivia Blake (Sheffield Hallam) (Lab):** I refer the House to my declaration in the Register of Members' Financial Interests about the help that I receive from the Refugee, Asylum and Migration Policy Project. I am also the co-chair of the all-party parliamentary group on migration. I welcome the Government's action in the Bill to repeal parts of the previous Government's repeated gimmicks and nonsense legislation in the last Parliament. I will speak to new clauses 1, 2 and 37, all of which I have sponsored.

New clause 1 was tabled by my right hon. Friend—apologies, I should have said my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham East (Nadia Whittome); she is not right honourable, but she should be. The new clause would require the Home Office to publish quarterly statistics and information on deaths in the asylum system and small boat channel crossings. Under the last Government, a horrifying number of refugees and people seeking asylum died trying to cross the channel and in Home Office accommodation. In 2024, that number reached a record high. Despite daily and weekly reports on the number of people stopped or deported, we still do not have regular, clear and transparent reporting on those who have lost their lives in the system. That is incredibly important, not just morally but in order to address the evidence gap, so that we get policy right.

New clause 2 would require reports on the right to work. I heard what the Minister said about this being a discussion about time, but mental health and working rights are not separate issues. The majority of asylum seekers in the UK are unable to work and use their skills to support themselves and their families or even to save enough to rent a home. Instead, they are trapped, isolated, inactive and dependent on state support. There are countless compelling reasons why asylum seekers should be allowed to work like the rest of the population. Given the huge amount of support that idea has from the public and businesses, we should at least have the opportunity to scrutinise why the ban remains and the impact that it is having.



Finally, new clause 37, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Clapham and Brixton Hill (Bell Ribeiro-Addy), seeks to ensure that children born in the UK who have grown up here and know no other home are not priced out of citizenship simply because of their parents' immigration status at the time of their birth. Such young people are part of our communities, schools and the fabric of our future. They should not be denied their rights or go on to face barriers in education, housing, healthcare and across society. They are not "strangers"; they are our friends and neighbours.

Some have stoked racist divisions against migrants—a drum that the far right have continually banged since—and the whole House must oppose that rhetoric. Amid rising anti-refugee sentiment, including last year's shocking riots, it could not be more urgent or valuable to enable people to feel secure and contribute to their communities. I am aghast at some of the amendments tabled by Opposition parties, particularly new clause 41. I wonder how many ruined lives those Members will consider too many. It is shameful to see the victimisation of people who have come here to find safety.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Judith Cummins):** I call Sarah Pochin to make her maiden speech.

7.45 pm

**Sarah Pochin (Runcorn and Helsby) (Reform):** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I start by saying how delighted I am that my colleagues have dragged themselves out of the pub to join me for my maiden speech? I am so proud to be in this place; I feel so privileged to be here. I hope that I will make a good contribution to the business of this place, with my background of 20 years of public service as a magistrate and a borough councillor.

I thank all the voters of Runcorn and Helsby who put their trust in me. It certainly was an historic night—one that I will never forget. We had a recount at about 3 o'clock in the morning, and the result finally came through at about 6 o'clock—and there were six votes in it, so I think six is probably my lucky number from now on. We certainly put Runcorn and Helsby on the map. It is the closest ever parliamentary by-election result. There was lots of drama and it made for some great headlines the next day—well, great headlines for us, anyway.

I thank and pay tribute to my predecessor, Mike Amesbury. In 2020 he won a ballot to introduce a Bill of his choice. He chose to focus on the cost of living crisis by limiting the cost of school uniforms. His Bill gathered cross-party support and became the Education (Guidance about Cost of School Uniforms) Act 2021.

I, too, will focus on the cost of living. During the campaign, it was raised with me endlessly on the doorstep by voters who feel let down by this Government—voters who have lost their winter fuel allowance, who have had their disability benefit slashed or who have seen their energy costs go through the roof when they were promised that their bills would go down.

It is very important that I make my maiden speech today. There were a few raised eyebrows, as I have been here less than a week, but the Bill is important because it is so relevant to what I believe in. There are over 900 illegal immigrants—that we know about—living in Runcorn. Some 400 of them are housed in an asylum hotel—the Daresbury Park hotel, which was, incidentally,

to be shut down by the Government during the election campaign, but is, of course, still open—while the remaining 500 or so are housed in houses of multiple occupancy in the community. The recent Government announcement encouraging private landlords to give up their properties to house illegal immigrants in order to get a five-year guarantee of rent and all the property maintenance paid for will only make that situation worse. We will end up with British tenants being evicted, rents being forced up and the already limited housing supply getting worse.

The problem for communities in places such as Runcorn is that those houses of multiple occupancy often have 15 to 20 young men in them. Families living nearby have to put up with antisocial behaviour through the night, drug dealing, people coming and going, and noise. I saw the CCTV throughout the campaign; I have heard the stories. People are frightened to go out. They will certainly not let their children play out on the pavements when there are such houses on their street. We know that these HMOs are breeding grounds for organised crime gangs, whether they are involved in drugs or people trafficking, or whether they are grooming gangs—something that was recently downplayed by the Leader of the House. Tackling sexual violence against women and the abuse of women and promoting the safety of women and children are things I will champion, not deny.

I hope that my background in the justice system will give substance to my contributions on subjects that are close to my heart, such as the current state of our prisons and the daily threat that our brave prison officers—men and women—face at work. Over the last couple of days, there was yet another example of what they are facing in the news. I will also be a strong voice against the prosecutions of our Northern Ireland veterans, who were so brave on our behalf in the troubles. I will be brave, as they were for us, and I will stand up for what is right and fair.

My constituency was formed in the boundary changes last year by five other constituencies lending areas to its geography. Not only is it new; it is diverse. It is home to some of the wealthiest and to some of the poorest. It is home to a beautiful and vibrant market town, Frodsham, and to Runcorn old town, which is in decline and in desperate need of investment. It has beautiful, leafy villages and housing estates battling drug crime and antisocial behaviour. I have lots of wonderful businesses in the constituency, ranging from the chemical industry and the farming industry right through to the science park.

There are many challenges ahead and the problems I am going to take on, on behalf of my constituents, include the drastic shortage of housing and the desperate need for investment and regeneration in the old town. The standard of education in the five secondary schools is at best average and at worst way below average. Somebody needs to highlight these issues. We have an incinerator that churns out toxic waste, and an investigation into the health implications is ongoing. And then we have the white elephant that is the net zero project, with carbon capture and storage, and an extensive solar panel farm right across the middle of the constituency. I will challenge the people who have put those policies in place; I will speak for the people who have for so long lacked the representation they deserve. This constituency has huge potential; it has hard-working people who just want fairness and I will be their voice.

[Sarah Pochin]

To conclude, I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Clacton (Nigel Farage) for his vision, his commitment and his conviction, which have brought a new voice to this Chamber. I will stand up for what is right, and I say to all my colleagues in this House that they will find me fair, principled and here to serve my constituents. Madam Deputy Speaker, I have been asked many times over the last 10 days whether I am overwhelmed by recent events and by being in this place. I am not overwhelmed; I am deeply respectful of this place, I am humbled by this place, but I am ready for this place.

**Chris Murray** (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab): It is an honour to follow that eloquent and impassioned maiden speech by our new colleague, the hon. Member for Runcorn and Helsby (Sarah Pochin). I can tell that we will be hearing a lot more from her in this House, and while I am sure that her colleagues are pleased to have their number back up to five, I think we can all understand that her lucky number is six.

I draw the House's attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests and the support provided to my office by the Refugee, Asylum and Migration Policy Project. I would like to make a couple of points about the amendments, drawing on the evidence we heard in Committee.

The purpose of this legislation is to stop the small boat crossings in the channel. They are too dangerous and too many vulnerable people die in the attempt. They represent a lack of grip on the immigration system, because it should be the Government who decide who comes into this country, not people smugglers. The previous approach manifestly failed. That is because the Rwanda scheme meant we could never reduce demand enough. As Dr Walsh from the Migration Observatory told us in our evidence sessions, demand for crossing the channel is essentially inelastic and we will never get it down enough. Deterrence alone therefore will not work. If we want proof, we should consider that of all the asylum seekers in the system, those who went to Rwanda represent one 4,000th of 1%. Rather than tackle demand, we should tackle supply. We need to make it harder to get in boats and to organise crossings, and we need to disrupt the supply chain that drives this multimillion-pound industry and seize the phones of those making the crossing.

On new clause 3 on safe routes, let us be clear that there is absolutely a wider case to be made for safe routes and there is a national obligation to help where we can, but let us also be clear that safe routes already exist at significant scale. Some 500,000 people sought sanctuary in the UK through them over the last few years. We must be clear, too, that given the vast numbers of people in the asylum system just now, no one can argue that Britain does not have enough refugees. Most importantly, safe routes fall into the same logical trap as the Rwanda scheme, in that they aim to reduce demand rather than to tackle supply. Rwanda said, "Don't come because there's a tiny chance you'll be sent to Rwanda instead." Safe routes say, "Don't come because there's a tiny chance you can come through safe routes instead."

The purpose of the Bill is to reduce channel crossings. There are good arguments for safe routes on many levels, but having worked on migration policy for 15 years

before coming here, I know we have to recognise that they will not play a role in reducing this cross-channel travel.

**Carla Denyer** (Bristol Central) (Green): The Government's repeal of the vile and illegal Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Act 2024 and large parts of the Illegal Migration Act 2023 are welcome, but they must do more to repeal the underlying legal framework, which continues to undermine the UK's ability to uphold the rule of law and human rights. The Illegal Migration Act simply does not belong on the statute book, and my preference would be to scrap the lot of it. My amendment 35 at least seeks to restore judicial oversight of decisions about detention. The Immigration Law Practitioners' Association points out that without my amendment 35, a software engineer who overstayed her visa could be detained for longer than a suspected terrorist, and with far less judicial oversight.

Turning to my new clause 38, I am disappointed that the Government have not used the Bill to repeal the Nationality and Borders Act 2022, when Labour rightly opposed that legislation in its entirety on its Second Reading. That Act marked the UK's move away from upholding the 1951 refugee convention and instead denies the right to territorial asylum, yet this Labour Government have chosen to leave the Act on the statute book, untouched by this Bill. My new clause 38 focuses on undoing the provisions that penalise and criminalise people who make unsafe journeys to the UK to seek sanctuary. It scraps the parts that create an unfair two-tier asylum system with differential treatment for different groups of people—a proposal so unworkable that the right hon. Member for Newark (Robert Jenrick) had to pause it when in government. Crucially, it scraps the law that criminalises people arriving in the UK without permission or the right paperwork with a penalty of up to four years in prison. This law is clearly contrary to article 31.1 of the 1951 refugee convention, which provides immunity from penalties in recognition of the fact that refugees are often compelled to arrive without appropriate documents in order to access their human rights under that convention. Lastly, my new clause 38 would scrap sections 30 to 38 of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022, which sought to—I will put it charitably—poorly reinterpret the refugee convention.

I wish to highlight the fact that the Government are leaving on the statute book measures that unjustly penalise and criminalise refugees for arriving irregularly when there are no safe and managed routes to travel here to claim asylum for the vast majority of people who might need and be eligible to do so. In the words of Warsan Shire:

"no one puts their children in a boat  
unless the water is safer than the land".

This Government are clearly focused on appearing tough on immigration, and to do so they have brought in some of the previous Government's cruel policies and introduced some of their own—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Judith Cummins):** Order. I call Bell Ribeiro-Addy.

8 pm

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy** (Clapham and Brixton Hill) (Lab): I want to speak in

support of new clause 37, which stands in my name, but I will begin by addressing the political theatre that often surrounds immigration. Politicians constantly speak about immigration, spinning fear and suspicion, and then conveniently report back that immigration is a top concern for voters, when it is not. Recent polls show clearly that immigration does not feature in the top concerns among those who were considering voting Labour but did not. Instead, people are talking about tangible issues, such as the winter fuel allowance, the rising cost of living and the desperate need to fund our public services. Rather than dealing with those issues, we choose to stoke division with sentiments about “strangers”.

I want to be crystal clear: immigration is not the crisis. What we are facing is the crisis in how we treat people, value rights and understand our responsibilities to one another. The focus seems always to be on small boat crossings, but irregular migration—people arriving by boats—accounts for just a fraction of the nearly 1 million people who came to this country last year. I do not call them “illegal migrants” as that term is morally degrading and asylum seekers have the right under international law to seek refuge. If we want to resolve these issues, we need to start with safe and legal routes.

Regular migration has soared since 2021, under the Tories and post Brexit, because the Government’s own policies created this situation. The points-based immigration system was always designed to encourage people to come here—and they have. So the issue is not migration itself, but the exploitative business model behind it. Policies around immigration are never about fairness but always seem to come back to profit. That same logic—profits over people—governs our asylum system. The companies contracted to run immigration detention—household names such as Serco, Mitie and Mears—are all profiteering and make millions off the backs of vulnerable people. We have seen reports of detainees being abused and being kept in unsanitary conditions, yet those companies continue to get millions of pounds in contracts.

Speaking of protection, let me turn to children, specifically children born here in the UK or who have lived here since they were young, who have called no other place home, yet are still denied British citizenship. I have tabled new clause 37 to address that. These children are not migrants, but they are treated like second-class citizens, often not knowing they are not officially citizens until they apply to university or for a job. Does that sound familiar? They suddenly find themselves locked out of everything through no fault of their own. It is a quiet scandal, just like the Windrush scandal—they have lived here their whole lives, only to be told that they have no right to be here.

We promised “Never again” and said that we would learn lessons, but in 2025 we are charging British-born children £1,214 to register as citizens, when we know the administrative cost is only £372. We are charging those children for something that is their right. Up to 215,000 children are legally entitled to citizenship but they are undocumented because of the exploitative fee. The fee waiver is not working, so we are calling for fairness. At the very least, if a child is entitled to citizenship, they should be able to claim it without

being priced out. No child should be punished for where their parents were born or how much money they have.

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and Kinross-shire) (SNP): I rise to speak to the new clauses and amendments in my name.

I was going to congratulate the hon. Member for Runcorn and Helsby (Sarah Pochin) on her maiden speech, but she seems to have joined her colleagues in the bar. I was going to tell her that she had achieved something quite notable: she has been able to force this Government to bring forward this immigration White Paper, as both the main parties try to outdo and triangulate the hon. Members from Reform, who are no longer in their places. May I just say to hon. Members on the Conservative and Labour Benches that they are more or less wasting my time: why would voters go for one of the diet versions when they could have the full-fat version in the hon. Member for Clacton (Nigel Farage)?

I have spoken at every stage of this Bill, including four interminable weeks and countless hours on the Public Bill Committee—[*Interruption.*] I wish I could say otherwise. Of course, for the Minister it was a positive experience, but for me it was nothing other than thoroughly frustrating, depressing and dispiriting. I have been appalled at the emerging casual and callous way that the most wretched people in the world are now portrayed and demonised, and I fear what this House now has in store for them. I despair at the lack of empathy and humanity that has been shown to some of the most desperate people in the world. I abhor the perception that essential human rights are considered a hinderance, to be dispensed with in the pursuit of even more cruelty and disregard. I think the House forgets that these are real people fleeing conflict, oppression and unimaginable horror.

I rise to speak in support of my new clause 3, on safe routes, because I believe that is the only way we should deal with those people. What we have done just now is create a monopoly and exclusive rights for the gangs that operate the Channel crossings. There is no other way for asylum seekers to assert their asylum rights. When they have the opportunity to assert those rights, most of them have them granted, which makes a nonsense of the fact that asylum seekers are being termed “illegal immigrants.” Instead of smashing the gangs, the Government are actually giving them new opportunities and making their business model even more lucrative.

I pay tribute to all the agencies and support organisations that helped me with these amendments and the amendments I tabled in Committee. Those groups are now in some sort of legal jeopardy because of some of the clauses in the Bill. Their opportunities to support the most desperate people in the world through advocacy and looking after their rights are now at risk because of some of the measures in the Bill. We are heading towards a particularly dark place in some of the considerations on these issues.

I am impressed by some of the Labour speakers when they talk about immigration and say that we have to be very careful how we handle this debate as we go forward, but I am really feared just now. I listened to what the Prime Minister said this morning and was horrified by some of the language he conjured up, which we thought we had lost decades ago. This is the type of territory that we venture into with very great sensitivity, and I



[Pete Wishart]

am afraid that the Prime Minister lost that this afternoon. I hope that we have the opportunity to press these new clauses and amendments, secure the safe routes and ensure that we do everything we can for asylum seekers.

**Jo White:** Thank you for calling me, Madam Deputy Speaker.

“People started dying. People were screaming. It is very painful when someone is dying inside the water. The way they die—they cannot breathe...it is very difficult. I never thought I would experience such a thing... It is a harrowing experience I do not want to remember. I was holding on to what remained of the boat and people were screaming. It is something I will not forget.”

This is the witness testimony of Mohammed Omar when he spoke at the Cranston inquiry, which is investigating the UK’s worst small boat disaster. On 27 November 2021, it is believed that 31 people lost their lives. Mohammed said that he was told that 33 people would be aboard the dinghy, but more were added, including children.

Those gang members whose sole focus is on the billions of pounds that their horrific trade generates, who overload boats that are not fit to go into the ocean, who treat human life as having no value, willing to put lives at risk for huge profits must experience the full force of the law. This Bill gives Border Command the powers to pursue, arrest and prosecute those people. Breaking and destroying the gangs is critical to bringing an end to the small boat crossings. Mohammed’s witness evidence underlines how important it is to achieve that.

The Bill not only gives the power and authority to work with our international partners to track down and break up the gangs, with the powers to seize and interrogate mobile phones and laptops to collect data and evidence, but the new amendment will introduce enhanced illegal working checks, putting a stop to those delivery drivers bringing meals or parcels to our doorsteps who cannot speak a word of English, potentially using IDs that have been borrowed or purchased from legitimate employees.

I welcome the raids on the businesses, such as the nail bars, barbers and restaurants employing illegal workers, potentially in slave labour conditions. In January there were 131 raids in my area of the midlands, with 106 arrests. The amendment will mean that those arrested will now face fines of up to £60,000 per worker and prison sentences of up to five years. The French have said that people want to come to the UK because it is all too easy to be swept into the black economy and work illegally. The heavy disincentives of fines and prison sentences have the power to put a brake on the demand for the illegal trafficking of people.

I welcome this Bill. As I said in February,

“crack on with the job, give us a running commentary of every success, publicise the return flights and the jailing of criminals, clear up the Conservatives’ mess, secure our borders, close down the use of hotels and stop the small boats.”—[*Official Report*, 10 February 2025; Vol. 762, c. 124.]

Today is the next step forward.

**Esther McVey** (Tatton) (Con): I rise to speak in support of new clause 14. This Government came into power on the promise to “smash the gangs” and cut immigration numbers—what an empty, cynical slogan that turned out to be. The exact opposite happened:

the gangs were emboldened and the Government lost control of illegal immigration, which is up 31% since the election and 35% in this year.

After the failure to smash the gangs and the poor showing at the recent elections, the Government’s response is another gimmick: the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill. It is hollow, its five core principles are a word salad of empty phrases and it is a rehash of old ideas and contradictions. It lacks a deterrent. In fact, the biggest mistake that this Prime Minister has made, in a strong field of contenders, was cancelling the Rwanda scheme. Even the National Crime Agency described that as a deterrent, and it was already starting to work; we saw those coming in by dinghy from France starting to head to Ireland and other countries. Without Rwanda or another third country, there is no way to remove any illegal immigrants who destroy their documents as they come to this country.

As a result of cancelling that deterrent, we have seen illegal migration soar. Some of the levels of illegal immigration will come down, but that will be as a result of what the former Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Northallerton (Rishi Sunak), did with his restrictions to stop dependants entering the country and the bilateral deals he made, such as the one with Albania to deport criminals. This Government say that they will now create a new legal framework for immigration judges to prevent illegal migrants and foreign criminals avoiding deportation by exploiting article 8 of the ECHR. That will never happen under the human rights lawyer who leads the Labour party, or a Labour party that champions the ECHR and the Human Rights Act.

The reality is that until this Government get ahead of the curve, get a spine, take the UK out of the ECHR, repeal the Human Rights Act—a law that Labour introduced to cement the ECHR in British law—reinstate the Rwanda scheme and radically clamp down on housing and benefits, I am afraid that immigrants will continue to come to the UK. The British people expect security and prosperity, not platitudes and broken promises. We in this House must act accordingly and vote in favour of new clause 14, which would disapply the Human Rights Act.

**Nadia Whittome** (Nottingham East) (Lab): Vulnerable people are dying in the channel and in our asylum system in record, horrifying numbers. Today, yet another person tragically died trying to reach our shores. The exact figures are murky, but from what we know, last year was the deadliest year ever for people seeking asylum in the UK. The UN estimates that 82 people, including at least 14 children, lost their lives in the channel, but French frontline charities believe the fatality rate to be significantly higher. Meanwhile, freedom of information requests reveal that 51 people died in asylum accommodation, and among them were a 15-year-old boy and two babies.

People are drowning while trying to reach safety. Once they arrive, they are dying by suicide, from infectious diseases and from unknown causes in poverty, in low-quality accommodation or on the streets, like the teenage victim of modern slavery who took his own life while terrified of deportation, the father of one who died of diphtheria after being held in a Government processing centre, or the seven-year-old girl who was crushed to death on an

overcrowded boat. In several cases of deaths in asylum accommodation, there have been alleged lapses of safeguarding codes. These deaths are utterly unacceptable and often preventable, yet the Home Office keeps no official record. As such, we do not know how many lives are being lost.

The Government rightly want to reduce deaths in the channel, and the starting point must be to know the numbers. My new clause 1, which is supported by 24 MPs, is a call for truth and transparency. It would mandate that the Home Office records and reports statistics and information on the deaths of people in our asylum system who are meant to be in its care and people at our borders. It would provide opportunities for scrutiny and accountability, because no matter where they come from or how they got here, people deserve dignity. We must not allow them to die in silence, ignored and uncared for, so I urge the Government to act. We need a new approach to refugees and asylum. We need to stand up to Conservative Members scapegoating desperate people for the problems that our communities are experiencing after 14 years of Conservative austerity, instead of parroting them.

8.15 pm

I am glad that this Bill repeals the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Act 2024 and much of the Illegal Migration Act 2023, but we need to reverse all the dehumanising policies implemented by the last Government, not just the ones covered by this Bill. We need to expand safe and legal routes to the UK, including resettlement, family reunion and piloting a refugee visa to travel, as proposed in a report by the Public and Commercial Services Union and Care4Calais, the launch of which I was privileged to host here in Parliament.

No longer must people seeking asylum fall through the cracks of a system that does not provide them with the care and safety that they deserve. Let us ensure that every person who loses their life is counted, remembered and mourned and that we do everything in our power to prevent anyone else from dying because of this inhumane system.

**Sir Christopher Chope:** May I speak briefly to new clause 39, in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh)? He is unfortunately not able to present this argument himself, because he is attending a meeting of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and he asked if I would speak briefly in support of his new clause. I hope that I can encourage the Minister to expand a bit on whether the Government think that this is rather a good way of ensuring that the worst abuses in the courts system are avoided.

Essentially, my right hon. Friend's new clause would give precedence to the non-refoulement arrangements in the refugee convention and in the UN convention against torture, but it would not allow the European convention on human rights and the interpretation of the European Court of Human Rights to extend beyond those provisions. That is very important, because fundamental to English law is the principle of equity. If people come here with clean hands and seek justice and our support, we should be keen to encourage that, but if people come here and abuse our hospitality or have

already committed offences, we should get rid of them quickly. That is not very easy at the moment, because of how the courts interpret the European convention on human rights.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Esther McVey) referred to new clause 14. The problem I have with it is that it does not go far enough. It talks about getting rid of or disapplying the Human Rights Act, but of only disapplying the interim arrangements of the European Court of Human Rights. We need to go much further than that, and I am slightly reluctant to be enthusiastic about the new clause.

One provision that I am very enthusiastic about, and which I am disappointed that the official Opposition will not call a Division on, is new clause 15. The shadow Home Secretary's explanatory statement says:

"This new clause would prevent a foreign national who is convicted of any offence from remaining in the UK, as well as anyone who has been charged with"—

**Steve Barclay** (North East Cambridgeshire) (Con): Does my hon. Friend recognise that there is an issue of democracy here? Successive Governments and Ministers have said that they want to toughen up the regime, but that is undermined by activist judges. That is a further reason to support the new clauses that he mentions.

**Sir Christopher Chope:** I agree with my right hon. Friend. If one wants a current example, there was a headline in *The Daily Telegraph* on 1 May that read, "Migrant spared prison after punching female officer". [*Interruption.*] This was a fact—it was a court case in Poole in Dorset, not far from my constituency. A small-boat migrant who repeatedly punched two female police officers was spared jail. That is completely laughable, and on that I have the support of David Sidwick, Dorset's excellent police and crime commissioner, who is trying to take this issue further. When people who have come here seeking our help and assistance abuse the system, and we indulge their presence, that brings the whole system into disrepute. I hope that the Minister will get much tougher on this issue, but sadly, the Bill seems to weaken the offence regime under immigration law, rather than strengthening it, as we should.

**Phil Brickell:** I am pleased to speak in support of the Bill, because for far too long, criminal smuggling gangs have operated with virtual impunity, ruthlessly exploiting men, women and children and putting their lives at risk for profit. That is why I am encouraged to see a Government being honest with me and my constituents. No more gimmicks. No more wasting £700 million on unworkable and fantastical Rwanda schemes. They are just giving our law enforcement bodies the tools and resourcing that they need to intervene earlier and act faster.

The Bill contains new offences targeting those who supply or handle boat parts used in crossings, with up to 14 years behind bars for those found guilty. It allows for the seizing of electronic devices, such as phones and laptops, to help gather evidence and disrupt operations, and creates a new interim serious crime prevention order, which allows immediate restrictions on travel, communications and finances, so that we can stop criminals in their tracks before they escalate their activity. I am particularly pleased about the £150 million going into the new Border Security Command, and further

[*Phil Brickell*]

National Crime Agency officers working across Europe—including, importantly, through Europol. It is not rocket science, but the National Crime Agency has said that these measures will give it what it needs to disrupt smuggling networks and dismantle their business model.

Just as importantly, the Bill will put a stop to the Conservative party's attempts to make us turn our back on the world. The fantastic trade deals that we concluded just last week with India and the US are vital recognition that putting Britain back on the global stage and tackling the gangs that are smuggling people into our country can go hand in hand. Crime does not respect borders, so it is quite right that we are prioritising strong international partners. I particularly welcome the new joint action plan with Germany and, through the Calais Group and the G7, the alignment of efforts across Europe to shut down smuggling groups, seize key equipment and bring gang leaders to justice.

New clauses 6 and 7 set reasonable timelines for first-tier tribunal appeal determinations. Those are important clarifications, given the damage done to trust in our immigration system by interminable proceedings and delays. Those new clauses will cut the asylum backlog and drastically save money for taxpayers. New clause 8 will, I hope, improve our approach to persons convicted of serious sexual offences, which my constituents have grave concerns about. It is right that foreign nationals who commit sex offences should not be able to claim refugee status in the UK.

The UK is a welcoming and open nation, and we need a sensible, fair and caring immigration system to support our key industries. I am pleased that the Government are making moves towards that, and I will be pleased to support the Bill tonight.

**Nick Timothy:** I want to go through the differences between what the Government told the newspapers, and the reality of this Bill and the amendments that have been tabled. Ministers said that they would change indefinite leave to remain, but the White Paper proposal today is weak, and the Home Secretary admitted that it may not apply to immigrants who are already here. It is therefore no wonder that the Government refuse to support new clause 11, which would do the job for them.

The visa crackdown on the nationalities blamed for asylum costs—Pakistanis, Nigerians and Sri Lankans, we were told—and the promise to kick out all foreign criminals were both headlines, but no credible policy on those issues was presented to us today. The Government promised action against the tens of thousands of people, or maybe more, who are working illegally for delivery companies as a result of abusing substitution clauses. It is welcome that substitution clauses are being added to sections 15 to 24 of the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006, but what will be the operational reality? There are perhaps 1 million illegal immigrants in Britain, but only 366 fines were imposed for illegal working in the last quarter of last year. At least 100,000 people are trading identities online to work as substitutes.

Before the local elections, the headlines said, "Foreign sex offenders will be banned from claiming asylum in the UK". I suppose that is what Government new clause 8 does, but what use is that new clause if Ministers

do not give themselves legal powers to deport foreign sex offenders? The Government are whipping their MPs to vote against new clause 14, which disappplies the Human Rights Act and interim measures issued by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

I am afraid that today is just another stage in the cycle of political deceit. I should say that in the past, my party has been as culpable as the Labour party—we must be honest about that. Immigration policy must be about not just who comes here, but who we decide must leave. People who are here on time-limited visas must be told to go; people who refuse to accept our culture and way of life must leave; and people who have broken the law, and those who take out more than they put in must be thrown out. We will need to ensure vast numbers of removals and deportations in the years ahead, and we need to remove the legal impediments in domestic law, and in international conventions drafted in another age, that stop us securing the border and saving our country.

We must also be tough about who we allow to come here. We cannot afford to import more of the world's hatreds, nor to allow foreign conflicts to be fought out on our streets. We must accept that not every migrant is the same, and not every culture is equal; one in 50 Albanians in Britain is in jail, one in three Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage adults is economically inactive, and 72% of Somalis live in social housing. We are a million miles away from doing what is necessary, and despite the rhetoric, this Bill takes us even further backwards. Look past the words, and this country will see what this Government are doing.

**Jo Platt** (Leigh and Atherton) (Lab/Co-op): I rise to speak in support of the Bill and the Government's new clauses, as this issue matters deeply. When we talk about immigration and border control, we are not just talking about policies made in Westminster, but about real-life consequences for those seeking refuge. This Bill is a major step forward in building an immigration system that is both firm and fair, both robust and compassionate. Since the general election, this Government have already taken bold action. Over 24,000 people with no legal right to remain have been processed—the most in years. In just one month, enforcement teams raided over 800 businesses, arresting more than 600 people for allowing illegal working practices—a 73% increase on the same period last year.

However, this is not just about numbers; it is about confronting a criminal underworld that preys on human suffering. People-smuggling gangs are profiting from desperation. They are putting lives at risk in the channel and undermining the values of fairness and order that we all believe in. With this Bill, and with new clauses 6 to 8, we can now go even further. We are introducing real criminal penalties for those who supply boat parts—up to 14 years in prison. We are making it a crime to endanger life at sea during illegal crossings, modernising how we process asylum claims by using artificial intelligence to speed up decisions, banning sex offenders from ever claiming refugee status in this country, and putting tough restrictions on bogus immigration lawyers.

Let me be clear: being tough does not mean being cruel. True compassion means creating a system that works for everyone. That includes the people who are coming here, because there is nothing humane about placing vulnerable people from around the world in the



most deprived communities in the country, with poor housing, overstretched services, and no opportunity to rebuild their lives.

In Leigh, we have seen that at first hand. This does not relate to the Bill, but I need to mention it: Serco has acquired many properties in my constituency and in the Greater Manchester area generally. Our town has lost its industry. We have fewer job opportunities and a housing crisis of our own, and yet we are being asked to carry a disproportionate burden simply because our homes are cheaper. That is not compassion; it is neglect. People are being housed in failing conditions and no one benefits—not the asylum seekers and not our local residents.

This Government are delivering real results—results that we are seeing for the first time. This is what we need to see. We need to see a fairer system that protects lives, upholds the law and restores order without losing sight of basic human dignity.

**Zöe Franklin** (Guildford) (LD): I should start by mentioning that I am the vice-chair of the all-party parliamentary group on refugees.

I rise to speak in favour of new clause 21, which would allow asylum seekers the right to work after three months of waiting for a decision. I back this measure for three key reasons: common sense, economic rationale and human dignity. In my constituency, I work closely with a charity called Big Leaf, an outstanding organisation that supports more than 200 displaced young people. Through it, I met Mohi—a young woman who, on arriving in the UK, lived in a hotel for 20 consecutive months. Her husband had nursing experience, and Mohi herself dreamed of becoming a nurse. She told me, “I want to give back to the country that has given me safety. We are here to be useful. We don’t want to rely on benefits. We just want a normal life.” Big Leaf, her peers, her mentors, her colleagues and her employers all recognised what Mohi could become. Everyone saw her potential, except the system. Today she works as a healthcare assistant, and this September she is excited about beginning training at the University of Surrey to become a nurse.

8.30 pm

New clause 21 would give Mohi and so many like her a chance to contribute, grow and begin their lives in this country with dignity. Britain lags behind our international friends. Countries like Canada and Sweden allow asylum seeker to work within weeks. The Refugee Council and the Lift the Ban coalition estimate that the change proposed in new clause 21 could generate over £100 million a year through tax revenue and savings. Given that this is a country that prides itself on being sensible, I have to question why, for 14 years, the Conservative Government refused to see sense on this issue. We have the opportunity to bring change, improve lives, and unlock so much potential, both human and economic.

**Luke Taylor:** My hon. Friend has given three fantastic reasons that my hon. Friend has given for lifting the ban, but such a move is also popular with the public: 80% of people polled backed the right for asylum seekers to work. Moreover, 45% of asylum seekers would be classified as critical workers. Does my hon. Friend agree that there are, in fact, four fantastic reasons why the Government should lift the ban?

**Zöe Franklin:** I absolutely agree. I urge colleagues on both sides of the House to vote for new 21 for all four reasons that, between us, my hon. Friend and I have stated.

**Tom Hayes:** So late in the day, with so much said, I am going to take a direction that differs from that taken by some of my colleagues. I want to talk about what border security means for us as a country.

The playwright James Graham says that our country is only the story that we tell about ourselves. With the Conservatives, we were told a story of hopelessness, despair and scapegoating. People were left to believe that we should be frightened by the challenges we face, frightened by our inability to meet them, and frightened by the setbacks that we face and what they say about who we are and where we are going. That is why it is so important for this Labour Government to be correcting that narrative. Getting a grip on our borders, closing asylum hotels, bringing the asylum bill down: those are the basics that people expect. They are what make people feel confident, not frightened—secure, not susceptible to those on the Opposition Benches who would peddle empty promises and, ultimately, let the British people down.

**Nick Timothy:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Tom Hayes:** No.

For me, border security sits alongside fixing potholes, tackling graffiti and fly-tipping, and stopping e-scooter and e-bike speeding. It is obviously more complicated—for one thing, it involves a great deal of international negotiation—but border security is security. It is vital for people’s safety and pride. It underpins so much. If people cannot rely on the basics, they cannot begin to enjoy everything else that life has to offer. If people cannot see pledges being kept, promises being delivered and things being improved where they live, they will not just lose trust; they will succumb to hopelessness. We must not allow the spirit of our people to break. We must get the basics right, and with the Bill we will do that.

We will secure our borders with this Bill and these amendments. We will have new powers on seizing electronic devices, a new law to protect life at sea, a new statutory border security command, tougher action on foreign national sex offenders, and the ending of asylum hotels that cost eye-watering sums. It is in our national interest to get our borders back under control against criminal smuggler gangs.

In order to understand the politics of where we are, I have been looking back at old debates, and Conservative Members may enjoy hearing what I am about to say. With our policies and politics on border security, as with much else, I feel that we could benefit from listening to a question that was put by the first Earl of Stockton in his maiden speech in the other place in 1985. He said:

“Should we just slowly and majestically sink...like a great ship—or shall we make a new determined and united effort... Let us do the latter and then historians of the future will not describe...the decline and fall of Britain but...the beginning of a new and glorious renaissance.”—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 23 January 1985; Vol. 459, c. 254.]

As the Member of Parliament for Bournemouth East, I want to work with all in this place who share the former Conservative Prime Minister’s moderation and

[Tom Hayes]

determination to have a united effort to bring about a better Britain. That involves fixing the basics, such as border security. After all, it would be an absurdity for small boats to sink a great ship.

**Vikki Slade** (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (LD): The trafficking gangs that profit from the most vulnerable refugees do not care if the people on those boats live or die. It is obvious that we all want to see the end of this horrendous crime, but those who travel are not bad people; they are desperate. It is understandable that communities who see groups of mainly young men being economically inactive will be frustrated and angry, but asylum seekers are not responsible for people not getting a doctor's appointment—it is the people who traffic them.

When I was the leader of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole council, I backed the Lift the Ban coalition and met an inspiring young man from Cameroon who had arrived here legitimately on a student visa. While he was here, his village was torched and his uncle killed. He could not return home, so he claimed asylum from where he was in the midlands. He was immediately relocated to a hotel in Bournemouth and refused the ability to work—something that he had done legitimately right up to that point. Letting him work would allow him to contribute to our community, instead of being a great drain on it.

I will speak to the Liberal Democrats' new clauses 24 and 33, which relate to our work with international partners. As a member of the armed forces parliamentary scheme, I recently learned more about the United Nations convention on the law of the sea. Article 99 covers the prohibition of the transport of slaves, but it does not cover human trafficking. Around the world, our international partnerships are being hamstrung as a result, and I urge the Minister to look at how we could use Interpol as a route towards developing UNCLOS further.

Finally, I will speak against new clause 16, which would increase the minimum income for a spousal visa to £38,000. This would mean that the average police officer, research scientist or nurse outside London—in places such as Mid Dorset and North Poole—would not be able to get a visa for their spouse. I was pleased that the Government paused the proposal and left the threshold at £29,000, as I am concerned that we could see a brain drain among many British professionals who choose to leave the UK for their partners' home countries, where they will be welcome.

I want to speak about the armed forces personnel I have met both in the constituency and through the AFPS, particularly those coming from Commonwealth countries. They have answered our call to fight for our country, but they are forced to leave their spouses behind, as the lower threshold provided for them only applies after an extended period of service. Pushing that threshold up to £38,000 would take reunification out of their reach, too. The current threshold ensures that families who can support themselves can stay together, and I urge the Government to leave it where it is.

**Shockat Adam** (Leicester South) (Ind): We can all agree that immigration must be managed. The public rightly expect a fair, firm and functional system, but

control cannot come at the cost of compassion, so let me be clear: immigrants cannot be viewed through the lens of fear, and parliamentarians on all sides must choose their words carefully. We are responsible for ensuring that our rhetoric does not incite attacks, fear and division, or even lead to violence. It is not enough to say that we denounce hate; we must also refrain from language that fuels it. Terms like “island of strangers” simply do not help.

Too often, we hear suggestions—either explicitly or implicitly—that immigrants are to blame for everything that is wrong in our country. Let us be honest with the public: it is not immigrants who have polluted our rivers or our seas with sewage; it is not immigrants who set sky-high rail fares while slashing routes; it is not immigrants who have hollowed out our NHS, cut GP services or closed libraries; and it is not immigrants who have overseen 14 years of economic stagnation, rising rents and growing inequality.

There are some aspects of this Bill that I can support—abolishing the ridiculous Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Act 2024 is one—but there are more shortcomings, especially in relation to the lack of help for victims of human trafficking, which is why I rise to support some of the amendments. I call on Members across the House to support new clause 27, which would ensure that proper age assessments are conducted by trained and independent social workers, and not through rushed visual judgments or flawed and impersonal scientific tests.

Furthermore, in the shadow of our immigration debate, children are being exploited. They are the victims of a modern slave trade run by smugglers and traffickers who prey on desperation. Children are coerced into roles that put their lives and the lives of others at risk. These are not isolated cases. Over 4,000 unaccompanied children claimed asylum in the UK last year alone. The system must recognise the unique vulnerability of children and treat them as such, not as suspects and not as statistics, but as they are: children. Although the Government's intention to address the asylum appeals backlog is laudable, proposals such as new clause 6 and 7 to impose arbitrary deadlines of 24 weeks, without sufficient resources or legal safeguards, are not the answer. Justice rushed is justice denied.

Finally, by taking on the narrative of those on the right wing, by mimicking their talking points and rhetoric, we are not neutralising the threat of extremism, but feeding it. We will only push Reform UK and others even further to the right, emboldening them to say things that we have made appear acceptable. I ask the Government: when will they stand their ground, choose principles over polling and remember that leadership means bringing people together, not chasing after the loudest voices in the room? Let us reject the politics of scapegoating, and lead with integrity, facts and humanity. Our country deserves nothing less.

**Caroline Voaden** (South Devon) (LD): I would like to focus on new clause 21. We can all see that the asylum system is broken and expensive, and the horror of people arriving in a desperate state on small boats is causing division and anger across our country. However, turning to a populist party that throws out soundbites that appeal to many but fall apart at the first hint of real scrutiny is not the answer.

How do we address this problem? First, we need to dial down the volume and the divisiveness in this debate, and to talk about these people as humans, not numbers. We need to open up safe and legal routes for people genuinely fleeing war, persecution and conflict. We need to assess their asylum claims quickly and efficiently, and then help them into the workforce so they can start earning money, supporting themselves, contributing to the economy and, just as importantly, integrating properly into our society.

The hon. Member for Clacton (Nigel Farage) said on Radio 4 this weekend that his party's chairman, the child of immigrants from Sri Lanka, was intensely patriotic, saying:

"The whole point of coming to a country is that you adopt it".

That is exactly what asylum seekers will do when given refuge by a country that offers them safety. We have seen it since time began. Indeed, many in this House are the children of immigrants who have given back enthusiastically to the country that welcomed them.

The asylum backlog stood at 91,000 at the end of 2024. While they wait, asylum seekers are trapped in limbo, unable to work or rebuild their lives and forced to depend on Government funds. This benefits no one. The Liberal Democrats' new clause 21 would lift the restrictions on asylum seekers engaging in employment, which would help to manage the cost of asylum, benefit the UK economy and help asylum seekers to integrate.

Evidence from the Refugee Council shows that, in the medium to long term, refugees in the UK make a net positive fiscal contribution. Initially, they rely more on public services, but within five to 10 years their tax contributions exceed their cost to the state. After five years, 60% to 70% are employed, approaching the national average for employment rates. A study by the Centre for Entrepreneurs shows that one in seven UK companies is founded by a migrant: 17% of non-UK nationals have launched businesses compared with just 10% of UK-born individuals.

The reality is that we have an ageing population, with more people than ever aged over 85 who depend on services. We have fewer people paying tax, working and providing services, and more who have greater needs, particularly in health and care. The chief operations officer of CareYourWay franchising told me:

"We are both baffled and deeply concerned by the government's decision to revoke the visa route for social care workers. It is harrowing to witness such a critical sector continuously overlooked... This change will, without doubt, have a tangible and far-reaching impact... For many, this decision will not only reduce capacity—it may very well close doors."

The Liberal Democrats are pushing for more safe and legal routes for refugees, which we know will be crucial to help stop these dangerous channel crossings—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Ms Nusrat Ghani):** Order. I call Iqbal Mohamed.

**Iqbal Mohamed:** The UK immigration system is in shambles. That is no secret after the debacle of the last Government, with the proposed Rwanda scheme, the controversial refugee barges, the Illegal Migration Act 2023 to stop boat crossings, and the hostile environment, which made immigration enforcement the responsibility of nurses, doctors, teachers and public service workers. I think we all agree that any step towards fixing this

mess is a step in the right direction, and the Bill deserves credit for repealing certain measures proposed by the previous Government. However, it needs to go further and it still has substantial issues: worryingly, it criminalises vulnerable families fleeing hardship and it fails to adequately protect victims of trafficking.

8.45 pm

Let us talk about the most pressing failure of the Bill: the complete lack of a clear, humane strategy for safe and legal routes. The truth is that if we do not give people fleeing war, persecution or trafficking a safe way out, they will find a dangerous one. We have seen the consequences: families risking everything, children arriving on our shores and an asylum system buckling under the weight of its own inhumanity. Yet the Bill, in its current state, offers no plan and no route for how the UK will open legal doors, instead of forcing people to scale fences. That is why I support new clause 3, which would require the Government to publish a long overdue strategy on how it will establish safe routes into the UK. We need safe routes not because it is morally right, but because it works.

Moving on to deaths of asylum seekers, more than 10 people have already died this year trying to reach the UK on small boats. Last year, over 80 people died trying to reach our shores. That is why I also support new clause 1 to shine a light on the human cost of this broken system. Right now, the Government do not have a system to ensure that a full record of deaths is published. People die in asylum accommodation. People die while waiting for decisions. Also, over 450 children went missing between 2021 and 2024. In 2024, over 100 were still unaccounted for.

Immigration and asylum legislation is not just about fixing systems; it has a profound impact on people's lives. Therefore, it is crucial that the provisions in the Bill are compassionate and prioritise the needs of vulnerable communities and the very people who suffer the most within these systems.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Ms Nusrat Ghani):** We have no more speakers, so we will go straight to the Minister. Forgive me, I thought we had another person bobbing, but they no longer seem to be in the Chamber. Minister Eagle, you get the lucky extra few minutes for the winding-up.

**Dame Angela Eagle:** Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise after what has been a very full debate, with people having to fit in quite complex points in short amounts of time. I congratulate everybody on the points they made. I will try, as much as possible, to deal with some of them in the time I have left.

I thank all those on the Labour Benches who made contributions: my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool Riverside (Kim Johnson), my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Tony Vaughan), my hon. Friends the Members for Walthamstow (Ms Creasy), for Sheffield Hallam (Olivia Blake), for Edinburgh East and Musselburgh (Chris Murray), for Clapham and Brixton Hill (Bell Ribeiro-Addy), for Bassetlaw (Jo White), for Nottingham East (Nadia Whittome), for Bolton West (Phil Brickell) and for Leigh and Atherton (Jo Platt).



[*Dame Angela Eagle*]

Liberal Democrat Members concentrated on safe and legal routes, and the ability to work. I was worried that the hon. Member for Perth and Kinross-shire (Pete Wishart) had had such a difficult time in Committee. I thought we were having quite a reasonable time, but he was extremely downbeat about it. I must try more on another occasion.

I welcome the maiden speech from the hon. Member for Runcorn and Helsby (Sarah Pochin), which we all listened to in traditional silence. I congratulate her on it, welcome her to the House and wonder if Reform is practising the principle of one in, one out—or perhaps one out, one in. It is a pleasure to welcome her to the House.

The shadow Home Secretary produced a flurry of amendments and new clauses demanding that we do a whole range of things that not only did he not do when he had the chance as a Home Office Minister, but his party did not do when they had the chance over 14 years. I have to keep saying this, but we inherited a system in the most incredibly difficult mess, with huge backlogs. He says we have made it worse, but by beginning to process claims, that by definition creates a backlog of those who have been refused. By trying to get the system working again, we get a backlog of appeals, because people who are refused asylum generally appeal, and the backlog—as he knows from his time in the Home Office—therefore reappears in the appeals system. That is why we have the new clauses to attempt to get a timeline for dealing with those cases.

I will concentrate on some of the things that I know there will be votes on tonight. First, I will deal with safe and legal routes and new clause 3. Our approach is to resettle refugees identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees who would benefit most from resettlement to the UK. Alongside that, we have bespoke routes to sanctuary for those from Ukraine, Afghanistan and Hong Kong. It is important that safe and legal routes are sustainable, well managed and in line with the UK's capacity to welcome, accommodate and integrate refugees. Part of the difficulty we have at the moment is the legacy we received from the Conservatives of a huge quadrupling of net migration and the issues with having to assimilate all those people in the huge, unplanned way in which they delivered that.

New clause 37 was tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Clapham and Brixton Hill (Bell Ribeiro-Addy). We recognise her campaigning on this issue over the past five years. We also recognise that there has been an unfair burden for some families with rights to citizenship under the system as it is. I can confirm that the work referenced on page 76 of the White Paper—it is right at the end—will look at tackling the financial barriers that she highlighted in her speech. I urge her to work with us on how we move forward and to not press her new clause.

The Opposition tabled new clause 14. Let me be clear that this Government are fully committed to the protection of human rights at home and abroad. As the Prime Minister has made clear, the United Kingdom is unequivocally committed to the European convention on human rights, and it is worth noting that many of the legal obligations provided for in the European convention are also found in other international agreements to which the UK is a party.

**Steve Barclay:** Will the Minister give way?

**Dame Angela Eagle:** Very quickly, because I have a lot of points and not much time.

**Steve Barclay:** The Minister has just set out once again, as the Prime Minister did earlier today, her steadfast commitment to the ECHR. Does she not accept that that means that the legislation is not watertight and that those who have committed serious criminality will continue to be able to stay in the United Kingdom, because of the ECHR?

**Dame Angela Eagle:** New clause 8 will deny refugee status to those who commit sexual offences. We also have the work being announced on narrowing article 8, which will allow Parliament to give more direction to judges about how the rules ought to be interpreted. The immigration rules reflect the requirements of the ECHR generally, including the qualified nature of article 8, setting requirements that properly balance the individual right to respect for family and private life with the public interest in safeguarding the economic wellbeing of the UK by controlling immigration.

**Chris Philp:** The Minister mentioned the provision to prevent certain sex offenders from claiming asylum. While that is a welcome step, what will happen in practice is that the sex offender will simply make a claim under article 3 of the ECHR instead. I have seen dozens and dozens of cases like that, and that is precisely why we need to disapply the Human Rights Act 1998 from all immigration matters. Otherwise, there will just be a huge loophole, as my right hon. Friend the Member for North East Cambridgeshire (Steve Barclay) pointed out.

**Dame Angela Eagle:** If we disapplied the Human Rights Act, people would just go to the ECHR anyway, and a lot of these cases would end up in Strasbourg, which would take even longer. Disapplying the Human Rights Act would also mean that other countries that we have to work and collaborate with to deal with cross-border people smuggling would not work with us. The Conservatives had many huge rows with people and went around the world making it look as though they did not believe in the rule of law. This Government do believe in the rule of law and we will carry on upholding the rule of law; we regard that as an important part of the value system we have in this country.

On new clause 18 and the cap on non-visitor visas, as always the Conservatives talk a good talk now that they are safely in opposition, having not delivered when they were in government. They promised time after time to reduce net migration down to the tens of thousands—they did it in their manifestos and in the many different manifestations of Conservative Governments that we saw plough through the House, especially in the past four years—and what did they do? They quadrupled net migration. We do not need a cap; we need to get migration down, fundamentally lower than it is now, to make the system fair and effective. In order to do that, we have published a White Paper today and introduced further measures in this Bill. We will come back to this issue to ensure that we can deliver—unlike the Conservative party.

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** I thank the Minister for her mention of my new clause and her commitment to ending the financial burden on young children and their families who have a right to citizenship. What further work will be done to consult campaigns such as Citizens UK, Lambeth Citizens and the Project for the Registration of Children as British Citizens that have been working on this issue? I know that the White Paper covers a range of issues, but I want to understand what consultation will be done with those organisations to ensure that we get to where we need to be: a situation where children are not priced out of citizenship.

**Dame Angela Eagle:** The Minister for Citizenship and Migration, my hon. Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Seema Malhotra), has just made it clear to me from the Front Bench that she is very happy to consult and meet all those groups. We want people to contribute to the consultation so that we get this right. I hope that in the light of that, my hon. Friend the Member for Clapham and Brixton Hill will not press new clause 37.

I want to deal with the right to work in the brief time I have left, because those on the Lib Dem Benches talked about that in particular. It is an issue of balance: we know at the moment that, if someone's asylum claim is delayed for 12 months, they have the right to work in particular shortage areas. Our way of dealing with this is to get the system to work more quickly, so that we do not have people languishing for many years in limbo. That is what we are aiming to do.

We are worried that if the right to work came in after three months, it would be too much of a pull factor and get around some of the issues with work visas. We have to have a system that people apply to properly, rather than one that they can get around by coming in by irregular routes. That is the issue. I appreciate what Lib Dem Members are trying to achieve; we have a slight difference of approach on that, but clearly we will carry on having these debates.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*New clause 5 accordingly read a Second time, and added to the Bill.*

9 pm

*Proceedings interrupted (Programme Order, 10 February).*

*The Deputy Speaker put forthwith the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that time (Standing Order No. 83E).*

### New Clause 6

#### TIMEFRAME FOR DETERMINATION OF APPEAL BROUGHT BY APPELLANT RECEIVING ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT

"After section 86 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 insert—

*'86A Timeframe for determination of appeal under section 82(1)(a) where appellant is receiving accommodation support*

- (1) This section applies on an appeal under section 82(1)(a) brought by a person to whom, at the time the appeal is instituted, accommodation is being provided under section 95 or 98 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- (2) The Tribunal must, except where the Tribunal considers that it is not reasonably practicable to do so, determine the appeal and give notice of its determination to the parties before the end of the period of 24 weeks beginning with the day after that on which the appeal is instituted.

- (3) But subsection (2) does not apply or, as the case may be, ceases to apply, if the appeal must be brought, or must be continued, from outside the United Kingdom."

—(*Dame Angela Eagle.*)

*This new clause provides that where a person receiving accommodation support appeals against a decision to refuse their protection claim, the First-tier Tribunal must determine the appeal within 24 weeks unless it is not reasonably practicable to do so.*

*Brought up, and added to the Bill.*

### New Clause 7

#### TIMEFRAME FOR DETERMINATION OF CERTAIN APPEALS BROUGHT BY NON-DETAINED APPELLANTS LIABLE TO DEPORTATION

"(1) After section 86A of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 (as inserted by section (*Timeframe for determination of appeal brought by appellant receiving accommodation support*)) insert—

*'86B Timeframe for determination of appeal brought by certain non-detained appellants liable to deportation*

- (1) This section applies on an appeal under section 82(1) where the appeal is brought by a person falling within subsection (2).
- (2) A person falls within this subsection if, at the time the appeal mentioned in subsection (1) is instituted, the person—
  - (a) is not detained (whether under any provision of the Immigration Acts or otherwise),
  - (b) has been convicted of an offence (whether in or outside the United Kingdom), and
  - (c) is liable to deportation under section 3(5)(a) of the Immigration Act 1971 (Secretary of State deeming deportation conducive to public good).
- (3) The Tribunal must, except where the Tribunal considers that it is not reasonably practicable to do so, determine the appeal and give notice of its determination to the parties before the end of the period of 24 weeks beginning with the day after that on which the appeal is instituted.
- (4) But subsection (3) does not apply or, as the case may be, ceases to apply, if the appeal must be brought, or must be continued, from outside the United Kingdom."

(2) In Schedule 2 to the Immigration (Citizens' Rights Appeals) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 (S.I. 2020/61) (application of the 2002 Act to appeals to the Tribunal)—

- (a) in paragraph 1, after paragraph (b) insert—  
“(ba) section 86B;”;
- (b) in paragraph 3, after sub-paragraph (5) insert—  
“(5A) Section 86B has effect as if for subsection (4) there were substituted—  
“(4) But subsection (3) does not apply or, as the case may be, ceases to apply, if the appeal is brought, or is continued, from outside the United Kingdom.””

(3) In Schedule 2 to the Immigration (European Economic Area) Regulations 2016 (S.I. 2016/1052) (appeals to the First-tier Tribunal), as it continues to have effect following its revocation, after paragraph 1 insert—

“1A Section 86B of the 2002 Act (timeframe for determination of appeal brought by certain non-detained appellants liable to deportation) applies in relation to an appeal under these Regulations to the First-tier Tribunal as it applies in relation to an appeal under section 82(1) of the 2002 Act but as if for subsection (4) there were substituted—

- (4) But subsection (3) does not apply or, as the case may be, ceases to apply, if the appeal is brought, or is continued, from outside the United Kingdom.””

—(*Dame Angela Eagle.*)

*This new clause provides that in certain cases where a non-detained person who has been convicted of an offence and who is liable to deportation brings an appeal, the First-tier Tribunal must determine the appeal within 24 weeks unless it is not reasonably practicable to do so.*

*Brought up, and added to the Bill.*

### New Clause 8

#### REFUGEE CONVENTION: PARTICULARLY SERIOUS CRIME

“(1) Section 72 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 (construction and application of Article 33(2) of Refugee Convention) is amended as follows.

(2) After subsection (5) insert—

‘(5ZA) A person is to be presumed to have been convicted by a final judgment of a particularly serious crime if—

(a) the person is convicted in the United Kingdom of an offence listed in Schedule 3 to the Sexual Offences Act 2003, and

(b) the person is not, by virtue of the conviction, a person falling within subsection (2).

(5ZB) A person is to be presumed to have been convicted by a final judgment of a particularly serious crime if—

(a) the person is convicted outside the United Kingdom of an offence,

(b) the act constituting the offence would have constituted an offence listed in Schedule 3 to the Sexual Offences Act 2003 had it been done in any part of the United Kingdom, and

(c) the person is not, by virtue of the conviction, a person falling within subsection (3).’

(3) After subsection (5A) insert—

‘(5B) A person presumed to have been convicted of a particularly serious crime by virtue of subsection (5ZA) or (5ZB) is to be presumed to constitute a danger to the community of the United Kingdom.’

(4) In subsection (6), for ‘subsection (5A)’ substitute ‘subsection (5ZA) or (5ZB) that a person has been convicted by a final judgment of a particularly serious crime or under subsection (5A) or (5B)’.

(5) In subsection (7), for ‘(5A)’ substitute ‘(5ZA), (5ZB), (5A) or (5B)’.

(6) In subsection (8), after ‘(5A)’ insert ‘or (5B)’.

(7) In subsection (9)(b), for ‘(5A)’ substitute ‘(5ZA), (5ZB), (5A) or (5B)’.

(8) In subsection (10)(b), for ‘(5A)’ substitute ‘(5ZA), (5ZB), (5A) or (5B)’.”—(*Dame Angela Eagle.*)

*This new clause provides that where a person has been convicted of certain sexual offences there is to be a rebuttable presumption that the person has been convicted of a particularly serious crime and constitutes a danger to the community of the United Kingdom for the purposes of the Refugee Convention.*

*Brought up, and added to the Bill.*

### New Clause 3

#### DUTY TO PUBLISH A STRATEGY ON SAFE AND MANAGED ROUTES

“(1) The Secretary of State must, within six months of the passing of this Act, publish a strategy on the Government’s efforts to establish additional safe and legal routes for persons to seek asylum in the United Kingdom.

(2) A report under subsection (1) must be laid before Parliament.”—(*Pete Wishart.*)

*This new clause would require the Secretary of State to publish and lay before Parliament a strategy on the development of safe and managed routes for people to seek asylum in the UK.*

*Brought up.*

*Question put, That the clause be added to the Bill.*

*The House divided: Ayes 90, Noes 318.*  
**Division No. 191]**

**[9 pm**

#### AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Bell Ribeiro-Addy</i> )	Jardine, Christine
Adam, Shokat	Jarvis, Liz
Amos, Gideon	Jones, Clive
Aquarone, Steff	Khan, Ayoub
Babarinde, Josh	Logan, Seamus
Begum, Apsana ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Zarah Sultana</i> )	MacCleary, James
Bennett, Alison	Maguire, Ben
Berry, Siân	Maguire, Helen
Blake, Olivia	Martin, Mike
Brewer, Alex	Mathew, Brian
Brown-Fuller, Jess	Maynard, Charlie
Campbell, Mr Gregory	McDonnell, rh John
Cane, Charlotte	Miller, Calum
Chadwick, David	Milne, John
Chamberlain, Wendy	Mohamed, Iqbal
Chambers, Dr Danny	Moran, Layla ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Zöe Franklin</i> )
Chowns, Ellie	Morello, Edward
Coghlan, Chris	Morgan, Helen
Collins, Victoria	Morrison, Mr Tom
Cooper, Daisy	Munt, Tessa
Corbyn, rh Jeremy	O’Hara, Brendan
Dance, Adam	Olney, Sarah
Darling, Steve	Perteghella, Manuela
Davey, rh Ed	Ramsay, Adrian
Davies, Ann	Reynolds, Mr Joshua
Dean, Bobby	Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Denyer, Carla	Roome, Ian
Dillon, Mr Lee	Sabine, Anna
Doogan, Dave	Savage, Dr Roz
Dyke, Sarah	Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Eastwood, Colum	Shannon, Jim
Farron, Tim	Slade, Vikki
Forster, Mr Will	Smart, Lisa
Franklin, Zöe	Sollom, Ian
George, Andrew	Sultana, Zarah
Gethins, Stephen	Swann, Robin
Gibson, Sarah ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Anna Sabine</i> )	Taylor, Luke
Gilmour, Rachel	Voaden, Caroline
Glover, Olly	Whittome, Nadia
Goldman, Marie	Wilkinson, Max
Gordon, Tom	Wishart, Pete
Green, Sarah	Wrigley, Martin
Harding, Monica	Young, Claire
Heylings, Pippa	
Hobhouse, Wera	

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
**Kirsty Blackman and**  
**Ben Lake**

#### NOES

Abbott, Jack	Atkinson, Catherine
Abrahams, Debbie	Atkinson, Lewis
Ahmed, Dr Zubir	Bailey, Olivia
Akehurst, Luke	Baker, Richard
Alexander, rh Heidi	Ballinger, Alex
Al-Hassan, Sadik	Bance, Antonia
Ali, Rushanara	Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex
Ali, Tahir	Baxter, Johanna
Allister, Jim	Beales, Danny
Anderson, Callum	Beavers, Lorraine
Anderson, Fleur	Benn, rh Hilary
Anderson, Lee	Betts, Mr Clive
Arthur, Dr Scott	Billington, Ms Polly
Asato, Jess	Bishop, Matt
Asser, James	Blake, Rachel
Athwal, Jas	Bloore, Chris



Blundell, Mrs Elsie  
 Bonavia, Kevin  
 Botterill, Jade  
 Brackenridge, Mrs Sureena  
 Brash, Mr Jonathan  
 Brickell, Phil  
 Buckley, Julia  
 Burton-Sampson, David  
 Byrne, Ian  
 Caliskan, Nesil  
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan  
 Campbell, Irene  
 Campbell, Juliet  
 Campbell-Savours, Markus  
 Carden, Dan  
 Carling, Sam  
 Champion, Sarah  
 Charters, Mr Luke  
 Clark, Feryal  
 Coleman, Ben  
 Collier, Jacob  
 Collinge, Lizzi  
 Collins, Tom  
 Conlon, Liam  
 Coombes, Sarah  
 Cooper, Andrew  
 Cooper, Dr Beccy  
 Cooper, rh Yvette  
 Costigan, Deirdre  
 Cox, Pam  
 Coyle, Neil  
 Craft, Jen  
 Creasy, Ms Stella  
 Daby, Janet  
 Dakin, Sir Nicholas  
 Davies, Jonathan  
 Davies, Paul  
 Davies, Shaun  
 Davies-Jones, Alex  
 Dean, Josh  
 Dearden, Kate  
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh  
 Dickson, Jim  
 Dixon, Samantha  
 Dollimore, Helena  
 Dowd, Peter  
 Downie, Graeme  
 Duncan-Jordan, Neil  
 Eagle, Dame Angela  
 Eagle, rh Maria  
 Edwards, Lauren  
 Egan, Damien  
 Ellis, Maya  
 Elmore, Chris  
 Entwistle, Kirith  
 Eshalomi, Florence  
 Esterson, Bill  
 Evans, Chris  
 Fahnbulleh, Miatta  
 Falconer, Mr Hamish  
 Farage, Nigel  
 Farnsworth, Linsey  
 Fenton-Glynn, Josh  
 Ferguson, Mark  
 Fleet, Natalie  
 Foody, Emma  
 Fookes, Catherine  
 Foster, Mr Paul  
 Foxcroft, Vicky  
 Foy, Mary Kelly  
 Francis, Daniel  
 Frith, Mr James  
 Furniss, Gill  
 Gardiner, Barry  
 Gardner, Dr Allison  
 Gelderd, Anna  
 Gemmell, Alan  
 German, Gill  
 Gilbert, Tracy  
 Gittins, Becky  
 Glindon, Mary  
 Goldsborough, Ben  
 Gosling, Jodie  
 Gould, Georgia  
 Grady, John  
 Greenwood, Lilian  
 Griffith, Dame Nia  
 Gwynne, Andrew (*Proxy vote  
cast by Chris Elmore*)  
 Hack, Amanda  
 Haigh, rh Louise  
 Hall, Sarah  
 Hamilton, Paulette  
 Hardy, Emma  
 Harris, Carolyn  
 Hatton, Lloyd  
 Hayes, Helen  
 Hayes, Tom  
 Hazelgrove, Claire  
 Healey, rh John  
 Hendrick, Sir Mark (*Proxy vote  
cast by Chris Elmore*)  
 Hinchliff, Chris  
 Hinder, Jonathan  
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
 Hopkins, Rachel  
 Hughes, Claire  
 Hume, Alison  
 Huq, Dr Rupa  
 Hurley, Patrick  
 Irons, Natasha  
 Jameson, Sally  
 Jarvis, Dan  
 Jermy, Terry  
 Johnson, Kim  
 Jones, rh Darren  
 Jones, Gerald  
 Jones, Louise  
 Jones, Ruth  
 Jones, Sarah  
 Josan, Gurinder Singh  
 Joseph, Sojan  
 Juss, Warinder  
 Kane, Chris  
 Kane, Mike  
 Kaur, Satvir (*Proxy vote cast  
by Chris Elmore*)  
 Khan, Afzal  
 Khan, Naushabah  
 Kinnoch, Stephen  
 Kirkham, Jayne  
 Kitchen, Gen  
 Kumar, Sonia  
 Kumaran, Uma  
 Kyrke-Smith, Laura  
 Lamb, Peter  
 Lavery, Ian  
 Law, Noah  
 Leadbeater, Kim  
 Leishman, Brian  
 Lewell, Emma  
 Lewin, Andrew  
 Lightwood, Simon  
 Long Bailey, Rebecca

MacAlister, Josh  
 Macdonald, Alice  
 MacNae, Andy  
 Madders, Justin  
 Malhotra, Seema  
 Martin, Amanda  
 Maskell, Rachael  
 Mayer, Alex  
 McDonagh, Dame Siobhain  
 McDonald, Andy  
 McDonald, Chris  
 McDougall, Blair  
 McEvoy, Lola  
 McGovern, Alison  
 McIntyre, Alex  
 McKenna, Kevin  
 McKinnell, Catherine  
 McMahan, Jim  
 McMorris, Anna  
 McMurdoch, James  
 McNeill, Kirsty  
 Midgley, Anneliese  
 Minns, Ms Julie  
 Mishra, Navendu  
 Moon, Perran  
 Morden, Jessica  
 Morris, Grahame  
 Morris, Joe  
 Mullane, Margaret  
 Murphy, Luke  
 Murray, Chris  
 Murray, rh Ian (*Proxy vote  
cast by Chris Elmore*)  
 Murray, James  
 Myer, Luke  
 Naismith, Connor  
 Narayan, Kanishka  
 Nash, Pamela  
 Newbury, Josh  
 Niblett, Samantha  
 Nichols, Charlotte  
 Norris, Alex  
 Onn, Melanie  
 Opher, Dr Simon  
 Oppong-Asare, Ms Abena  
 Osborne, Kate (*Proxy vote  
cast by Kim Johnson*)  
 Osborne, Tristan  
 Owatemi, Taiwo  
 Owen, Sarah  
 Paffey, Darren  
 Pakes, Andrew  
 Patrick, Matthew  
 Payne, Michael  
 Peacock, Stephanie  
 Pearce, Jon  
 Pennycook, Matthew  
 Phillips, Jess  
 Pinto-Duschinsky, David  
 Pitcher, Lee  
 Platt, Jo  
 Pochin, Sarah  
 Pollard, Luke  
 Powell, Joe  
 Powell, rh Lucy  
 Poynton, Gregor  
 Prinsley, Peter  
 Quigley, Mr Richard  
 Qureshi, Yasmin  
 Race, Steve  
 Ranger, Andrew  
 Reader, Mike  
 Reynolds, Emma  
 Reynolds, rh Jonathan  
 Richards, Jake  
 Riddell-Carpenter, Jenny  
 Rigby, Lucy  
 Rimmer, Ms Marie  
 Roca, Tim  
 Rodda, Matt  
 Rushworth, Sam  
 Russell, Sarah  
 Rutland, Tom  
 Ryan, Oliver  
 Sackman, Sarah  
 Sandher, Dr Jeevun  
 Scrogham, Michelle  
 Sowards, Mark  
 Shah, Naz  
 Shanker, Baggy  
 Siddiq, Tulip  
 Simons, Josh  
 Slaughter, Andy  
 Slinger, John  
 Smith, Cat  
 Smith, David  
 Smith, Jeff  
 Smith, Nick  
 Smith, Sarah  
 Smyth, Karin  
 Snell, Gareth  
 Stainbank, Euan  
 Stevens, rh Jo  
 Stone, Will  
 Strathern, Alistair  
 Strickland, Alan  
 Stringer, Graham  
 Sullivan, Dr Lauren  
 Swallow, Peter  
 Tami, rh Mark  
 Tapp, Mike  
 Taylor, Alison  
 Taylor, David  
 Taylor, Rachel  
 Thomas, Fred  
 Thompson, Adam  
 Tice, Richard  
 Tidball, Dr Marie  
 Timms, rh Sir Stephen  
 Toale, Jessica  
 Trickett, Jon  
 Tufnell, Henry (*Proxy vote  
cast by Callum Anderson*)  
 Turley, Anna  
 Turmaine, Matt  
 Turner, Laurence  
 Twigg, Derek  
 Twist, Liz  
 Uppal, Harpreet  
 Vince, Chris  
 Walker, Imogen  
 Ward, Chris (*Proxy vote cast  
by Chris Elmore*)  
 Ward, Melanie  
 Waugh, Paul  
 Welsh, Michelle  
 West, Catherine  
 Western, Andrew  
 Western, Matt  
 Wheeler, Michael  
 Whitby, John  
 White, Jo  
 White, Katie  
 Williams, David

Witherden, Steve  
Woodcock, Sean  
Wrighting, Rosie  
Yang, Yuan  
Yasin, Mohammad

Yemm, Steve

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
**Keir Mather and**  
**Christian Wakeford**

*Question accordingly negated.*

### New Clause 14

#### BORDERS LEGISLATION: HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

“(1) This section applies to any provision made by or by virtue of this Act, the Illegal Migration Act 2023, the Immigration Acts, and any legislation relating to immigration, deportation, or asylum, including the Immigration Rules within the meaning of the Immigration Act 1971.

(2) The legislation identified in subsection (1), including in relation to the enforcement of immigration policy, deportation, the granting, removal, revocation or alteration of immigration status, or asylum, or other entitlements, must be read and given effect to disregarding the Human Rights Act 1998.

(3) In the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993, omit section 2.

(4) In the Immigration Act 1971—

(a) in section 8AA—

(i) in subsection (2), omit “Subject to subsections (3) to (5)”; and

(ii) omit subsections (2)(a)(ii) and subsections (3) to (6);

(b) in section 8B, omit subsection (5A).

(5) In section 84 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002—

(a) in subsection (1), after “must” insert “not”;

(b) in subsection (2), after “must” insert “not”;

(c) in subsection (2), for “section 6” substitute “any section”; and

(d) in subsection (3) after “must” insert “not”.

(6) Where the European Court of Human Rights indicates an interim measure relating to the exercise of any function under the legislation identified in subsection (1)—

(a) it is only for a Minister of the Crown to decide whether the United Kingdom will comply with the interim measure under this section; and

(b) an immigration officer or court or tribunal must not have regard to the interim measure.”.—(*Chris Philp.*)

*This new clause would disapply the Human Rights Act and interim measures of the European Court of Human Rights in relation to this Bill and to other legislation about borders, asylum and immigration.*

*Brought up.*

*Question put, That the clause be added to the Bill.*

*The House divided: Ayes 98, Noes 402.*

**Division No. 192]**

**[9.13 pm**

#### AYES

Allister, Jim  
Anderson, Lee  
Andrew, rh Stuart  
Argar, rh Edward  
Atkins, rh Victoria  
Bacon, Gareth  
Badenoch, rh Mrs Kemi  
Baldwin, Dame Harriett  
Barclay, rh Steve  
Bedford, Mr Peter  
Bhatti, Saqib  
Blackman, Bob

Bool, Sarah  
Bowie, Andrew  
Brandreth, Aphra  
Braverman, rh Suella  
Burghart, Alex  
Campbell, Mr Gregory  
Chope, Sir Christopher  
Cleverly, rh Sir James  
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey  
Cocking, Lewis  
Cooper, John

Coutinho, rh Claire (*Proxy*  
*vote cast by Joy Morrissey*)  
Cross, Harriet  
Davies, Gareth  
Davies, Mims  
Davis, rh David  
Dewhurst, Charlie  
Dowden, rh Sir Oliver  
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain  
Dyke, Sarah  
Evans, Dr Luke  
Farage, Nigel  
Fortune, Peter  
Fox, Sir Ashley  
Francois, rh Mr Mark  
French, Mr Louie  
Garnier, Mark  
Grant, Helen  
Griffith, Andrew  
Griffiths, Alison  
Harris, Rebecca  
Hayes, rh Sir John  
Hinds, rh Damian  
Hoare, Simon  
Hollinrake, Kevin  
Holmes, Paul  
Huddleston, Nigel  
Hudson, Dr Neil  
Jenkin, Sir Bernard  
Jenrick, rh Robert  
Johnson, Dr Caroline  
Jopp, Lincoln  
Kearns, Alicia (*Proxy vote cast*  
*by Joy Morrissey*)  
Kruger, Danny  
Lamont, John  
Lewis, rh Sir Julian  
Lopez, Julia  
Malthouse, rh Kit  
Mayhew, Jerome  
McMurdock, James

Abbott, rh Ms Diane (*Proxy*  
*vote cast by Bell Ribeiro-*  
*Addy*)  
Abbott, Jack  
Abrahams, Debbie  
Adam, Shokat  
Ahmed, Dr Zubir  
Akehurst, Luke  
Alexander, rh Heidi  
Al-Hassan, Sadik  
Ali, Rushanara  
Ali, Tahir  
Amos, Gideon  
Anderson, Callum  
Anderson, Fleur  
Aquarone, Steff  
Arthur, Dr Scott  
Asato, Jess  
Asser, James  
Athwal, Jas  
Atkinson, Catherine  
Atkinson, Lewis  
Babarinde, Josh  
Bailey, Olivia  
Baker, Richard  
Ballinger, Alex  
Bance, Antonia  
Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex

McVey, rh Esther  
Mohindra, Mr Gagan  
Morgan, Helen  
Morrissey, Joy  
Morton, rh Wendy  
Mullan, Dr Kieran  
Obese-Jecty, Ben  
Patel, rh Priti  
Paul, Rebecca  
Philp, rh Chris  
Pochin, Sarah  
Raja, Shivani (*Proxy vote cast*  
*by Mr Mohindra*)  
Rankin, Jack  
Reed, David  
Robertson, Joe  
Rosindell, Andrew  
Shannon, Jim  
Simmonds, David  
Smith, Greg  
Smith, rh Sir Julian  
Smith, Rebecca  
Snowden, Mr Andrew  
Spencer, Dr Ben  
Stafford, Gregory  
Stephenson, Blake  
Swann, Robin  
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond  
Thomas, Bradley  
Tice, Richard  
Timothy, Nick  
Vickers, Martin  
Vickers, Matt  
Whately, Helen  
Wild, James  
Williamson, rh Sir Gavin  
Wood, Mike

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
**Katie Lam and**  
**Mr Richard Holden**

#### NOES

Baxter, Johanna  
Beales, Danny  
Beavers, Lorraine  
Begum, Apsana (*Proxy vote*  
*cast by Zarah Sultana*)  
Benn, rh Hilary  
Bennett, Alison  
Berry, Siân  
Betts, Mr Clive  
Billington, Ms Polly  
Bishop, Matt  
Blackman, Kirsty  
Blake, Olivia  
Blake, Rachel  
Bloore, Chris  
Blundell, Mrs Elsie  
Bonavia, Kevin  
Botterill, Jade  
Brackenridge, Mrs Sureena  
Brash, Mr Jonathan  
Brewer, Alex  
Brickell, Phil  
Brown-Fuller, Jess  
Buckley, Julia  
Burton-Sampson, David  
Byrne, Ian  
Caliskan, Nesil  
Campbell, rh Sir Alan

Campbell, Irene  
Campbell, Juliet  
Campbell-Savours, Markus  
Cane, Charlotte  
Carden, Dan  
Carling, Sam  
Chadwick, David  
Chamberlain, Wendy  
Chambers, Dr Danny  
Champion, Sarah  
Charters, Mr Luke  
Chowns, Ellie  
Clark, Feryal  
Coghlan, Chris  
Coleman, Ben  
Collier, Jacob  
Collinge, Lizzi  
Collins, Tom  
Collins, Victoria  
Conlon, Liam  
Coombes, Sarah  
Cooper, Andrew  
Cooper, Dr Beccy  
Cooper, Daisy  
Cooper, rh Yvette  
Corbyn, rh Jeremy  
Costigan, Deirdre  
Cox, Pam  
Coyle, Neil  
Craft, Jen  
Creasy, Ms Stella  
Daby, Janet  
Dakin, Sir Nicholas  
Dance, Adam  
Darling, Steve  
Davey, rh Ed  
Davies, Ann  
Davies, Jonathan  
Davies, Paul  
Davies, Shaun  
Davies-Jones, Alex  
Dean, Bobby  
Dean, Josh  
Dearden, Kate  
Denyer, Carla  
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh  
Dickson, Jim  
Dillon, Mr Lee  
Dixon, Samantha  
Dollimore, Helena  
Doogan, Dave  
Dowd, Peter  
Downie, Graeme  
Duncan-Jordan, Neil  
Eagle, Dame Angela  
Eagle, rh Maria  
Eastwood, Colum  
Edwards, Lauren  
Egan, Damien  
Ellis, Maya  
Elmore, Chris  
Entwistle, Kirth  
Eshalomi, Florence  
Esterson, Bill  
Evans, Chris  
Fahnbulleh, Miatta  
Falconer, Mr Hamish  
Farnsworth, Linsey  
Farron, Tim  
Fenton-Glynn, Josh  
Ferguson, Mark  
Fleet, Natalie  
Foody, Emma  
Fookes, Catherine  
Forster, Mr Will  
Foster, Mr Paul  
Foxcroft, Vicky  
Foy, Mary Kelly  
Francis, Daniel  
Franklin, Zöe  
Frith, Mr James  
Furniss, Gill  
Gardiner, Barry  
Gardner, Dr Allison  
Gelder, Anna  
Gemmell, Alan  
George, Andrew  
German, Gill  
Gethins, Stephen  
Gibson, Sarah (*Proxy vote  
cast by Anna Sabine*)  
Gilbert, Tracy  
Gilmour, Rachel  
Gittins, Becky  
Glendon, Mary  
Glover, Olly  
Goldman, Marie  
Goldsborough, Ben  
Gordon, Tom  
Gosling, Jodie  
Gould, Georgia  
Grady, John  
Green, Sarah  
Greenwood, Lilian  
Griffith, Dame Nia  
Gwynne, Andrew (*Proxy vote  
cast by Chris Elmore*)  
Hack, Amanda  
Hall, Sarah  
Hamilton, Paulette  
Harding, Monica  
Hardy, Emma  
Harris, Carolyn  
Hatton, Lloyd  
Hayes, Helen  
Hayes, Tom  
Hazelgrove, Claire  
Healey, rh John  
Hendrick, Sir Mark (*Proxy vote  
cast by Chris Elmore*)  
Heylings, Pippa  
Hinchliff, Chris  
Hinder, Jonathan  
Hobhouse, Wera  
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
Hopkins, Rachel  
Hughes, Claire  
Hume, Alison  
Huq, Dr Rupa  
Hurley, Patrick  
Hussain, Imran  
Irons, Natasha  
Jameson, Sally  
Jardine, Christine  
Jarvis, Dan  
Jarvis, Liz  
Jermy, Terry  
Johnson, Kim  
Jones, Clive  
Jones, rh Darren  
Jones, Gerald  
Jones, Louise  
Jones, Ruth  
Jones, Sarah

Josan, Gurinder Singh  
Joseph, Sojan  
Juss, Warinder  
Kane, Chris  
Kane, Mike  
Kaur, Satvir (*Proxy vote cast  
by Chris Elmore*)  
Khan, Afzal  
Khan, Ayoub  
Khan, Naushabah  
Kinnock, Stephen  
Kirkham, Jayne  
Kitchen, Gen  
Kumar, Sonia  
Kumaran, Uma  
Kyrke-Smith, Laura  
Lake, Ben  
Lamb, Peter  
Lavery, Ian  
Law, Noah  
Leadbeater, Kim  
Leishman, Brian  
Lewell, Emma  
Lewin, Andrew  
Lightwood, Simon  
Logan, Seamus  
Long Bailey, Rebecca  
MacAlister, Josh  
MacCleary, James  
Macdonald, Alice  
MacNae, Andy  
Madders, Justin  
Maguire, Ben  
Maguire, Helen  
Malhotra, Seema  
Martin, Amanda  
Martin, Mike  
Maskell, Rachael  
Mathew, Brian  
Mayer, Alex  
Maynard, Charlie  
McDonagh, Dame Siobhain  
McDonald, Andy  
McDonald, Chris  
McDonnell, rh John  
McDougall, Blair  
McEvoy, Lola  
McGovern, Alison  
McIntyre, Alex  
McKenna, Kevin  
McKinnell, Catherine  
McMahon, Jim  
McMorrin, Anna  
McNeill, Kirsty  
Midgley, Anneliese  
Miller, Calum  
Milne, John  
Minns, Ms Julie  
Mishra, Navendu  
Mohamed, Iqbal  
Moon, Perran  
Moran, Layla (*Proxy vote cast  
by Zöe Franklin*)  
Morden, Jessica  
Morello, Edward  
Morris, Grahame  
Morris, Joe  
Morrison, Mr Tom  
Mullane, Margaret  
Munt, Tessa  
Murphy, Luke  
Murray, Chris  
Murray, rh Ian (*Proxy vote  
cast by Chris Elmore*)  
Murray, James  
Myer, Luke  
Naismith, Connor  
Narayan, Kanishka  
Nash, Pamela  
Newbury, Josh  
Niblett, Samantha  
Nichols, Charlotte  
Norris, Alex  
O'Hara, Brendan  
Olney, Sarah  
Onwurah, Chi  
Opher, Dr Simon  
Oppong-Asare, Ms Abena  
Osborne, Kate (*Proxy vote  
cast by Kim Johnson*)  
Osborne, Tristan  
Owatemi, Taiwo  
Owen, Sarah  
Paffey, Darren  
Pakes, Andrew  
Patrick, Matthew  
Payne, Michael  
Peacock, Stephanie  
Pearce, Jon  
Pennycook, Matthew  
Perteghella, Manuela  
Phillips, Jess  
Pinto-Duschinsky, David  
Pitcher, Lee  
Platt, Jo  
Pollard, Luke  
Powell, Joe  
Powell, rh Lucy  
Poynton, Gregor  
Prinsley, Peter  
Quigley, Mr Richard  
Qureshi, Yasmin  
Race, Steve  
Ramsay, Adrian  
Ranger, Andrew  
Reader, Mike  
Reynolds, Emma  
Reynolds, rh Jonathan  
Reynolds, Mr Joshua  
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell  
Richards, Jake  
Riddell-Carpenter, Jenny  
Rigby, Lucy  
Rimmer, Ms Marie  
Roca, Tim  
Rodda, Matt  
Roome, Ian  
Rushworth, Sam  
Russell, Sarah  
Rutland, Tom  
Ryan, Oliver  
Sabine, Anna  
Sackman, Sarah  
Sandher, Dr Jeevun  
Savage, Dr Roz  
Saville Roberts, rh Liz  
Scrogham, Michelle  
Sewards, Mark  
Shah, Naz  
Shanker, Baggy  
Siddiq, Tulip  
Simons, Josh  
Slade, Vikki  
Slaughter, Andy



Slinger, John  
Smart, Lisa  
Smith, Cat  
Smith, David  
Smith, Jeff  
Smith, Nick  
Smith, Sarah  
Smyth, Karin  
Snell, Gareth  
Sollom, Ian  
Stainbank, Euan  
Stevens, rh Jo  
Stone, Jamie  
Stone, Will  
Strathern, Alistair  
Strickland, Alan  
Stringer, Graham  
Sullivan, Dr Lauren  
Sultana, Zarah  
Swallow, Peter  
Tami, rh Mark  
Tapp, Mike  
Taylor, Alison  
Taylor, David  
Taylor, Luke  
Taylor, Rachel  
Thomas, Fred  
Thompson, Adam  
Tidball, Dr Marie  
Timms, rh Sir Stephen  
Toale, Jessica  
Trickett, Jon  
Tufnell, Henry (*Proxy vote  
cast by Callum Anderson*)  
Turley, Anna  
Turmaine, Matt

Turner, Laurence  
Twigg, Derek  
Twist, Liz  
Uppal, Harpreet  
Vaughan, Tony  
Vince, Chris  
Voaden, Caroline  
Walker, Imogen  
Ward, Chris (*Proxy vote cast  
by Chris Elmore*)  
Ward, Melanie  
Waugh, Paul  
Welsh, Michelle  
West, Catherine  
Western, Andrew  
Western, Matt  
Wheeler, Michael  
Whitby, John  
White, Jo  
White, Katie  
Whittome, Nadia  
Wilkinson, Max  
Williams, David  
Wishart, Pete  
Witherden, Steve  
Woodcock, Sean  
Wrighting, Rosie  
Wrigley, Martin  
Yang, Yuan  
Yasin, Mohammad  
Yemm, Steve  
Young, Claire

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
**Keir Mather and**  
**Christian Wakeford**

*Question accordingly negated.*

### New Clause 18

#### CAP ON THE NUMBER OF ENTRANTS

“(1) Within six months of the passing of this Act, the Secretary of State must make regulations specifying the total maximum number of persons who may enter the United Kingdom annually across all non-visitor visa routes, with such regulations subject to approval by both Houses.

(2) The Secretary of State may by regulations also specify a maximum number of entrants for individual visa routes, subject to the overall total.

(3) No visas may be issued in excess of the total maximum number specified in subsection (1).

(4) Any visas issued in excess of the number specified in subsection (1) must be revoked.”—(*Chris Philp.*)

*This new clause would provide a mechanism for a binding annual cap on the number of nonvisitor visas issued by the UK.*

*Brought up.*

*Question put, That the clause be added to the Bill.*

*The House divided: Ayes 94, Noes 315.*

**Division No. 193]**

**[9.27 pm**

#### AYES

Allister, Jim  
Anderson, Lee  
Andrew, rh Stuart  
Argar, rh Edward  
Atkins, rh Victoria  
Bacon, Gareth

Badenoch, rh Mrs Kemi  
Baldwin, Dame Harriett  
Barclay, rh Steve  
Bedford, Mr Peter  
Bhatti, Saqib  
Blackman, Bob

Bool, Sarah  
Brandreth, Aphra  
Braverman, rh Suella  
Burghart, Alex  
Campbell, Mr Gregory  
Chope, Sir Christopher  
Cleverly, rh Sir James  
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey  
Cocking, Lewis  
Cooper, John  
Costa, Alberto  
Coutinho, rh Claire (*Proxy  
vote cast by Joy Morrissey*)  
Cross, Harriet  
Davies, Gareth  
Davies, Mims  
Davis, rh David  
Dewhurst, Charlie  
Dowden, rh Sir Oliver  
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain  
Evans, Dr Luke  
Farage, Nigel  
Fortune, Peter  
Fox, Sir Ashley  
Francois, rh Mr Mark  
French, Mr Louie  
Garnier, Mark  
Grant, Helen  
Griffith, Andrew  
Griffiths, Alison  
Harris, Rebecca  
Hayes, rh Sir John  
Hinds, rh Damian  
Hoare, Simon  
Hollinrake, Kevin  
Holmes, Paul  
Huddleston, Nigel  
Jenkin, Sir Bernard  
Jenrick, rh Robert  
Johnson, Dr Caroline  
Jopp, Lincoln  
Kearns, Alicia (*Proxy vote cast  
by Joy Morrissey*)  
Kruger, Danny  
Lamont, John

Lewis, rh Sir Julian  
Lopez, Julia  
Malthouse, rh Kit  
Mayhew, Jerome  
McMurdoch, James  
McVey, rh Esther  
Mohindra, Mr Gagan  
Morrissey, Joy  
Morton, rh Wendy  
Mullan, Dr Kieran  
Obese-Jecty, Ben  
Patel, rh Priti  
Paul, Rebecca  
Philp, rh Chris  
Pochin, Sarah  
Raja, Shivani (*Proxy vote cast  
by Mr Mohindra*)  
Rankin, Jack  
Reed, David  
Robertson, Joe  
Shannon, Jim  
Simmonds, David  
Smith, Greg  
Smith, rh Sir Julian  
Smith, Rebecca  
Snowden, Mr Andrew  
Spencer, Dr Ben  
Stafford, Gregory  
Stephenson, Blake  
Swann, Robin  
Wayne, rh Sir Desmond  
Thomas, Bradley  
Tice, Richard  
Timothy, Nick  
Vickers, Martin  
Vickers, Matt  
Whately, Helen  
Wild, James  
Williamson, rh Sir Gavin  
Wood, Mike

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
**Katie Lam and**  
**Mr Richard Holden**

#### NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane (*Proxy  
vote cast by Bell Ribeiro-  
Addy*)  
Abbott, Jack  
Adam, Shokat  
Ahmed, Dr Zubir  
Akehurst, Luke  
Alexander, rh Heidi  
Al-Hassan, Sadik  
Ali, Rushanara  
Ali, Tahir  
Anderson, Callum  
Anderson, Fleur  
Arthur, Dr Scott  
Asato, Jess  
Asser, James  
Athwal, Jas  
Atkinson, Catherine  
Atkinson, Lewis  
Bailey, Olivia  
Baker, Richard  
Ballinger, Alex  
Bance, Antonia

Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex  
Baxter, Johanna  
Beavers, Lorraine  
Begum, Apsara (*Proxy vote  
cast by Zarah Sultana*)  
Benn, rh Hilary  
Betts, Mr Clive  
Bishop, Matt  
Blackman, Kirsty  
Blake, Olivia  
Bloore, Chris  
Blundell, Mrs Elsie  
Bonavia, Kevin  
Botterill, Jade  
Brackenridge, Mrs Sureena  
Brash, Mr Jonathan  
Brickell, Phil  
Burton-Sampson, David  
Caliskan, Nesil  
Campbell, rh Sir Alan  
Campbell, Irene  
Campbell, Juliet  
Campbell-Savours, Markus  
Carden, Dan

Carling, Sam  
 Champion, Sarah  
 Charters, Mr Luke  
 Chowns, Ellie  
 Coleman, Ben  
 Collier, Jacob  
 Collinge, Lizzi  
 Collins, Tom  
 Coombes, Sarah  
 Cooper, Andrew  
 Cooper, rh Yvette  
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy  
 Costigan, Deirdre  
 Craft, Jen  
 Creasy, Ms Stella  
 Daby, Janet  
 Dakin, Sir Nicholas  
 Davies, Ann  
 Davies, Jonathan  
 Davies, Paul  
 Davies, Shaun  
 Davies-Jones, Alex  
 Dean, Josh  
 Dearden, Kate  
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh  
 Dickson, Jim  
 Dixon, Samantha  
 Dollimore, Helena  
 Doogan, Dave  
 Dowd, Peter  
 Downie, Graeme  
 Duncan-Jordan, Neil  
 Eagle, Dame Angela  
 Eagle, rh Maria  
 Eastwood, Colum  
 Edwards, Lauren  
 Efford, Clive  
 Egan, Damien  
 Ellis, Maya  
 Elmore, Chris  
 Entwistle, Kirith  
 Esterson, Bill  
 Evans, Chris  
 Fahnbulleh, Miatta  
 Falconer, Mr Hamish  
 Fenton-Glynn, Josh  
 Ferguson, Mark  
 Fleet, Natalie  
 Foody, Emma  
 Fookes, Catherine  
 Foster, Mr Paul  
 Foxcroft, Vicky  
 Foy, Mary Kelly  
 Francis, Daniel  
 Frith, Mr James  
 Furniss, Gill  
 Gardiner, Barry  
 Gardner, Dr Allison  
 Gelderd, Anna  
 Gemmell, Alan  
 German, Gill  
 Gethins, Stephen  
 Gilbert, Tracy  
 Gittins, Becky  
 Glindon, Mary  
 Gould, Georgia  
 Grady, John  
 Greenwood, Lilian  
 Griffith, Dame Nia  
 Gwynne, Andrew (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)  
 Hack, Amanda

Haigh, rh Louise  
 Hall, Sarah  
 Hamilton, Paulette  
 Hardy, Emma  
 Harris, Carolyn  
 Hayes, Helen  
 Hayes, Tom  
 Hazelgrove, Claire  
 Healey, rh John  
 Hendrick, Sir Mark (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)  
 Hinchliff, Chris  
 Hinder, Jonathan  
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
 Hopkins, Rachel  
 Hughes, Claire  
 Hume, Alison  
 Huq, Dr Rupa  
 Hurley, Patrick  
 Hussain, Imran  
 Irons, Natasha  
 Jameson, Sally  
 Jarvis, Dan  
 Jermy, Terry  
 Johnson, Kim  
 Jones, rh Darren  
 Jones, Gerald  
 Jones, Louise  
 Jones, Ruth  
 Jones, Sarah  
 Josan, Gurinder Singh  
 Joseph, Sojan  
 Juss, Warinder  
 Kane, Chris  
 Kaur, Satvir (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)  
 Khan, Afzal  
 Khan, Ayoub  
 Khan, Naushabah  
 Kinnock, Stephen  
 Kirkham, Jayne  
 Kitchen, Gen  
 Kumar, Sonia  
 Kumaran, Uma  
 Kyrke-Smith, Laura  
 Lake, Ben  
 Lavery, Ian  
 Law, Noah  
 Leadbeater, Kim  
 Leadbitter, Graham  
 Leishman, Brian  
 Lewell, Emma  
 Lewin, Andrew  
 Lightwood, Simon  
 Logan, Seamus  
 Long Bailey, Rebecca  
 MacAlister, Josh  
 Macdonald, Alice  
 MacNae, Andy  
 Madders, Justin  
 Malhotra, Seema  
 Martin, Amanda  
 Maskell, Rachael  
 Mayer, Alex  
 McDonagh, Dame Siobhain  
 McDonald, Andy  
 McDonald, Chris  
 McDonnell, rh John  
 McDougall, Blair  
 McEvoy, Lola  
 McGovern, Alison  
 McIntyre, Alex

McKinnell, Catherine  
 McMahon, Jim  
 McMorris, Anna  
 Midgley, Anneliese  
 Minns, Ms Julie  
 Mishra, Navendu  
 Mohamed, Iqbal  
 Moon, Perran  
 Morden, Jessica  
 Morris, Grahame  
 Morris, Joe  
 Mullane, Margaret  
 Murphy, Luke  
 Murray, Chris  
 Murray, rh Ian (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)  
 Murray, James  
 Myer, Luke  
 Naismith, Connor  
 Narayan, Kanishka  
 Nash, Pamela  
 Newbury, Josh  
 Nichols, Charlotte  
 Norris, Alex  
 O'Hara, Brendan  
 Onn, Melanie  
 Onwurah, Chi  
 Opher, Dr Simon  
 Oppong-Asare, Ms Abena  
 Osborne, Kate (*Proxy vote cast by Kim Johnson*)  
 Osborne, Tristan  
 Owatemi, Taiwo  
 Owen, Sarah  
 Paffey, Darren  
 Pakes, Andrew  
 Patrick, Matthew  
 Payne, Michael  
 Peacock, Stephanie  
 Pearce, Jon  
 Pennycook, Matthew  
 Phillips, Jess  
 Pinto-Duschinsky, David  
 Pitcher, Lee  
 Platt, Jo  
 Pollard, Luke  
 Powell, rh Lucy  
 Poynton, Gregor  
 Prinsley, Peter  
 Qureshi, Yasmin  
 Ramsay, Adrian  
 Ranger, Andrew  
 Reader, Mike  
 Reynolds, Emma  
 Reynolds, rh Jonathan  
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell  
 Richards, Jake  
 Riddell-Carpenter, Jenny  
 Rigby, Lucy  
 Rimmer, Ms Marie  
 Roca, Tim  
 Rodda, Matt  
 Rushworth, Sam  
 Russell, Sarah  
 Rutland, Tom  
 Ryan, Oliver  
 Sandher, Dr Jeevun  
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz  
 Scroggum, Michelle  
 Sowards, Mark

Shah, Naz  
 Shanker, Baggy  
 Siddiq, Tulip  
 Simons, Josh  
 Slaughter, Andy  
 Slinger, John  
 Smith, Cat  
 Smith, David  
 Smith, Jeff  
 Smith, Nick  
 Smith, Sarah  
 Smyth, Karin  
 Snell, Gareth  
 Stainbank, Euan  
 Stevens, rh Jo  
 Stone, Will  
 Strathern, Alistair  
 Strickland, Alan  
 Stringer, Graham  
 Sullivan, Dr Lauren  
 Sultana, Zarah  
 Swallow, Peter  
 Tami, rh Mark  
 Tapp, Mike  
 Taylor, Alison  
 Taylor, David  
 Taylor, Rachel  
 Thomas, Fred  
 Thompson, Adam  
 Tidball, Dr Marie  
 Timms, rh Sir Stephen  
 Toale, Jessica  
 Trickett, Jon  
 Tufnell, Henry (*Proxy vote cast by Callum Anderson*)  
 Turley, Anna  
 Turmaine, Matt  
 Turner, Laurence  
 Twigg, Derek  
 Twist, Liz  
 Uppal, Harpreet  
 Vaughan, Tony  
 Vince, Chris  
 Walker, Imogen  
 Ward, Chris (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)  
 Ward, Melanie  
 Waugh, Paul  
 Welsh, Michelle  
 West, Catherine  
 Western, Andrew  
 Western, Matt  
 Wheeler, Michael  
 Whitby, John  
 White, Jo  
 White, Katie  
 Whittome, Nadia  
 Williams, David  
 Wishart, Pete  
 Witherden, Steve  
 Woodcock, Sean  
 Wrighting, Rosie  
 Yang, Yuan  
 Yasin, Mohammad  
 Yemm, Steve

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
 Keir Mather and  
 Christian Wakeford

*Question accordingly negated.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Ms Nusrat Ghani):** It has been brought to my attention that not all the Division bells are working. We are trying to rectify that as soon as possible. I urge colleagues to remain close to the Chamber and the estate, and to keep their eyes on the annunciators.

### New Clause 21

#### REMOVAL OF RESTRICTIONS ON ASYLUM SEEKERS ENGAGING IN EMPLOYMENT

“The Secretary of State must, within three months of the date on which this Act is passed, lay before Parliament a statement of changes in the rules (the ‘immigration rules’) under section 3(2) of the Immigration Act 1971 (general provisions for regulation and control) to make provision for asylum applicants to take up employment whilst their application is being determined, if it has been over three months since the application was made, with no decision made.”—(*Lisa Smart.*)

*This new clause would remove the restriction on working for asylum seekers, if it has been over three months since they applied.*

*Brought up.*

*Question put, That the clause be added to the Bill.*

*The House divided: Ayes 87, Noes 404.*

**Division No. 194]**

**[9.40 pm**

#### AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Bell Ribeiro-Addy</i> )	Gordon, Tom
Adam, Shockat	Green, Sarah
Amos, Gideon	Harding, Monica
Aquarone, Steff	Heylings, Pippa
Babarinde, Josh	Hobhouse, Wera
Begum, Apsana ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Zarah Sultana</i> )	Jardine, Christine
Bennett, Alison	Jarvis, Liz
Berry, Siân	Jones, Clive
Blackman, Kirsty	Khan, Ayoub
Blake, Olivia	Lake, Ben
Brewer, Alex	Leadbitter, Graham
Brown-Fuller, Jess	Logan, Seamus
Cane, Charlotte	MacCleary, James
Chadwick, David	Maguire, Ben
Chamberlain, Wendy	Maguire, Helen
Chambers, Dr Danny	Martin, Mike
Chowns, Ellie	Mathew, Brian
Coghlan, Chris	Maynard, Charlie
Collins, Victoria	McDonnell, rh John
Cooper, Daisy	Miller, Calum
Corbyn, rh Jeremy	Milne, John
Dance, Adam	Mohamed, Iqbal
Darling, Steve	Moran, Layla ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Zöe Franklin</i> )
Davey, rh Ed	Morello, Edward
Davies, Ann	Morgan, Helen
Denyer, Carla	Munt, Tessa
Dillon, Mr Lee	O'Hara, Brendan
Doogan, Dave	Olney, Sarah
Dyke, Sarah	Perteghella, Manuela
Eastwood, Colum	Ramsay, Adrian
Farron, Tim	Reynolds, Mr Joshua
Forster, Mr Will	Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Franklin, Zöe	Roome, Ian
George, Andrew	Sabine, Anna
Gethins, Stephen	Savage, Dr Roz
Gibson, Sarah ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Anna Sabine</i> )	Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Gilmour, Rachel	Slade, Vikki
Glover, Olly	Smart, Lisa
Goldman, Marie	Sollom, Ian
	Stone, Jamie
	Sultana, Zarah
	Taylor, Luke

Voaden, Caroline  
Whittome, Nadia  
Wilkinson, Max  
Wishart, Pete  
Wrigley, Martin

Young, Claire

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
**Mr Tom Morrison and**  
**Bobby Dean**

#### NOES

Abrahams, Debbie	Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Ahmed, Dr Zubir	Cocking, Lewis
Akehurst, Luke	Coleman, Ben
Alexander, rh Heidi	Collier, Jacob
Al-Hassan, Sadik	Collinge, Lizzi
Ali, Rushanara	Collins, Tom
Ali, Tahir	Conlon, Liam
Allister, Jim	Coombes, Sarah
Anderson, Callum	Cooper, Andrew
Anderson, Fleur	Cooper, Dr Beccy
Anderson, Lee	Cooper, John
Andrew, rh Stuart	Cooper, rh Yvette
Argar, rh Edward	Costa, Alberto
Arthur, Dr Scott	Costigan, Deirdre
Asato, Jess	Cox, Pam
Asser, James	Coyle, Neil
Athwal, Jas	Craft, Jen
Atkins, rh Victoria	Creasy, Ms Stella
Atkinson, Catherine	Cross, Harriet
Atkinson, Lewis	Daby, Janet
Bacon, Gareth	Dakin, Sir Nicholas
Badenoch, rh Mrs Kemi	Davies, Gareth
Bailey, Olivia	Davies, Jonathan
Baker, Richard	Davies, Mims
Baldwin, Dame Harriett	Davies, Paul
Ballinger, Alex	Davies, Shaun
Bance, Antonia	Davies-Jones, Alex
Barclay, rh Steve	Dean, Josh
Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex	Dearden, Kate
Baxter, Johanna	Dewhurst, Charlie
Beales, Danny	Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Beavers, Lorraine	Dickson, Jim
Bedford, Mr Peter	Dixon, Samantha
Benn, rh Hilary	Dollimore, Helena
Betts, Mr Clive	Dowd, Peter
Bhatti, Saqib	Downie, Graeme
Billington, Ms Polly	Duncan-Jordan, Neil
Bishop, Matt	Eagle, Dame Angela
Blackman, Bob	Eagle, rh Maria
Blake, Rachel	Edwards, Lauren
Blundell, Mrs Elsie	Efford, Clive
Bonavia, Kevin	Egan, Damien
Bool, Sarah	Ellis, Maya
Botterill, Jade	Elmore, Chris
Bowie, Andrew	Entwistle, Kirith
Brackenridge, Mrs Sureena	Eshalomi, Florence
Brandreth, Aphra	Esterson, Bill
Brash, Mr Jonathan	Evans, Chris
Braverman, rh Suella	Evans, Dr Luke
Brickell, Phil	Falconer, Mr Hamish
Buckley, Julia	Farage, Nigel
Burghart, Alex	Farnsworth, Linsey
Burton-Sampson, David	Fenton-Glynn, Josh
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	Ferguson, Mark
Campbell, Irene	Fleet, Natalie
Campbell, Juliet	Foody, Emma
Campbell-Savours, Markus	Fookes, Catherine
Carden, Dan	Fortune, Peter
Carling, Sam	Foster, Mr Paul
Champion, Sarah	Fox, Sir Ashley
Charters, Mr Luke	Foxcroft, Vicky
Chope, Sir Christopher	Foy, Mary Kelly
Clark, Feryal	Francis, Daniel
Cleverly, rh Sir James	Francois, rh Mr Mark



French, Mr Louie  
Frith, Mr James  
Furniss, Gill  
Gardiner, Barry  
Gardner, Dr Allison  
Garnier, Mark  
Gelder, Anna  
Gemmell, Alan  
German, Gill  
Gilbert, Tracy  
Gittins, Becky  
Glendon, Mary  
Goldsborough, Ben  
Gosling, Jodie  
Gould, Georgia  
Grady, John  
Grant, Helen  
Greenwood, Lilian  
Griffith, Andrew  
Griffith, Dame Nia  
Griffiths, Alison  
Gwynne, Andrew (*Proxy vote  
cast by Chris Elmore*)  
Hack, Amanda  
Haigh, rh Louise  
Hall, Sarah  
Hamilton, Paulette  
Hardy, Emma  
Harris, Carolyn  
Harris, Rebecca  
Hatton, Lloyd  
Hayes, Helen  
Hayes, rh Sir John  
Hayes, Tom  
Hazelgrove, Claire  
Healey, rh John  
Hendrick, Sir Mark (*Proxy vote  
cast by Chris Elmore*)  
Hinchliff, Chris  
Hinder, Jonathan  
Hinds, rh Damian  
Hoare, Simon  
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
Holden, rh Mr Richard  
Hollinrake, Kevin  
Holmes, Paul  
Hopkins, Rachel  
Huddleston, Nigel  
Hudson, Dr Neil  
Hughes, Claire  
Hume, Alison  
Huq, Dr Rupa  
Hurley, Patrick  
Irons, Natasha  
Jameson, Sally  
Jarvis, Dan  
Jenkin, Sir Bernard  
Jenrick, rh Robert  
Jermy, Terry  
Johnson, Dr Caroline  
Johnson, Kim  
Jones, rh Darren  
Jones, Gerald  
Jones, Louise  
Jones, Ruth  
Jones, Sarah  
Jopp, Lincoln  
Josan, Gurinder Singh  
Joseph, Sojan  
Juss, Warinder  
Kane, Chris

Kane, Mike  
Kaur, Satvir (*Proxy vote cast  
by Chris Elmore*)  
Khan, Afzal  
Khan, Naushabah  
Kinnock, Stephen  
Kirkham, Jayne  
Kitchen, Gen  
Kruger, Danny  
Kumar, Sonia  
Kumaran, Uma  
Lam, Katie  
Lamb, Peter  
Lamont, John  
Lavery, Ian  
Law, Noah  
Leadbeater, Kim  
Leishman, Brian  
Lewell, Emma  
Lewin, Andrew  
Lewis, rh Sir Julian  
Lightwood, Simon  
Long Bailey, Rebecca  
Lopez, Julia  
MacAlister, Josh  
Macdonald, Alice  
MacNae, Andy  
Madders, Justin  
Malthouse, rh Kit  
Martin, Amanda  
Maskell, Rachael  
Mayer, Alex  
Mayhew, Jerome  
McDonagh, Dame Siobhain  
McDonald, Andy  
McDonald, Chris  
McDougall, Blair  
McEvoy, Lola  
McGovern, Alison  
McIntyre, Alex  
McKenna, Kevin  
McKinnell, Catherine  
McMahon, Jim  
McMorrin, Anna  
McMurdock, James  
McNeill, Kirsty  
Midgley, Anneliese  
Minns, Ms Julie  
Mishra, Navendu  
Mohindra, Mr Gagan  
Moon, Perran  
Morden, Jessica  
Morris, Grahame  
Morris, Joe  
Morton, rh Wendy  
Mullan, Dr Kieran  
Mullane, Margaret  
Murphy, Luke  
Murray, Chris  
Murray, rh Ian (*Proxy vote  
cast by Chris Elmore*)  
Murray, James  
Myer, Luke  
Naismith, Connor  
Narayan, Kanishka  
Nash, Pamela  
Newbury, Josh  
Niblett, Samantha  
Nichols, Charlotte  
Norris, Alex  
Obese-Jecty, Ben  
Onn, Melanie

Onwurah, Chi  
Opher, Dr Simon  
Oppong-Asare, Ms Abena  
Osborne, Kate (*Proxy vote  
cast by Kim Johnson*)  
Osborne, Tristan  
Owatemi, Taiwo  
Owen, Sarah  
Paffey, Darren  
Pakes, Andrew  
Patel, rh Priti  
Patrick, Matthew  
Paul, Rebecca  
Payne, Michael  
Peacock, Stephanie  
Pearce, Jon  
Pennycook, Matthew  
Phillips, Jess  
Philp, rh Chris  
Pinto-Duschinsky, David  
Pitcher, Lee  
Platt, Jo  
Pochin, Sarah  
Pollard, Luke  
Powell, Joe  
Powell, rh Lucy  
Poynton, Gregor  
Prinsley, Peter  
Quigley, Mr Richard  
Qureshi, Yasmin  
Race, Steve  
Raja, Shivani (*Proxy vote cast  
by Mr Mohindra*)  
Ranger, Andrew  
Rankin, Jack  
Reader, Mike  
Reed, David  
Reynolds, Emma  
Reynolds, rh Jonathan  
Richards, Jake  
Riddell-Carpenter, Jenny  
Rigby, Lucy  
Robertson, Joe  
Roca, Tim  
Rodda, Matt  
Rosindell, Andrew  
Rushworth, Sam  
Russell, Sarah  
Rutland, Tom  
Ryan, Oliver  
Sackman, Sarah  
Sandher, Dr Jeevun  
Scrogham, Michelle  
Sewards, Mark  
Shah, Naz  
Shanker, Baggy  
Siddiq, Tulip  
Simmonds, David  
Simons, Josh  
Slaughter, Andy  
Slinger, John  
Smith, Cat  
Smith, David  
Smith, Greg  
Smith, Jeff  
Smith, rh Sir Julian  
Smith, Nick  
Smith, Rebecca  
Smith, Sarah  
Smyth, Karin

Snell, Gareth  
Snowden, Mr Andrew  
Spencer, Dr Ben  
Stafford, Gregory  
Stainbank, Euan  
Stephenson, Blake  
Stevens, rh Jo  
Stone, Will  
Strathern, Alistair  
Strickland, Alan  
Stringer, Graham  
Sullivan, Dr Lauren  
Swallow, Peter  
Swann, Robin  
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond  
Tami, rh Mark  
Tapp, Mike  
Taylor, Alison  
Taylor, David  
Taylor, Rachel  
Thomas, Bradley  
Thomas, Fred  
Thompson, Adam  
Tice, Richard  
Tidball, Dr Marie  
Timms, rh Sir Stephen  
Timothy, Nick  
Toale, Jessica  
Trickett, Jon  
Tufnell, Henry (*Proxy vote  
cast by Callum Anderson*)  
Turley, Anna  
Turmaine, Matt  
Turner, Laurence  
Twigg, Derek  
Twist, Liz  
Uppal, Harpreet  
Vaughan, Tony  
Vickers, Martin  
Vickers, Matt  
Vince, Chris  
Walker, Imogen  
Ward, Chris (*Proxy vote cast  
by Chris Elmore*)  
Ward, Melanie  
Waugh, Paul  
Welsh, Michelle  
West, Catherine  
Western, Andrew  
Western, Matt  
Whately, Helen  
Wheeler, Michael  
Whitby, John  
White, Jo  
White, Katie  
Wild, James  
Williams, David  
Williamson, rh Sir Gavin  
Witherden, Steve  
Wood, Mike  
Woodcock, Sean  
Wrighting, Rosie  
Yang, Yuan  
Yasin, Mohammad  
Yemm, Steve

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
**Keir Mather and**  
**Christian Wakeford**

*Question accordingly negated.*

**Clause 20**POWERS OF AUTHORISED OFFICERS TO SEARCH FOR  
RELEVANT ARTICLES

*Amendments made:* 6, page 14, line 33, leave out “superintendent” and insert “inspector”.

*This amendment changes the rank of the officer who may authorise a constable to exercise a power to search under this clause.*

Amendment 7, page 14, line 33, at end insert—

“(7A) If an inspector gives an authorisation under subsection (7), the inspector must, as soon as it is practicable to do so, cause an officer of at least the rank of superintendent to be informed.”—(*Dame Angela Eagle.*)

*This amendment provides that where an inspector authorises a constable to exercise a power to search under this clause the inspector must cause an officer of at least the rank of superintendent to be informed as soon as is practicable.*

**Clause 21**

## POWERS TO SEIZE AND RETAIN RELEVANT ARTICLES

*Amendments made:* 8, page 15, line 3, leave out “superintendent” and insert “inspector”.

*This amendment changes the rank of the officer who may authorise a constable to exercise a power of seizure under this clause.*

Amendment 9, page 15, line 3, at end insert—

“(2A) If an inspector gives an authorisation under subsection (2), the inspector must, as soon as it is practicable to do so, cause an officer of at least the rank of superintendent to be informed.”—(*Dame Angela Eagle.*)

*This amendment provides that where an inspector authorises a constable to exercise a power of seizure under this clause the inspector must cause an officer of at least the rank of superintendent to be informed as soon as is practicable.*

**Clause 23**POWERS TO ACCESS, COPY AND USE INFORMATION  
STORED ON RELEVANT ARTICLES

*Amendments made:* 10, page 17, line 41, leave out “superintendent” and insert “inspector”.

*This amendment changes the rank of the officer who may authorise a constable to exercise a power to access, examine, copy, retain or use information under this clause.*

Amendment 11, page 17, line 41, at end insert—

“(3) If an inspector gives an authorisation under subsection (2), the inspector must, as soon as it is practicable to do so, cause an officer of at least the rank of superintendent to be informed.”—(*Dame Angela Eagle.*)

*This amendment provides that where an inspector authorises a constable to exercise a power to access, examine, copy, retain or use information under this clause the inspector must cause an officer of at least the rank of superintendent to be informed as soon as is practicable.*

**Clause 25**

## EXTENSION OF POWERS TO OTHER PERSONS

*Amendment made:* 12, page 18, line 24, leave out “22” and insert “23”.—(*Dame Angela Eagle.*)

*This amendment corrects an incorrect cross-reference; the effect is that the Secretary of State may by regulations provide that a reference to an authorised officer in clause 23 (rather than clause 22) includes a person of a description specified in the regulations.*

**Clause 40**IMMIGRATION ADVISERS AND IMMIGRATION  
SERVICE PROVIDERS

*Amendment made:* 13, page 32, line 21, at end insert “and certain related amendments of other provision”.—(*Dame Angela Eagle.*)

*This amendment is consequential on the amendments of Schedule 1 made by amendments 24, 27 and 29.*

**Clause 48**

## INSERT CLAUSE 48 HEADING

*Amendments made:* 14, page 43, line 7, leave out “within subsection (2)” and insert “made by a court in England and Wales”.

*This amendment and Amendments 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 remove provision enabling the imposition of electronic monitoring requirements by a court in Scotland or Northern Ireland when making an SCPO which is terrorism-related.*

Amendment 15, page 43, leave out lines 11 to 14.

*See the explanatory statement to Amendment 14.*

Amendment 16, page 45, line 2, leave out “the court” and insert

“, in the case of an order made by a court in England and Wales, the High Court in England and Wales”.

*This amendment is consequential on Amendments 14, 15, 17, 18 and 19 removing provision enabling the imposition of electronic monitoring requirements by a court in Scotland or Northern Ireland when making an SCPO which is terrorism-related.*

Amendment 17, page 45, line 6, leave out “the court” and insert

“, in the case of an order made by a court in England and Wales, the Crown Court in England and Wales”.

*This amendment is consequential on Amendments 14, 15, 16, 18 and 19 removing provision enabling the imposition of electronic monitoring requirements by a court in Northern Ireland when making an SCPO which is terrorism-related.*

Amendment 18, page 45, line 10, leave out “the court” and insert

“, in the case of an order made by a court in England and Wales, the Crown Court in England and Wales”.

*This amendment is consequential on Amendments 14, 15, 16, 17 and 19 removing provision enabling the imposition of electronic monitoring requirements by a court in Northern Ireland when making an SCPO which is terrorism-related.*

Amendment 19, page 45, leave out lines 12 to 21.—(*Dame Angela Eagle.*)

*This amendment is consequential on Amendments 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 removing provision enabling electronic monitoring requirements to be imposed by a court in Scotland when making an SCPO which is terrorism-related.*

**Clause 57**

## EXTENT

*Amendment made:* 20, page 60, line 22, at end insert—

“(ca) section 63(3) of the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006.”—(*Dame Angela Eagle.*)

*This amendment is consequential on NC5.*

**Clause 58****COMMENCEMENT**

*Amendments made:* 21, page 60, line 32, leave out paragraph (b) and insert—

“(b) paragraphs 2 to 4 of Schedule 1 (and section 40 and paragraph 1 of that Schedule so far as relating to those paragraphs);”.

*This amendment is consequential on the amendments of Schedule 1 made by amendments 24 to 29.*

*Amendment 22, page 60, line 36, after “regulations” insert “or an order”.—(Dame Angela Eagle.)*

*This amendment is consequential on amendment 28 and enables an order under the power inserted by that amendment to be made on or after the day on which the Bill is passed.*

**Schedule 1****IMMIGRATION ADVISERS AND  
IMMIGRATION SERVICE PROVIDERS**

*Amendments made:* 23, page 62, line 5, leave out paragraph 1 and insert—

“1 The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 is amended as follows.”

*This amendment is consequential on the amendments of Schedule 1 made by amendments 24, 27 and 29.*

*Amendment 24, page 62, line 6, at end insert—*

*“Power to amend definition of “relevant matters”*

1A In section 82 (interpretation of Part 5), after subsection (3) insert—

“(4) The Secretary of State may by regulations amend the definition of “relevant matters” in subsection (1).

(5) Regulations under subsection (4) may make consequential amendments to this section.”

1B (1) In section 166(5) (regulations subject to the affirmative procedure), after paragraph (c) insert—  
“(cza) section 82(4).”.

(2) If sub-paragraph (1) comes into force before the coming into force of paragraph 24(2) of Schedule 11 to the Immigration Act 2016, sub-paragraph (1) has effect as if after “procedure,” there were inserted “omit the “or” at the end of paragraph (c) and”.

*This amendment enables the definition of “relevant matters” in section 82(1) of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 to be amended by regulations.*

*Amendment 25, page 62, line 6 at end insert—*

*“Suspension etc of registration*

1C In section 84(3)(b) (effect of suspension of registration on person’s registration), for “4B(5)” substitute “4C(1)“.

1D (1) Section 87 (appeals to First-tier Tribunal) is amended as follows.

(2) After subsection (3A) insert—

“(3AA) Subsection (3A) does not apply in relation to a decision to cancel a person’s registration under paragraph 4A(e) of Schedule 6 if condition A or B is met.

(3AB) Condition A is that the Commissioner notifies the person to whom the decision relates (“the relevant person”) in writing that—

(a) the Commissioner considers that the relevant person is acting or has acted in a way which—

(i) creates a risk of serious harm to persons seeking immigration advice or immigration services, or

(ii) creates a risk of serious harm to the system of immigration control in the United Kingdom, and

(b) accordingly, the decision to cancel the relevant person’s registration has effect from the time specified in the notice and while the period mentioned in subsection (3A) is running.

(3AC) Condition B is that the person’s registration has been cancelled wholly or partly on the basis that the person has been convicted of—

(a) an offence involving dishonesty or deception, or

(b) an indictable offence.”

(3) After subsection (3C) insert—

“(3D) Tribunal Procedure Rules may not permit a direction of the kind mentioned in subsection (3B) in relation to a decision to cancel a person’s registration under paragraph 4A(e) of Schedule 6 where the person meets condition B in subsection (3AC).”

(4) In subsection (4), for the words from “paragraph 4B” to the end of the subsection substitute “paragraphs 4AA and 4B of Schedule 6 (appeals against suspension by the Commissioner).”

(5) After subsection (4) insert—

“(4A) For the purposes of this section, conduct creates a risk of serious harm to the system of immigration control in the United Kingdom if, in particular, it involves—

(a) abuse of a procedure operating in the United Kingdom in connection with immigration or asylum (including any appellate or other judicial procedure), or

(b) advice to any person to do something which would amount to such an abuse.”

1E (1) Schedule 6 (registration) is amended as follows.

(2) Before paragraph 4B (but after the italic heading before that paragraph) insert—

“4AA “(1) The Commissioner may, by notice in writing to a registered person, suspend the person’s registration from the time specified in the notice if—

(a) the Commissioner has reason to suspect that the registered person is acting or has acted in a way which—

(i) creates a risk of serious harm to persons seeking immigration advice or immigration services, or

(ii) creates a risk of serious harm to the system of immigration control in the United Kingdom, and

(b) accordingly, the Commissioner considers it is necessary to suspend the person’s registration.

(2) The Commissioner—

(a) may, by notice in writing to a person whose registration has been suspended under sub-paragraph (1), cancel the suspension of the person’s registration, and

(b) must do so if the Commissioner is no longer satisfied that paragraph (a) or (b) of that sub-paragraph applies in relation to that person.

(3) If a person’s registration has been suspended under sub-paragraph (1), the Commissioner must consider whether the suspension should be cancelled—

(a) before the end of the period of 7 working days beginning with the working day after the day on which the Commissioner issued the notice of the suspension, and

(b) before the end of each subsequent period of 7 working days.

(4) A person whose registration is suspended under sub-paragraph (1) may appeal to the First-tier Tribunal against the suspension.

(5) For the purposes of this paragraph, conduct creates a risk of serious harm to the system of immigration control in the United Kingdom if, in particular, it involves—



- (a) abuse of a procedure operating in the United Kingdom in connection with immigration or asylum (including any appellate or other judicial procedure), or
- (b) advice to any person to do something which would amount to such an abuse.
- (6) In this paragraph “working day” means a day other than a Saturday, a Sunday, Christmas Day, Good Friday or a bank holiday under the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971 in any part of the United Kingdom.”
- (3) In paragraph 4B—
  - (a) for sub-paragraph (1) substitute—
 

“(1) The Commissioner may, by notice in writing to a registered person, suspend the person’s registration from the time specified in the notice if the person is charged with—

    - (a) an offence involving dishonesty or deception,
    - (b) an indictable offence, or
    - (c) an offence under section 25 or 26(1)(d) or (g) of the 1971 Act.

(1A) The Commissioner may, by notice in writing to a person whose registration has been suspended under sub-paragraph (1), cancel the suspension of the person’s registration.

(1B) A person whose registration is suspended under sub-paragraph (1) may appeal to the First-tier Tribunal against the suspension.”,
  - (b) in sub-paragraph (2), in the opening words, for “The suspension” substitute “Otherwise, the suspension under sub-paragraph (1)”, and
  - (c) omit sub-paragraphs (5) to (7).
- (4) After paragraph 4B insert—
 

“4C “(1) A person whose registration is suspended under paragraph 4AA or 4B is not to be treated as a registered person for the purposes of section 84 (but is to be treated as a registered person for the purposes of the other provisions of this Part).

(2) Where a person’s registration is suspended under paragraph 4AA or 4B the Commissioner must as soon as reasonably practicable record the suspension in the register.

(3) Where a suspension under paragraph 4AA or 4B ceases to have effect (and the person’s registration is not cancelled) the Commissioner must as soon as reasonably practicable remove the record of suspension from the register.””

*This amendment makes provision for the cancellation of a person’s registration as a provider of immigration advice or immigration services to have immediate effect in certain circumstances as well as for the suspension of a person’s registration.*

Amendment 26, page 62, line 6, at end insert—

*“Provision of immigration advice or immigration services under supervision*

1F In section 84 (provision of immigration services), after subsection (3B) insert—

“(3C) A person’s entitlement to provide immigration advice or immigration services by virtue of subsection (2)(e) is subject to section 84A and regulations under section 84B.”

1G After section 84 insert—

*“84A Limitations on acting under supervision: sanctions under this Part*

- (1) A person (“P”) is not entitled to provide immigration advice or immigration services by virtue of section 84(2)(e) (persons acting under supervision) if—
  - (a) P is disqualified under paragraph 4 of Schedule 6 (conviction of certain immigration offences) for registration under paragraph 2 of that Schedule or continued registration under paragraph 3 of that Schedule,

- (b) P’s registration is suspended under paragraph 4AA of Schedule 6 (suspension on grounds of risk of serious harm), or
- (c) P’s registration is suspended under paragraph 4B of Schedule 6 (suspension of persons charged with particular offences).
- (2) A person (“P”) is not entitled to provide immigration advice or immigration services by virtue of section 84(2)(e) during the relevant period if—
  - (a) P’s registration has been cancelled under paragraph 4A(e) of Schedule 6 (cancellation for lack of competence etc), and
  - (b) the cancellation took effect before the end of the period mentioned in subsection (3A) of section 87 because condition A in subsection (3AB) of that section (risk of serious harm) was met in relation to P.
- (3) In subsection (2) “the relevant period” means the period of 12 months beginning with the time specified in the notice under section 87(3AB) as the time at which the decision to cancel P’s registration had effect.
- (4) Subsection (2) does not apply if—
  - (a) the Commissioner decides to register P or to continue P’s registration, or
  - (b) the cancellation of P’s registration is overturned on appeal (unless the cancellation is subsequently reinstated as a result of a further appeal).
- (5) A person (“P”) is not entitled to provide immigration advice or immigration services by virtue of section 84(2)(e) if—
  - (a) P’s registration has been cancelled under paragraph 4A(e) of Schedule 6, and
  - (b) the cancellation took effect before the end of the period mentioned in subsection (3A) of section 87 because condition B in subsection (3AC) of that section (conviction of particular offences) was met in relation to P.
- (6) Subsection (5) does not apply if—
  - (a) P’s conviction of the offence mentioned in section 87(3AC) is quashed or set aside,
  - (b) the Commissioner decides to register P or to continue P’s registration, or
  - (c) the cancellation of P’s registration is overturned on appeal (unless the cancellation is subsequently reinstated as a result of a further appeal).
- (7) A person (“P”) other than a person to whom subsection (1), (2) or (5) applies is not entitled to provide immigration advice or immigration services by virtue of section 84(2)(e) if—
  - (a) subsection (8) applied to P when P entered into the arrangement for supervision, and
  - (b) P did not inform the person by whom P was to be supervised of that fact before entering into that arrangement.
- (8) This subsection applies to P if—
  - (a) P is or has previously been subject to a direction by the First-tier Tribunal under section 89(2A)(a) (directions in connection with registration),
  - (b) P is or has previously been subject to a direction by the First-tier Tribunal under section 89(8)(a) (restrictions on provision of immigration advice or immigration services),
  - (c) P has previously been subject to a direction by the First-tier Tribunal under section 89(8)(b) (suspension from provision of immigration advice or immigration services),
  - (d) P is or has previously been subject to an order made by a disciplinary body under section 90(1)(a) (restrictions on provision of immigration advice or immigration services),

- (e) P has previously been subject to an order made by a disciplinary body under section 90(1)(b) (suspension from provision of immigration advice or immigration services),
  - (f) P has at any time been given a penalty notice under section 92C (power to impose monetary penalties),
  - (g) P's registration has at any time been cancelled under paragraph 6(3)(a) of Schedule 5 (failure to assist with investigation),
  - (h) P's registration has at any time been cancelled under paragraph 10A(7) or (8) of Schedule 5 (failure to allow access to premises etc),
  - (i) P's registration has at any time been cancelled under paragraph 4A(d) or (e) of Schedule 6 (cancellation following direction by First-tier Tribunal or for lack of competence etc),
  - (j) P's registration has previously been suspended under paragraph 4AA of Schedule 6, or
  - (k) P's registration has previously been suspended under paragraph 4B of Schedule 6.
- (9) Subsection (7) does not apply if, before the time mentioned in subsection (7)(a), the direction, order, penalty, cancellation or suspension referred to in subsection (8)—
- (a) had been reversed, cancelled or quashed,
  - (b) had been overturned on appeal (and had not subsequently been reinstated as a result of a further appeal), or
  - (c) in the case of suspension under paragraph 4B of Schedule 6, had ceased to have effect by virtue of sub-paragraph (2) of that paragraph.

*84B Limitations on acting under supervision: other sanctions*

- (1) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide that a person is not entitled to provide immigration advice or immigration services by virtue of section 84(2)(e) where—
  - (a) the person is subject to a professional sanction of a kind specified in the regulations, or
  - (b) in the circumstances specified in the regulations, the person is disqualified or suspended from practice as a member of a relevant profession.
- (2) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide that a person ("P") is not entitled to provide immigration advice or immigration services by virtue of section 84(2)(e) where—
  - (a) when P entered into the arrangement for supervision—
    - (i) P was or had previously been subject to a professional sanction of a kind specified in the regulations, or
    - (ii) in the circumstances specified in the regulations, P was or had previously been disqualified or suspended from practice as a member of a relevant profession, and
  - (b) P did not inform the person by whom P was to be supervised of that fact before entering into the arrangement for supervision.
- (3) In this section—
 

"professional sanction" means an order, direction or decision which is imposed, given or made by, or other action which is taken by—

  - (a) a designated professional body,
  - (b) a designated qualifying regulator,
  - (c) a relevant disciplinary body,
  - (d) an Inn of Court, or
  - (e) a judge, court or tribunal in the exercise of a function in relation to the provision of legal services;

"relevant disciplinary body" means a body established wholly or partly for the purpose of exercising disciplinary functions in relation to—

- (a) members of a designated professional body, or
  - (b) persons regulated by a designated qualifying regulator;
- "relevant profession" means a profession which is regulated by a designated professional body or a designated qualifying regulator."

*This amendment makes provision about a person's entitlement to provide immigration advice or immigration services under supervision where the person is or has been subject to a sanction imposed by the Immigration Services Commissioner or in the person's capacity as a legal professional.*

Amendment 27, page 62, line 6, at end insert—

*"Monetary penalties*

1H After section 92B insert—

*"92C Power to impose monetary penalties*

- (1) The Commissioner may give a relevant person a penalty notice if the Commissioner is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the relevant person—
  - (a) has failed to comply with—
    - (i) the duty imposed on the person by paragraph 3(4) of Schedule 5 (duty to comply with Code of Standards) or paragraph 6(2) of that Schedule (duty to assist with investigation of complaint), or
    - (ii) any other requirement imposed on the person by or under this Part, or
  - (b) has, without reasonable excuse, obstructed the Commissioner in the exercise of the Commissioner's functions under paragraph 4A of Schedule 5 (power to carry out inspections).
- (2) In this section "relevant person", in relation to the giving of a penalty notice, means a person who was a registered person at the time of the act or omission in relation to which the notice is given.
- (3) A penalty notice is a notice requiring the person to whom it is given to pay to the Commissioner—
  - (a) an amount specified in regulations made by the Secretary of State (a "fixed penalty notice"), or
  - (b) an amount specified by the Commissioner in the notice (a "variable penalty notice").
- (4) The Commissioner may give a person who is not a relevant person a penalty notice if the Commissioner is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the person has failed to comply with the duty imposed on the person by paragraph 6(2) of Schedule 5.
- (5) The Commissioner may give an unqualified person a penalty notice if the Commissioner is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the person has committed an offence under section 91 or 92B.
- (6) In subsection (5) "unqualified person", in relation to the giving of a penalty notice, means a person who was not a qualified person at the time of the act or omission in relation to which the notice is given.
- (7) An amount specified in regulations under subsection (3)(a), and the amount specified in a variable penalty notice, must not exceed—
  - (a) in the case of a penalty imposed on a person under subsection (5) in relation to the commission of an offence under section 92B, the maximum amount of the fine that could be imposed on the person on summary conviction for the offence;
  - (b) in any other case, £15,000.
- (8) The Secretary of State may by regulations amend the amount for the time being specified in subsection (7)(b).

- (9) In this section and sections 92D to 92H—  
“penalty notice” means a notice under this section;  
“fixed penalty notice” and “variable penalty notice”  
have the meanings given by subsection (3).

*92D Procedure for imposing penalties*

- (1) Before giving a penalty notice to a person the Commissioner must notify the person of the Commissioner’s intention to do so.
- (2) The notice under subsection (1) must—
  - (a) specify the proposed amount of the penalty,
  - (b) specify the Commissioner’s reasons for proposing to impose the penalty,
  - (c) specify the period during which the person may make representations about the proposal (“the specified period”), and
  - (d) specify the way in which those representations may be made.
- (3) The specified period must not be less than 28 days beginning with the date on which the notice under subsection (1) is given.
- (4) The Commissioner must have regard to any representations made by a person during the specified period in deciding—
  - (a) whether to give a penalty notice to the person, and
  - (b) if the Commissioner decides to give a variable penalty notice to the person, the amount of the penalty specified in the notice.
- (5) Where the Commissioner gives a penalty notice to a person, the notice must specify—
  - (a) the amount of the penalty, and
  - (b) the period within which the penalty must be paid (“the payment period”).
- (6) The penalty notice must also contain information as to—
  - (a) the grounds for the penalty,
  - (b) how payment may be made,
  - (c) the details of any early payment discount or late payment penalty included by virtue of subsection (7),
  - (d) the consequences of non-payment,
  - (e) rights of appeal, and
  - (f) the period within which an appeal may be made.
- (7) The penalty notice may include provision for the amount payable under the notice—
  - (a) to reduce in the event of early payment;
  - (b) to increase in the event of payment after the end of the payment period.

*92E Appeals against penalties*

- (1) A person to whom a penalty notice has been given may appeal to the First-tier Tribunal against—
  - (a) the decision to give the person a penalty notice;
  - (b) where the notice given is a variable penalty notice, the amount of the penalty specified in the notice.
- (2) On an appeal under this section, the Tribunal may—
  - (a) cancel the penalty,
  - (b) confirm the requirement to pay the penalty, or
  - (c) in the case of an appeal under subsection (1)(b), amend the amount of the penalty.
- (3) The requirement to pay the penalty under the notice is suspended at any time when—
  - (a) an appeal under this section could be brought by the person in respect of the penalty, or
  - (b) such an appeal is pending.
- (4) But subsection (3)(a) does not prevent the requirement to pay taking effect if the person notifies the Commissioner that the person does not intend to appeal.

- (5) No further amount is payable as a result of provision included in the penalty notice by virtue of section 92D(7)(b) in respect of the period during which the requirement to pay is suspended.
- (6) For the purposes of subsection (3)(b) an appeal is pending during the period—
  - (a) starting when the appeal is brought, and
  - (b) ending when the appeal is finally determined, abandoned or withdrawn.

*92F Enforcement of penalty notices*

- (1) This section applies if a person who is liable to pay an amount to the Commissioner under a penalty notice has not paid the whole or any part of that amount when it is required to be paid.
- (2) In England and Wales the Commissioner may recover the unpaid amount on the order of the county court as if it were payable under an order of that court.
- (3) In Scotland payment of the unpaid amount may be enforced in the same manner as an extract registered decree arbitral bearing a warrant for execution issued by the sheriff court of any sheriffdom in Scotland.
- (4) In Northern Ireland the Commissioner may recover the unpaid amount on the order of a county court as if it were payable under an order of that court.

*92G Guidance about penalties*

- (1) The Commissioner must prepare and publish guidance about the Commissioner’s use of the power to give a penalty notice.
- (2) The guidance must, in particular, include information as to—
  - (a) the circumstances in which the Commissioner is likely to give—
    - (i) a fixed penalty notice, or
    - (ii) a variable penalty notice, and
  - (b) in the case of a variable penalty notice, the matters to which the Commissioner has regard in determining the amount of the penalty.
- (3) The Commissioner—
  - (a) must from time to time review the guidance, and
  - (b) may revise and republish the guidance following a review.
- (4) Before preparing or revising guidance under this section, the Commissioner must consult such persons as the Commissioner considers appropriate.

*92H Penalties imposed in relation to commission of offence: convictions*

A person who is required to pay a penalty under a penalty notice given under section 92C(5) (penalty in respect of offence under section 91 or 92B) may not at any time be convicted of an offence under section 91 or, as the case may be, 92B in respect of the act or omission in relation to which the notice was given.”

- II (1) In section 166(5) (regulations subject to the affirmative procedure), after paragraph (cza) (as inserted by paragraph 1B) insert—  
“(czb) section 92C(3)(a) or (8),”.
- (2) If sub-paragraph (1) comes into force before the coming into force of paragraph 24(2) of Schedule 11 to the Immigration Act 2016, paragraph 24(2) of that Schedule has effect on its coming into force as if for “for the “or” at the end of paragraph (c) substitute” there were substituted “after paragraph (czb) insert”.
- IJ (1) Schedule 5 is amended as follows.
- (2) In paragraph 6(3) (investigations under the complaints scheme), after paragraph (c) (and on a new line insert)—



“(See also section 92C (which confers a power to impose monetary penalties for breaching the duty imposed by paragraph 6(2)).)”

- (3) In paragraph 9(1) (determination of complaints), after paragraph (f) (as inserted by paragraph 1M(4)) (and on a new line) insert—

“(See also section 92C (which confers a power to impose monetary penalties for breaching the Code or otherwise failing to comply with requirements imposed by or under this Part).)”

*This amendment confers powers on the Immigration Services Commissioner to impose monetary penalties on persons providing immigration advice or immigration services.*

Amendment 28, page 62, line 6, at end insert—

“Fees

1K After section 93 insert—

“93A Fees

- (1) The Secretary of State may by order provide for fees to be charged by the Commissioner in respect of the exercise of the Commissioner’s functions.
- (2) The order may, in particular, make provision—
  - (a) for fees (including fees for the taking of examinations) to be charged in respect of the assessment of a person’s competence to provide immigration advice or immigration services;
  - (b) for fees to be charged in respect of a person’s registration or continued registration;
  - (c) for fees to be charged for making changes to a person’s registration;
  - (d) for fees to be charged in respect of the provision by the Commissioner of training for persons providing or seeking to provide immigration advice or immigration services;
  - (e) for fees to be charged in respect of the provision by the Commissioner of, or of access to, training or other material for such persons;
  - (f) for fees to be charged in respect of the provision by the Commissioner of events for such persons;
  - (g) for fees to be charged in respect of the accreditation by the Commissioner of training or events for such persons;
  - (h) for fees to be charged in respect of the provision of advice by the Commissioner;
  - (i) for, and in connection with, requiring or authorising the Commissioner to waive all or part of a fee in particular cases.
- (3) The order may result in the charging of a fee in respect of the exercise of a function in a particular case which exceeds the costs of exercising the function in that case.
- (4) But in specifying the amount of a fee by virtue of subsection (3) the Secretary of State may have regard only to either or both of the following—
  - (a) the costs of exercising the function in question;
  - (b) the costs of exercising any other function of the Commissioner.
- (5) References in subsection (4) to the costs of exercising a function are to the costs of doing so in a particular class of case or in all cases.
- (6) In this section “registration” means registration with the Commissioner under section 85.”

1L In Schedule 6, for paragraph 5 substitute—

“5 No application under paragraph 1 or 3 is to be entertained by the Commissioner unless it is accompanied by the fee specified for that application by order under section 93A (but this is subject to any waiver in accordance with provision by virtue of subsection (2)(i) of that section).”

*This amendment replaces the current power for the Secretary of State to specify the fees that may be charged by the Immigration Services Commissioner with a new and wider power.*

Amendment 29, page 62, line 6, at end insert—

“The complaints scheme

1M (1) Schedule 5 is amended as follows.

- (2) In paragraph 5(3), after paragraph (b) insert—

“(ba) the provision of immigration advice or immigration services by a person in contravention of section 84.”

- (3) In paragraph 6—

(a) in sub-paragraph (2) for “is the subject of an investigation under the scheme” substitute “falls within sub-paragraph (2A)”;

(b) after sub-paragraph (2) insert—

“(2A) A person (“P”) falls within this sub-paragraph if—

(a) P is the subject of an investigation under the scheme, or

(b) in a case where the person who is the subject of an investigation under the scheme is a relevant body, P—

(i) was an officer, member or partner of the body when the body provided the immigration advice or immigration services to which the complaint relates, but

(ii) is no longer such an officer, member or partner.

(2B) In sub-paragraph (2A)—

(a) “relevant body” means a body which was a registered person at the time to which the complaint relates;

(b) “officer”, in relation to a body corporate, means a director, manager, secretary or other similar officer of the body.”

- (4) In paragraph 9—

(a) in sub-paragraph (1), after paragraph (e) insert—

“(f) if the person to whom the complaint relates (“P”) was not, at the time to which the complaint relates, a relevant authorised person, order P or a relevant body in relation to P—

(i) to refund all or any part of the fees charged by P or the relevant body for the immigration advice or immigration services to which the complaint relates;

(ii) to pay to the person to whom the advice or services were provided an amount specified in the order by way of compensation in respect of any loss, inconvenience or distress suffered by the person as a result of the provision of the advice or services.”

(b) after sub-paragraph (1B) insert—

“(1C) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (1)(f) and this sub-paragraph—

(a) a person is a “relevant authorised person” if—

(i) the person falls within section 84(2)(b), or

(ii) the person falls within section 84(2)(e) because the person acts on behalf of, and under the supervision of, a person falling within section 84(2)(b);

(b) a body is a “relevant body” in relation to P if P was acting as the employee, officer, member or partner of the body when providing the immigration advice or immigration services to which the complaint relates;

(c) “officer”, in relation to a body corporate, means a director, manager, secretary or other similar officer of the body.

(1D) The total amount that may be ordered to be refunded or paid by virtue of sub-paragraph (1)(f) in respect of a complaint must not exceed £250,000.

(1E) The Secretary of State may by regulations amend the amount for the time being specified in sub-paragraph (1D).

- (1F) An order under sub-paragraph (1)(f) may specify the time by which the refund or payment must be made.”

(5) After paragraph 9 insert—

*“Order on determination of complaint to refund fees or pay compensation: procedure, appeals and enforcement*

9A The complaints scheme must include provision securing that, where the Commissioner proposes to make an order under paragraph 9(1)(f) against a person—

- (a) the Commissioner must give the person a notice of what is proposed (a “notice of intent”),
- (b) the person may, within the period specified in the notice of intent, make written representations and objections to the Commissioner in relation to the proposed order,
- (c) the Commissioner must, at the end of the period for making representations and objections, consider any representations and objections made and—
  - (i) determine to make the proposed order,
  - (ii) determine not to make an order under paragraph 9(1)(f) against the person,
  - (iii) determine to make an order under paragraph 9(1)(f) against the person requiring the person to refund or pay an amount which is less than the amount mentioned in the notice of intent, or
  - (iv) provisionally determine to make an order under paragraph 9(1)(f) against the person requiring the person to refund or pay an amount which is greater than the amount mentioned in the notice of intent, and
- (d) where the Commissioner makes a provisional determination as mentioned in paragraph (c)(iv), the person is given an opportunity to make written representations and objections in relation to the provisional determination which must be considered by the Commissioner before the order is made.

9B Where the Commissioner makes an order under paragraph 9(1)(f) against a person, the person may appeal to the First-tier Tribunal against the making of the order.

9C (1) This paragraph applies where—

- (a) on determining a complaint under the complaints scheme, the Commissioner makes an order under paragraph 9(1)(f) for an amount to be refunded or paid to a person (“P”), and
  - (b) the appeal rights in relation to the order are exhausted.
- (2) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (1)(b) the appeal rights in relation to an order are exhausted at a time when—
- (a) it is no longer possible for an appeal against the order to be made under paragraph 9B (ignoring any possibility of an appeal out of time), and
  - (b) there is no appeal against the order which is pending.
- (3) On the application of P or the Commissioner, a court may order that the amount to be refunded or paid under the order is recoverable as if it were payable under an order of that court.
- (4) The Commissioner may make an application under sub-paragraph (3) only—
- (a) in the circumstances specified in the complaints scheme, and
  - (b) with P’s consent.

- (5) If a court makes an order under sub-paragraph (3) on the application of the Commissioner, the Commissioner may, in the circumstances specified in the complaints scheme and with P’s consent, recover the amount mentioned in that sub-paragraph on behalf of P.

(6) For the purposes of this paragraph—

- (a) an appeal is pending during the period—
  - (i) starting when the appeal is brought, and
  - (ii) ending when the appeal is finally determined, abandoned or withdrawn;
- (b) “court” means—
  - (i) in England and Wales, the High Court or the county court;
  - (ii) in Scotland, the Court of Session or the sheriff;
  - (iii) in Northern Ireland, the High Court or a county court.”

1N (1) In section 166(5) (regulations subject to the affirmative procedure), at the end of paragraph (d) insert “or

(e) paragraph 9(1E) of Schedule 5,”.

(2) If sub-paragraph (1) comes into force before the coming into force of paragraph 24(2) of Schedule 11 to the Immigration Act 2016, paragraph 24(2) of that Schedule has effect on its coming into force as if the “or” at the end of paragraph (ca) as inserted by paragraph 24(2) were omitted.

(3) If sub-paragraph (1) comes into force at the same time as or after the coming into force of paragraph 24(2) of Schedule 11 to the Immigration Act 2016, omit the “or” at the end of section 166(5)(ca) of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (as inserted by paragraph 24(2) of that Schedule).”—(*Dame Angela Eagle.*)

*This amendment extends the Immigration Services Commissioner’s complaints scheme in relation to who may be the subject of a complaint under the scheme, who may be required to co-operate with the investigation of a complaint and what sanctions may be imposed if a complaint is upheld.*

### Third Reading

9.55 pm

**Dame Angela Eagle:** I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

This Bill restores order to an asylum system that was left in chaos by the Conservatives. It puts an end to the failed gimmicks and unworkable mess that they bequeathed us. It repeals in full the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Act 2024, and it repeals most of the unworkable Illegal Migration Act 2023, which trapped asylum seekers in limbo as asylum backlogs soared and the taxpayer picked up a spiralling bill.

This Government are clearing up the mess that the Conservative party left us, and the Bill before the House will help us to succeed. It will assist in securing our borders by dealing with the soaring backlogs. It gives counter-terror style powers to law enforcement agencies, equipping them to go after the people-smuggling gangs that are making millions of pounds out of exploiting people’s misery. The Bill introduces new powers to seize electronic devices and disrupt the activities of people smugglers; new offences against gangs selling or handling small boat parts for use in the channel; new powers on serious crime prevention orders to target individuals involved in organised immigration crime; a new law to protect lives at sea by making it an offence to endanger another life during small boat crossings; a new statutory footing for the Border Security Commander; and new

and improved data sharing between Government agencies, such as HMRC and DVLA, and law enforcement to detect organised immigration crime.

The Bill introduces a statutory timeline for appeals decisions and a major modernisation of the powers of the Immigration Services Commissioner. It ensures that those who commit certain sexual offences will be denied protection under the refugee convention, and contains a long-overdue extension of the right-to-work checks for casual and temporary workers in the gig economy, so why on earth is the Conservative party going to vote against it tonight?

People smuggling is a complex and multifaceted problem, and there are no quick or easy solutions to prevent it. Anyone who claims that there are easy answers is a snake oil salesman, but it is possible to identify, disrupt and dismantle the criminal gangs and strengthen the security of our borders through international diplomacy and operational co-operation. This Bill will help us do just that, and I commend it to the House.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Ms Nusrat Ghani):** I call the shadow Home Secretary, who has a minute or two.

9.57 pm

**Chris Philp:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for this unexpected opportunity. The reason the Opposition will vote against the Bill is that it does nothing to restore control of our country's borders. It repeals the legislative basis for a removals deterrent, which is needed to stop people crossing the English channel. The fact that the Labour Government cancelled that deterrent before it started is why illegal crossings have gone up by 29% since the last election, and why this year has been the worst in history for illegal crossings of the English channel. This Bill weakens border controls, and it removes the powers that the Government could otherwise exercise to control our borders. They are failing, and this Bill will do nothing to restore control of our borders.

*Question put,* That the Bill be now read the Third time.

*The House divided:* Ayes 316, Noes 95.

**Division No. 195]**

**[9.59 pm**

# **AYES**

Abbott, Jack	Ballinger, Alex
Abrahams, Debbie	Bance, Antonia
Ahmed, Dr Zubir	Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex
Akehurst, Luke	Baxter, Johanna
Alexander, rh Heidi	Beales, Danny
Al-Hassan, Sadik	Beavers, Lorraine
Ali, Rushanara	Benn, rh Hilary
Ali, Tahir	Betts, Mr Clive
Allister, Jim	Billington, Ms Polly
Anderson, Callum	Bishop, Matt
Anderson, Fleur	Blake, Rachel
Arthur, Dr Scott	Bloore, Chris
Asato, Jess	Blundell, Mrs Elsie
Asser, James	Bonavia, Kevin
Athwal, Jas	Botterill, Jade
Atkinson, Catherine	Brackenridge, Mrs Sureena
Atkinson, Lewis	Brash, Mr Jonathan
Bailey, Olivia	Brickell, Phil
Baker, Richard	Buckley, Julia
	Burton-Sampson, David
	Campbell, rh Sir Alan

Campbell, Irene	Grady, John
Campbell, Juliet	Greenwood, Lilian
Campbell-Savours, Markus	Griffith, Dame Nia
Carden, Dan	Gwynne, Andrew ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore</i> )
Carling, Sam	Hack, Amanda
Champion, Sarah	Haigh, rh Louise
Charters, Mr Luke	Hall, Sarah
Clark, Feryal	Hamilton, Paulette
Coleman, Ben	Hardy, Emma
Collier, Jacob	Harris, Carolyn
Collinge, Lizzi	Hatton, Lloyd
Collins, Tom	Hayes, Helen
Conlon, Liam	Hayes, Tom
Coombes, Sarah	Hazelgrove, Claire
Cooper, Andrew	Healey, rh John
Cooper, Dr Beccy	Hendrick, Sir Mark ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore</i> )
Cooper, rh Yvette	Hinchliff, Chris
Costigan, Deirdre	Hinder, Jonathan
Cox, Pam	Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Coyle, Neil	Hopkins, Rachel
Craft, Jen	Hughes, Claire
Creasy, Ms Stella	Hume, Alison
Daby, Janet	Huq, Dr Rupa
Dakin, Sir Nicholas	Hurley, Patrick
Davies, Jonathan	Irons, Natasha
Davies, Paul	Jameson, Sally
Davies, Shaun	Jarvis, Dan
Davies-Jones, Alex	Jermey, Terry
Dean, Josh	Johnson, Kim
Dearden, Kate	Jones, rh Darren
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh	Jones, Gerald
Dickson, Jim	Jones, Louise
Dixon, Samantha	Jones, Ruth
Dollimore, Helena	Jones, Sarah
Dowd, Peter	Josan, Gurinder Singh
Downie, Graeme	Joseph, Sojan
Duncan-Jordan, Neil	Juss, Warinder
Eagle, Dame Angela	Kane, Chris
Eagle, rh Maria	Kane, Mike
Edwards, Lauren	Kaur, Satvir ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore</i> )
Efford, Clive	Khan, Afzal
Egan, Damien	Khan, Naushabah
Ellis, Maya	Kinnock, Stephen
Elmore, Chris	Kirkham, Jayne
Entwistle, Kirith	Kitchen, Gen
Eshalomi, Florence	Kumar, Sonia
Esterson, Bill	Kumaran, Uma
Evans, Chris	Kyrke-Smith, Laura
Fahnbulleh, Miatta	Lamb, Peter
Falconer, Mr Hamish	Lavery, Ian
Farnsworth, Linsey	Law, Noah
Fenton-Glynn, Josh	Leadbeater, Kim
Ferguson, Mark	Lewell, Emma
Fleet, Natalie	Lewin, Andrew
Foody, Emma	Lightwood, Simon
Fookes, Catherine	Long Bailey, Rebecca
Foster, Mr Paul	MacAlister, Josh
Foxcroft, Vicky	Macdonald, Alice
Foy, Mary Kelly	MacNae, Andy
Francis, Daniel	Madders, Justin
Frith, Mr James	Malhotra, Seema
Furniss, Gill	Martin, Amanda
Gardiner, Barry	Maskell, Rachael
Gardner, Dr Allison	Mayer, Alex
Gemmell, Alan	McDonagh, Dame Siobhain
German, Gill	McDonald, Andy
Gilbert, Tracy	McDonald, Chris
Gittins, Becky	McDougall, Blair
Glendon, Mary	McEvoy, Lola
Goldsborough, Ben	
Gosling, Jodie	
Gould, Georgia	



McGovern, Alison  
McIntyre, Alex  
McKenna, Kevin  
McKinnell, Catherine  
McMahon, Jim  
McMorrin, Anna  
McNeill, Kirsty  
Midgley, Anneliese  
Minns, Ms Julie  
Mishra, Navendu  
Moon, Perran  
Morden, Jessica  
Morris, Grahame  
Morris, Joe  
Mullane, Margaret  
Murphy, Luke  
Murray, Chris  
Murray, rh Ian (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)  
Murray, James  
Myer, Luke  
Naismith, Connor  
Narayan, Kanishka  
Nash, Pamela  
Newbury, Josh  
Niblett, Samantha  
Nichols, Charlotte  
Norris, Alex  
Onn, Melanie  
Onwurah, Chi  
Opher, Dr Simon  
Oppong-Asare, Ms Abena  
Osborne, Kate (*Proxy vote cast by Kim Johnson*)  
Osborne, Tristan  
Owatemi, Taiwo  
Owen, Sarah  
Paffey, Darren  
Patrick, Matthew  
Payne, Michael  
Peacock, Stephanie  
Pearce, Jon  
Pennycook, Matthew  
Phillips, Jess  
Pinto-Duschinsky, David  
Pitcher, Lee  
Platt, Jo  
Pollard, Luke  
Powell, Joe  
Powell, rh Lucy  
Poynton, Gregor  
Prinsley, Peter  
Quigley, Mr Richard  
Qureshi, Yasmin  
Race, Steve  
Ranger, Andrew  
Reader, Mike  
Reynolds, Emma  
Reynolds, rh Jonathan  
Richards, Jake  
Riddell-Carpenter, Jenny  
Rigby, Lucy  
Rimmer, Ms Marie  
Roca, Tim  
Rodda, Matt  
Rushworth, Sam  
Russell, Sarah  
Rutland, Tom  
Ryan, Oliver  
Sackman, Sarah  
Sandher, Dr Jeevun  
Scrogg, Michelle  
Sewards, Mark  
Shah, Naz  
Shanker, Baggy  
Shannon, Jim  
Siddiq, Tulip  
Simons, Josh  
Slaughter, Andy  
Slinger, John  
Smith, Cat  
Smith, David  
Smith, Jeff  
Smith, Nick  
Smith, Sarah  
Smyth, Karin  
Snell, Gareth  
Stainbank, Euan  
Stevens, rh Jo  
Stone, Will  
Strathern, Alistair  
Strickland, Alan  
Stringer, Graham  
Sullivan, Dr Lauren  
Swallow, Peter  
Swann, Robin  
Tami, rh Mark  
Tapp, Mike  
Taylor, Alison  
Taylor, David  
Taylor, Rachel  
Thomas, Fred  
Thompson, Adam  
Tidball, Dr Marie  
Timms, rh Sir Stephen  
Toale, Jessica  
Trickett, Jon  
Tufnell, Henry (*Proxy vote cast by Callum Anderson*)  
Turley, Anna  
Turmaine, Matt  
Turner, Laurence  
Twigg, Derek  
Twist, Liz  
Uppal, Harpreet  
Vaughan, Tony  
Vince, Chris  
Walker, Imogen  
Ward, Chris (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)  
Ward, Melanie  
Waugh, Paul  
Welsh, Michelle  
West, Catherine  
Western, Andrew  
Western, Matt  
Wheeler, Michael  
Whitby, John  
White, Jo  
White, Katie  
Williams, David  
Witherden, Steve  
Woodcock, Sean  
Wrighting, Rosie  
Yang, Yuan  
Yasin, Mohammad  
Yemm, Steve

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
Keir Mather and  
Christian Wakeford

**NOES**

Anderson, Lee  
Andrew, rh Stuart  
Argar, rh Edward  
Atkins, rh Victoria  
Bacon, Gareth  
Badenoch, rh Mrs Kemi  
Baldwin, Dame Harriett  
Barclay, rh Steve  
Bedford, Mr Peter  
Bhatti, Saqib  
Blackman, Bob  
Bool, Sarah  
Bowie, Andrew  
Brandreth, Aphra  
Braverman, rh Suella  
Burghart, Alex  
Chope, Sir Christopher  
Cleverly, rh Sir James  
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey  
Cocking, Lewis  
Cooper, John  
Corbyn, rh Jeremy  
Costa, Alberto  
Coutinho, rh Claire (*Proxy vote cast by Joy Morrissey*)  
Cross, Harriet  
Davies, Gareth  
Davies, Mims  
Davis, rh David  
Dewhurst, Charlie  
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain  
Evans, Dr Luke  
Farage, Nigel  
Fortune, Peter  
Fox, Sir Ashley  
Francois, rh Mr Mark  
French, Mr Louie  
Garnier, Mark  
Grant, Helen  
Griffith, Andrew  
Griffiths, Alison  
Harris, Rebecca  
Hayes, rh Sir John  
Hinds, rh Damian  
Hoare, Simon  
Hollinrake, Kevin  
Holmes, Paul  
Huddleston, Nigel  
Hudson, Dr Neil  
Jenkin, Sir Bernard  
Jenrick, rh Robert  
Johnson, Dr Caroline  
Jopp, Lincoln  
Kearns, Alicia (*Proxy vote cast by Joy Morrissey*)  
Khan, Ayoub  
Kruger, Danny  
Lamont, John  
Lewis, rh Sir Julian  
Lopez, Julia  
Malthouse, rh Kit  
Mayhew, Jerome  
McMurdock, James  
McVey, rh Esther  
Mohindra, Mr Gagan  
Moore, Robbie  
Morrissey, Joy  
Morton, rh Wendy  
Mullan, Dr Kieran  
Obese-Jecty, Ben  
Patel, rh Priti  
Paul, Rebecca  
Philp, rh Chris  
Pochin, Sarah  
Raja, Shivani (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Mohindra*)  
Rankin, Jack  
Reed, David  
Robertson, Joe  
Rosindell, Andrew  
Simmonds, David  
Smith, Greg  
Smith, rh Sir Julian  
Smith, Rebecca  
Snowden, Mr Andrew  
Spencer, Dr Ben  
Stafford, Gregory  
Stephenson, Blake  
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond  
Thomas, Bradley  
Tice, Richard  
Timothy, Nick  
Vickers, Martin  
Vickers, Matt  
Whately, Helen  
Wild, James  
Williamson, rh Sir Gavin  
Wood, Mike

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
Mr Richard Holden and  
Katie Lam

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

*Bill read the Third time and passed.*

**Business without Debate****DEFERRED DIVISIONS**

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 41A(3)),*

That, at this day's sitting, Standing Order No. 41A (Deferred divisions) shall not apply to the Motions in the name of James Murray relating to (a) Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill: Ways and Means; and (b) Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats and Ferrets) Bill: Money.—(*Sir Nicholas Dakin.*)

*Question agreed to.*

## ANIMAL WELFARE (IMPORT OF DOGS, CATS AND FERRETS) BILL (MONEY)

*King's recommendation signified.*

*Resolved,*

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats and Ferrets) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of: (a) any expenditure incurred under or by virtue of the Act by the Secretary of State, and (b) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable under or by virtue of any other Act out of money so provided.—(*Emma Hardy.*)

## DELEGATED LEGISLATION

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),*

### CAPITAL GAINS TAX

That the draft Finance Act 2021 (Increase in Schedule 26 Penalty Percentages) Regulations 2025, which were laid before this House on 31 March, be approved.—(*Sir Nicholas Dakin.*)

*Question agreed to.*

## British Nationals Murdered Abroad: Support for Families

*Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Sir Nicholas Dakin.)*

10.12 pm

**Mr Joshua Reynolds** (Maidenhead) (LD): I am glad to be able to speak in the Adjournment today about an issue of painful neglect that affects 80 British families each year, yet remains largely hidden from public and parliamentary view. We have all said goodbye to a loved one at an airport, wishing them well for their holiday, or their time abroad for work or study. If any of us was to receive a phone call saying that our loved one had been murdered when they were in the UK, that phone call would be devastating enough, but to receive that phone call when a loved one is thousands of miles away—murdered across an ocean, in a country that speaks another language—is a whole different world of pain and confusion.

Every year, British citizens are killed in acts of violence abroad. In many cases, their families are left to deal with unimaginable grief for the loss of a loved one, all while faced with the full weight of an unfamiliar, bureaucratic and different system. They do that alone. They have to navigate foreign legal procedures, untranslated documents and distant court proceedings with patchy, inconsistent support from their Government—all at a time of trauma, vulnerability and mourning.

Tonight, I want to be a voice for those families, through the Murdered Abroad campaign, a group of bereaved relatives who have turned their grief into a powerful call for change. They are not asking for special treatment—in fact, they want the complete opposite. They are asking for fairness and compassion, and the kind of structured, statutory support that families receive when tragedy strikes on British soil.

In January this year, I met a family in Maidenhead, who discussed their story of their son's murder in America in 2009. They managed to contact the consulate, but the time difference was tricky, and there was not much help for the family with communicating. After many calls, they realised they were not really getting anywhere, so they had to take matters into their own hands, even going so far as to arrange the repatriation of their son's body in the absence of support from their Government.

When a British citizen is murdered abroad, their family is plunged not only into grief and shock, but into a crisis made worse by the overwhelming burden of having to navigate unfamiliar systems with a lack of support.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I commend the hon. Gentleman for securing this debate on a subject that is very important to many. Between 2010 and 2015, more than 250 British nationals were murdered abroad, in Pakistan, Tunisia, France and the United States, which he mentioned. We often see horror stories online—cases in which an individual has been found but not yet identified. Does he agree that, in the case of British nationals, there is more that the Foreign Office could do to ensure that all efforts are made to alert the family before any news is released to the media? Sometimes the media need to be sensitive.

**Mr Reynolds:** I completely agree with the hon. Gentleman. I have spoken to a number of families across the country who say that they found out via social media or via the press that their son or parent had been murdered. That is not good enough—it is not acceptable.

I want to start with language barriers, which are among the first and most distressing problems that families face. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office offers families a list of translators, but those lists often come without crucial context, such as information about whether the translators are legally certified, whether they are experienced with criminal or judicial terminology, whether they are available on short notice, and how much they cost. In a moment of extreme vulnerability, families are forced into a commercial marketplace with no quality control and no guidance. Many simply cannot afford translation fees, which can run into thousands of pounds, yet they are handed copies of important documents—autopsy reports, court transcripts, police records, judgments—in a language they do not speak. That is an active barrier to justice. Let us consider for a moment what that means in practice: a grieving mother receiving her child's post-mortem report, unable to understand a word of it, or a widower left alone to guess at the meaning of complex judgment findings, not even sure whether justice has been served or denied, because they cannot read the verdict.

Then we must confront the issue of distance. In many cases, trials take place thousands of miles away. Families may be notified of court proceedings at short notice and are often given no logistical or financial support to attend. The cost of flights, accommodation, meals and unpaid leave from work quickly adds up. For many, it becomes an impossible choice: deplete their savings to try to attend, or stay at home and risk missing their one chance to see justice carried out, to hear what happened or to look the accused in the eye. The Government do not provide any funding for families to attend foreign trials, even when the court's findings could have a direct impact on a coroner's inquest here in the UK. This is not about luxury; it is about basic fairness. No bereaved family should be priced out of justice because a killing happened beyond our borders.

Add to that the challenges of cultural and legal complexities, and it is easy to see why families feel so lost. Legal systems vary from country to country. Some are adversarial like ours; others are not. Some permit victims' families to play an active role; others do not. The length of proceedings, the level of evidence required and the appeal process all differ, yet families are given little to no explanation by the Government. They are often told to find a lawyer abroad, but the list provided comes with little guidance. There is no indication whether those lawyers speak English, specialise in murder, understand victim support or are familiar with working alongside British families. All the while, in the UK, the families are left with no legal advice from someone who specialises in overseas homicide cases.

Time and again, however, the most frustrating aspect is communication failures, which the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) mentioned. Families describe being left in the dark about the most basic details of the case. Trial dates come and go without notice. Hearings are adjourned with no explanation. Key developments, such as the release of a suspect or even a final verdict,

are learned of through the media, social media or word of mouth, rather than through official channels. That is unacceptable. Families are not asking for the world; they are asking for regular updates, clear communication and transparency, so that they are not blindsided by crucial developments in the pursuit of justice for their loved one.

**Josh Newbury** (Cannock Chase) (Lab): Some aspects of the cases that the hon. Gentleman is eloquently describing are sadly very similar to those in the case of Rob Spray, from my Cannock Chase constituency, who died suddenly in Bulgaria in 2019. Rob's case is about to be heard at inquest, so I will not comment on the legal aspects, but I can say that his family were left in the dark by the Bulgarian authorities and, sadly, by the Foreign Office. They had very little guidance, even on how to bring Rob's body back to the UK, and they had to resort to a translation app to decipher Rob's autopsy after they were told that they would have to wait six months for an official translation. That all deepened their grief and frustration at the worst possible time. The worst part of all is that Rob's mom sadly passed away not knowing what happened to her son.

I will do everything I can to help Rob's family get the answers that they have waited so long to get, and I know that the hon. Gentleman will continue to campaign on this. Does he agree that we need to make sure that bereaved families like the Sprays get the full support of the British Government, so that they can get the closure that they need and deserve?

**Mr Reynolds:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention, and for talking about Rob and his family. It is really important that the Government step up and support families, where they need it. Families need consistent advice, and to know that they have someone to turn to.

That brings me on nicely to my next point, which is about the consistency of support for families through consular services. Some describe consular services overseas as being provided by really positive, empathetic individuals who go out of their way to help, but far too many tell me about being passed from person to person, receiving contradictory advice, having emails ignored and being made to feel more like a burden than a bereaved family in need of care. The inconsistency is one of the crucial failings, because there is no statutory duty on the Government to provide a minimum standard of support to families in such circumstances. The level of help depends on the consulate involved, which official picks up the phone, and which country the incident occurs in. It is a passport lottery.

I want to mention some real people and highlight how they feel they have been failed. Eve Henderson's husband Roderick was killed in France in 1997. She encountered immediate language barriers and a completely different judicial process that no one explained to her and no one helped her navigate.

Brian Chandler's grandson Liam was killed in Greece in 2006. He was pushed from a fourth-floor balcony by his own father, a British national. The perpetrator admitted what he had done, yet the Greek court found him not guilty because of a psychiatric episode. For Liam's family, the experience of sitting through the trial in a foreign language and trying to understand the complex



legal arguments with no help was traumatic and bewildering. The fact that the case involved a British perpetrator makes it all the more difficult to understand why British authorities provided no support.

Brenda's brother Howard was killed in Australia in 1999. She faced an enormous barrier of distance. Attending the trial meant significant cost, time off work and personal sacrifice. No financial assistance or practical help was offered. She had to choose between justice and affordability—an impossible choice that no grieving family should ever have to make.

Alyssa's sister Vanessa was killed in Thailand in 2004. Alyssa faced a perfect storm of challenges: the language barrier, cultural differences, geographical distance and an unfamiliar legal system. She had no understanding of how Thai courts operated and no guidance on how to follow proceedings, and it quickly became a nightmare. Those are not isolated incidents; they are emblematic of a broken and inconsistent system.

**Steff Aquarone** (North Norfolk) (LD): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this debate. Dr Ding Col Dau Ding was raised and educated in North Norfolk and became a neurosurgeon before travelling to South Sudan to practise medicine and save lives. In 2017, he was found dead in his family's flat, and they believe that he was murdered. The official Government narrative is that he died by suicide or misadventure, but there is significant evidence to dispute that. Does my hon. Friend agree that there is an extra challenge for families whose loved ones are murdered abroad when they also have to challenge the authorities, and that the Foreign Office should support them in their fight for justice?

**Mr Reynolds:** I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. It is incredibly important that the authorities provide that extra support.

One thing that families have told me makes a real difference is the peer support that they can get from other families who have walked the path, and who can offer reassurance, practical advice and emotional understanding that no bureaucrat or leaflet ever could. These support networks, like *Murdered Abroad*, are under-resourced and often disconnected from formal consular processes. They are run by volunteers—by the bereaved themselves—who have taken on this work not because they are asked to, but because nobody else would. It is time we supported them and recognised their work, because that is what we are here to do. We need a clear, comprehensive statutory framework of support for families of British citizens murdered abroad. I am calling on the Government to commit to eight key reforms. First, there needs to be a statutory duty to provide consistent and timely communication to bereaved families. Every family should have a named point of contact and regular updates, not a revolving door of anonymous officials and faceless email inboxes. Secondly, key documents must be translated into English. No family should be forced to hire their own translator through crowdfunding or use up all their savings just to understand how their loved one died.

Thirdly, there needs to be accessible guidance on the foreign country's judicial process, including information about how criminal investigations work, trial expectations, timelines and victim rights. This information should be publicly accessible. Fourthly, there must be a list of

verified legal support that makes it clear what kind of cases the legal experts handle and whether they speak English. Fifthly, we need improved co-operation between British and foreign authorities as well as police liaison and information sharing. The UK must be proactive in ensuring that our citizens' cases are not allowed to stall for long periods of time.

Sixthly, families should have support to attend foreign trials, including financial assistance where it is desperately needed, logistical help and trauma-informed briefings. Attendance at trials should be a right, not a luxury. Seventhly, we need clear co-ordination within the UK. That includes consistent advice on repatriation, clearer guidance on coroner inquests and formal links to the peer-to-peer networks that can reduce isolation and provide lived experience insight, because it can often be so different.

Finally, we need an independent complaints and review mechanism, so that when support fails, families know that they have somewhere to turn. This mechanism must include the power to investigate, recommend and drive change. These points are important, because this provision does not exist at the moment.

The loss of a loved one to murder is already the greatest pain a family can endure. That pain should not be compounded by systemic failure, indifference or confusion. The families who make up the *Murdered Abroad* campaign have shown courage, dignity and resolve, and not just in seeking justice for their loved ones, but in trying to ensure that no one else suffers the way that they have.

**Tom Gordon** (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (LD): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this important debate. He eloquently outlined the steps that would ensure that people who suffer bereavement abroad receive justice. Does he agree that as well as having a framework for going forward, we also need the Foreign Office to look retrospectively at historical cases to ensure that people who have previously suffered get the justice they deserve?

**Mr Reynolds:** My hon. Friend makes a really important point. As I said, about 80 families are affected each year, so this issue is ongoing and we need to make sure that where things have not gone right, we fix them and provide support to these families.

The changes that families are calling for are not radical; they are humane, reasonable and long overdue, so I ask the Minister directly: will the Government commit to working with families, consular staff, legal experts and campaigners to create a statutory framework for support, and will she ensure that no British family is left to face this horror alone, with only silence and guesswork for company?

Let us remember that if a British citizen were murdered on UK soil, their family would have access to a whole network of support—victim liaison officers, legal aid, local police, courts, coroners and therapeutic services. It should not matter where the tragedy happens; a British passport should still guarantee a minimum level of support from the British state. The UK must do better, because British justice does not stop at our borders. A British life lost, no matter where it happens, is still a British life lost. Compassion in the face of tragedy is not optional; it is a duty, and it is a duty that we should be taking on.

10.27 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Alex Davies-Jones):** May I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mr Reynolds) on securing this very important debate and on his thoughtful and compassionate contribution? He has used his voice this evening for the voiceless, and I thank him for doing so.

Losing a loved one to murder is devastating, but when that tragedy happens overseas, the pain is only compounded by distance, unfamiliar legal systems and the complexity of navigating bureaucracy while trying to grieve. I fully agree with the hon. Gentleman that families going through something so traumatic should never have to face it alone. They should be able to access support to help them cope and recover. Let me reassure the hon. Gentleman and this House that bereaved families in England and Wales can access support, even if the crime took place abroad.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office leads on providing support to families bereaved through murder or manslaughter overseas. The specialist murder and manslaughter team in the FCDO's consular assistance department provides emotional support to bereaved families and helps them to navigate challenging investigative and judicial processes in foreign countries. That includes when a death occurred in an event designated by the UK Government as an act of terrorism.

Families can receive updates on an investigation or trial, guidance about local legal processes, and help finding support services in the country where the incident happened. While the FCDO cannot intervene in another country's justice system, it does all it can to ensure that families are kept informed and treated with compassion.

I do appreciate, however, that the experience of families in legal systems abroad, as we have heard from hon. Members, can be deeply painful at a time when they are already experiencing immense grief. This evening, I want to pay tribute to my constituent Nathan Osman, who tragically lost his life in Benidorm on 28 September last year. His family, including his sister Alannah, brother Lee and parents Liz and Jonathan, have given their consent to speak about Nathan today. My team and I have been supporting them for several months as they fight tirelessly for justice.

Alannah was initially contacted by the Spanish authorities on the day of Nathan's death. The exchange of information was brief and unclear, with Alannah confirming her name only to be told, "Brother found dead, bottom of cliff." They were told to contact the British embassy two days later and left with no additional information. The Spanish police initially—like in the case of Dr Ding, mentioned by the hon. Member for North Norfolk (Steff Aquarone)—ruled Nathan's death as accidental and closed his case with little investigation or support. It was only thanks to the family's research and investigation, with help from my team—specifically from Rebecca Lewis—that enough information was collated to reopen that case. I hope that will bring closure for the Osman family. While South Wales police did their best to support the family during the immediate aftermath of Nathan's death, they had no direct contact with the Spanish authorities or Interpol to clarify if the translated information that the family had received was correct and accurate.

**Jim Shannon:** The point I made to the hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mr Reynolds) was that families sometimes find out about these cases on social media or somewhere else. I would have thought that whenever the police in whatever country become aware that someone was a British citizen, they would immediately contact the embassy and make it aware of what had happened so that it could be the conduit. Could that be done? We have had a similar case in Northern Ireland, although I will not go into any details because it is an ongoing case. There is an important role for the consulate and the British embassy to play.

**Alex Davies-Jones:** The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point. It should be the appropriate protocol for the police to be informed first of an incident in a country, with the families informed by the police in that country or by the police in our country via Interpol, as I said. But, in today's modern age, sadly that is not always the case. It is not fair to the families that they find out second or third hand. An appropriate protocol should be in place. That should be how it happens. Sadly, we know that is not always the case.

The Osman family did not receive, and did not know that they could receive, a trained family liaison officer in Wales, and they were largely ignored by Spanish police. When they visited Spain shortly afterwards, they had to describe the situation on a mobile phone using Google Translate—we have heard that about similar cases—and there was extensive miscommunication throughout the ordeal between the family and external authorities, costing valuable investigation time and prolonging their agony.

There were many other issues with obtaining Nathan's case file and coroner's report, which the family believe contain a number of discrepancies. No one should have to endure what they went through. Losing a young family member in such horrific circumstances is a pain that few of us can truly understand, and they were retraumatised through various errors and miscommunications.

In the pictures and videos shared with my team by the family, it is easy to see what a dedicated father Nathan was to his young children and how much he is still loved and missed every day. I thank Alannah, Lee, Liz and Jonathan for sharing Nathan's story with me, and I thank hon. Members for sharing their stories with me this evening. I am sure the whole House will join me in sharing all our condolences with everyone impacted.

**Josh Newbury:** I thank the Minister for the open and sensitive way in which she is responding to the debate and for sharing the experiences of the family of her constituent Nathan. I am familiar with that case. She heard me explain the contact that I am having with the family of Rob Spray in my constituency. Would she be willing to meet me and the family, when the time is right for them, to see what could be done to get them the answers they so desperately want?

**Alex Davies-Jones:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the Sprays' experience. It is their lived experience and the experiences of other bereaved families that fuel me and give me that information to conduct my role as the victims Minister. I wholeheartedly welcome that correspondence and information.

In addition to the FCDO support that I have set out, the Homicide Service is commissioned by the Ministry of Justice to provide specialist practical, emotional, peer and advocacy support to families after a murder, whether it happened here or abroad. For homicides that occur overseas, that includes funding to contribute to the cost of repatriation to the UK, for the family to travel to the country in question, and for the interpretation and translation of documents, among other services. Crucially, this support is tailored to each family's circumstances and is available for as long as it is needed, so that families are not left to navigate these challenges alone.

**Tom Gordon:** I have been helping a constituent whose relative was murdered abroad over 10 years ago, and it is still an ongoing issue. My constituent tells me that the responses from the FCDO have not always been prompt or clear, that there has not always been a named point of contact and that, sadly, in some instances there have been mistakes in emails that were labelled "official" by the FCDO. In addition to offering support to colleagues through talking about their experiences, would the Minister and her colleagues consider setting up some sort of drop-in to which MPs could bring their cases, so that we can all help our constituents to get the justice they deserve?

**Alex Davies-Jones:** I thank the hon. Member for that contribution, and I am so sorry to hear of his constituent's experiences. It is exactly that type of experience that is fuelling me to find out what more we can do to support the families of those murdered abroad. I think a drop-in would be welcome, and I welcome correspondence from Members across the House on their experiences. I also appeal to families across England and Wales to let me hear about their experiences directly so that I can work with charities such as Murdered Abroad and the Victims' Commissioner to see what more we can do for them.

We have a memorandum of understanding in place on murder, manslaughter and infanticide abroad between the FCDO, UK policing and His Majesty's coroner. This sets out clearly the support that is available when a British national is murdered overseas and the deceased has been repatriated to England or Wales. It clearly defines the roles of each signatory, setting out a shared commitment to working together in support of bereaved families. In some cases, this includes assigning a family liaison officer to bereaved families in the UK, although I appreciate that this is at the discretion of the local police force. At local level in England and Wales, police and crime commissioners also have the power to commission services for all victims of crime, including supporting victims where the crime has been committed overseas.

However, as I have already outlined, we recognise that for many families in this difficult position, it is not always clear what support is available or how to access it. That is why, as we develop the new victims code

provided for in the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, we are considering what further information can be included to better signpost help for those affected by crimes overseas. I intend to consult on the new code with all new Members and the public in due course.

**Mr Reynolds:** While the Minister is developing that code, and before we reach the point at which it is ready to be shared widely with the public, would it be valuable for her to meet Eve and others who founded the charity Murdered Abroad, and to talk directly to them about their experiences and how they could influence the code at this earlier stage?

**Alex Davies-Jones:** I welcome the hon. Member's comments. It is crucial that we consult organisations such as Murdered Abroad when looking at the new victims code. It is important that we consult all organisations supporting victims and survivors as we look at what else is missing from the code and how best we can provide that support.

That said, I should make it clear that we do not necessarily believe that the victims code is the right place to make provision for victims of overseas crimes. The code sets out the minimum standards of service that victims should receive when involved in cases dealt with in the criminal justice system in England and Wales. It is therefore designed around the laws and procedures that we have here in our jurisdiction and our criminal justice system, much of which will not be applicable in cases involving crimes overseas. It is therefore not the right vehicle to make provision for victims where the offence is investigated and prosecuted abroad, as consular support overseas relies on the responses of agencies in that specific country where the crime occurred.

I commit to the hon. Member for Maidenhead and the House that, following the new code, my Department will work with the National Police Chiefs' Council, the FCDO, the Victims' Commissioner and Murdered Abroad, taking into account the lived experience of others, to explore how we can make clearer what support exists for families affected by homicide abroad and what more we can do to support them.

We know how traumatic and isolating it can be to lose a loved one to violence in a foreign country. No family should face that kind of devastation alone, and our hearts go out to families who have gone, and are going, through it. When it does happen, those families deserve compassion, clarity and proper support. We are working to improve access to the help available and to ensure that those who need support know how to find it. I hope the hon. Member for Maidenhead is reassured by the measures I have set out and the steps we are taking to strengthen the support on offer even further.

*Question put and agreed to.*

10.39 pm

*House adjourned.*





# Westminster Hall

Monday 12 May 2025

[GRAHAM STUART *in the Chair*]

## Income Tax: Personal Allowance

4.30 pm

**Lewis Atkinson** (Sunderland Central) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered e-petition 702844 relating to the Income Tax Personal Allowance.

It is a pleasure to serve with you in the Chair, Mr Stuart, and it is a privilege to open the debate as a member of the Petitions Committee.

All colleagues from all parties will recognise the priority that the public place on improving living standards, as our conversations with constituents, polling and the facts of the matter tell us. The reality is that average disposable incomes after tax fell from 2019-20 to 2023-24—an unprecedented and shocking situation in which people were left poorer at the end of the last Parliament than they were at the start of it. That is the key context for today's debate, which has been triggered as a result of more than 250,000 citizens signing the petition on income tax personal allowances. It also speaks to wider and entirely understandable public frustration about living standards.

In preparation for the debate, I had the pleasure of talking to Mr Alan Frost, the creator of the petition and a constituent of the hon. Member for Bridgwater (Sir Ashley Fox). Mr Frost, who is in the Gallery, explained that he has recently retired, having worked his whole life. He feels a sense of injustice that his state pension is considered as income for tax purposes, and that the tax thresholds he faces are not increasing.

The events that led to that situation are as follows. In the 2021 spring Budget, the right hon. Member for Richmond and Northallerton (Rishi Sunak), who was Chancellor at the time, announced that the income tax personal allowance threshold of £12,570 would be frozen until April 2026. In the 2022 autumn statement, the Chancellor at that time, the right hon. Member for Godalming and Ash (Sir Jeremy Hunt), announced that the freeze would be extended for a further two years until April 2028. Following the change of Government, the current Chancellor announced in her autumn 2024 Budget that the freeze would not be extended any further, and therefore income tax personal allowances are expected to next rise in April 2028.

Although Mr Frost is a pensioner and his petition reflects a desire to boost pensioner incomes, he also believes that significantly increasing the personal tax allowance would benefit those in work, boosting incomes and reducing the need for benefits. That belief reflects the reality that less than a quarter of the 37 million income tax payers in the UK are over the age of 65. The vast majority of those paying income tax are of working age and are not receiving the state pension.

In their written response to the petitioners, the Government highlighted that making the suggested changes to the personal allowance would cost “many billions of pounds”. I am sure that the Minister will say more about that when he responds, but cost is a key element

to discuss in our debate. It is Parliament's responsibility to agree the ways and means of any policy it makes—that is, how to pay for what we decide to do.

I gently suggest that the events of the last Parliament remind us how serious that responsibility is. The mini-Budget of September 2022 announced tax cuts costing around £45 billion without explaining how they would be funded, and the market reaction to that announcement left ordinary people paying the price. An emergency reversal of those tax changes followed, but not before high inflation and interest rates hit the standard of living. I therefore urge our debate to be conducted in full consideration of the cost and funding of any tax policy changes.

Were income tax personal allowances to rise in the way suggested by the petition, there would be several other linked tax policy choices to be made, and those choices would determine the full cost of the change. For example, would the size of the tax bands above the personal allowance be maintained? Currently, the basic rate of 20% is levied above the personal allowance and up to about £50,000 of income. Would the size of that band be maintained if the personal allowance were increased by £7,500? If so, the point at which the higher rate of tax takes effect would, in turn, increase to almost £58,000, at further cost to the Exchequer.

Similarly, the additional rate of tax is currently levied on incomes above £125,000, so if the personal allowance was to rise, would that level rise proportionately too? Finally, the income tax personal allowance is aligned with the level at which people start making national insurance contributions; should that level also rise to £20,000, or would we return to a more complicated tax system in which income tax and national insurance thresholds were no longer harmonised?

**Sir Ashley Fox** (Bridgwater) (Con): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for introducing the debate. Will he join me in paying tribute to my constituent, Mr Alan Frost, for raising the number of signatures required to achieve the debate? Does he also agree that freezing the level of the basic allowance at £12,570 most heavily impacts pensioners with limited income, who find themselves paying more income tax on small occupational pensions as time goes by?

**Lewis Atkinson:** Of course, I join the hon. Gentleman in paying tribute to his constituent for securing this debate; 250,000 signatures is an extraordinary level of engagement in the democratic process, and that is to be applauded. I will make some points about the distribution of the benefits of income tax freezes later on in my speech.

The cost of the policy requested by the petition depends on the answers to the questions I just posed. Other Members may wish to speak about how they would approach such matters, but, to aid debate, I thought it would be useful to present some indicative costs. At this point, I want to place on record my thanks to the staff of the House, including those from the Petitions Committee and the Library, for their work in helping me to access such information.

The House of Commons Library estimates that it would cost more than £60 billion to increase the personal allowance to £20,000, make corresponding increases to the higher rate tax threshold, and raise the national insurance threshold to £20,000 to maintain alignment.

[*Lewis Atkinson*]

That figure is consistent with the range of costs expected by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, which I also met in preparation for this debate. The IFS estimates that increasing the personal allowance to £20,000 would cost somewhere in the range of £40 billion to £90 billion, depending on the choices made on the related tax matters that I have outlined.

To put those figures into context, at a minimum cost of £40 billion, the proposal would be at least as large as the tax measures proposed by the September 2022 mini-Budget, which were then quickly reversed after the economy crashed. At the higher end of the estimates—£90 billion—the cost of such a change would be around the same size as the entirety of public revenue spend on education, or two thirds of the total cost of the state pension. It is not for me, in introducing the debate, to advocate one way or another, but I urge Members contributing to speak frankly about the costs and funding of any tax changes they favour.

I hope it is also useful briefly to provide some context about how individuals throughout the UK would be impacted by increases in the personal allowance. The IFS notes that the income level of one third of adults is already below the existing personal allowance. That group—those with the lowest incomes in society—would not benefit from the changes sought by the petition, while the greatest benefits would be received by those who are best off. That is to say, in net, such a change would be regressive, increasing inequalities of income.

**Wendy Morton** (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con): I thank the hon. Gentleman for setting out the petition's argument. I came to the debate because an unusually high number of my constituents signed the petition. On the hon. Gentleman's point about disparities, does he not agree that a considerable number of pensioners feel aggrieved and hard done by at the moment—and rightly so—because of a number of a policy decisions? That is why it is worth the Government having a proper look at the petition and what it proposes, and not just the financial aspect. If pensioners were able, for example, to earn a little more before they hit the threshold, they would have more to put back into the economy, and those who continue to work might want to do so for a little longer.

**Lewis Atkinson**: I thank the right hon. Lady for that intervention. Of course, it was the previous Government who harmonised the income tax thresholds for pensioners and those of working age alike, the situation having previously been different. I absolutely recognise the stress felt by pensioners around the land. That is why such a debate is difficult without wider consideration of pension incomes and in particular the maintenance of the triple lock, which is not the subject of this debate, but which strikes me as important to consider.

As I was saying, there is a disparity between the potential benefits of a significant increase in the personal allowance for those with different levels of income, with those earning the most benefiting the most from such an increase. Members may also wish to know that there would also be significant geographic differences in the impact of any changes. The places with average lower levels of income—for example, Sunderland—would lose out relative to places with higher average incomes, which are disproportionately in London and the south-east.

Were such tax changes funded by cutting public services, regions such as the north-east would lose out even more. I hope those matters of context will help inform the debate this afternoon.

I will end where I started, with a reflection of public sentiment on living standards. As other Members have mentioned, there is undoubtedly a strength of public feeling on these matters. We have to be frank: it is our job to improve the incomes and lives of the people that we serve. When I am out in Sunderland Central every week, that is the key issue that people raise with me, because for years they have been no better off and, in many cases, they are struggling to make ends meet. I get it. Putting more money in people's pockets so they can do what they want is the public's top priority. A key part of that is managing the public finances well. We all saw what the Liz Truss mini-Budget and unfunded half-baked tax plans did to living standards.

**Wendy Morton**: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

**Lewis Atkinson**: No, I will make progress. The public expect us to do better than that and they expect us to do more. They want wages and pensions to go up faster than inflation, as is now starting to happen. They want the personal allowance to rise. I pay tribute to Mr Frost again for calling for those measures, and to all those who signed the petition. We should be hugely thankful to have citizens who are engaged in our parliamentary democracy, as the 250,000 people who signed the petition are. I look forward to an interesting, and I hope informed, debate.

**Graham Stuart (in the Chair)**: Members will have noticed that the in-Chamber clock is not functioning, but the time can be seen on the annunciator—time is probably not of the essence in this debate. I remind Members that if they want to speak, they should bob, but I do not think that applies either.

4.43 pm

**Mr Tom Morrison** (Cheadle) (LD): It is an honour to serve under your chairship, Mr Stuart. One in five people in the UK is now living in poverty. That is around 14 million people. Those are people in our communities: we see them at the school gates, we go to church with them and we meet them every day in our constituencies. Those people are struggling to navigate ever-increasing energy bills, rising food prices and other costs, while their wages do not keep up with inflation.

Last year, I was door-knocking in Gatley village, which sits in my constituency. It was one of those incredibly cold nights—the kind of cold that really bites through people's fingertips. I came to one house where the lights were off. I was not expecting an answer, but a woman answered the door layered up in two dressing gowns, and with two small boys behind her. We talked briefly about the issues she was facing: rising energy prices, increases in her mortgage and the struggle to keep her boys fed and warm. However, what really stood out to me was the look in her eye, because it was the same look that my mum had when I was growing up.

When I was about 13, my mum, brother and I faced homelessness after our landlord hiked up the rent. My mum did everything to protect my brother and me from



what was happening, and it is only now that I realise what she went through. She missed meals so her boys could eat. She would sometimes sit in the dark alone when the electricity meter ran out of credit and we had gone to bed. That was the day-to-day life that we were living. Many years later, seeing those two boys standing behind their mother in a freezing cold house reminded me how important it is to keep standing up for those people who are struggling day by day.

I thank Mr Frost for bringing this issue to the House. I believe that raising the personal income allowance could ease the burden that many people are facing, although it has to be when the finances allow. However, whether the Government listen to the signatories of the petition or not, more must be done to help those who are struggling.

The Conservatives effectively raised taxes by freezing the income thresholds for several years. Families and pensioners should not have to pay to clear up the economic mess left by the previous Government. This Government must find ways to lower the tax burden, so that more people are not dragged into poverty and so that more families can live in dignity and security.

According to Resolve Poverty, which was formerly known as Greater Manchester Poverty Action, nearly 20% of children in Cheadle live in poverty, while across Stockport the figure is over 30%. Make no mistake—the figure should be 0% everywhere. Raising the personal allowance would help, but if the Government refuse to do that, at the very least they must better support low-income earners who are struggling to afford the basics.

One way that the Government could act is by scrapping the unfair child benefit cap, which is one of the biggest drivers of rising child poverty. Many charities from across the UK, including Child Poverty Action, Citizens Advice and Save the Children, are advocating for the cap to be scrapped. As Dan Paskins, executive director of Save the Children, has said:

“good intentions are not enough. Children growing up in poverty need action and no child poverty strategy will be credible unless the two-child limit is scrapped”.

I finish by reminding the Minister of the story that I shared earlier: that mother, with two young boys standing behind her, doing everything she could to ensure that they were being looked after. No one wants to struggle. No one wants to choose between heating and eating, but it is still happening. In the sixth richest country in the world, that is not acceptable. The Government must do more to help those who are in work but still struggling, and more to provide support for those children being dragged into poverty.

4.47 pm

**Daisy Cooper** (St Albans) (LD): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Stuart.

I start by thanking Mr Frost for launching this petition and the 250,000 people who have signed it. The number of people who have signed it speaks to the strength of public feeling about this issue, which is a serious policy challenge for all political parties. Indeed, I think the petition does more than showing the strength of feeling that exists. I regard it as a cry for help, because right around the country there are struggling families gripped by a cost of living crisis, there are high streets and small businesses gripped by the cost of doing business crisis, and people are crying out for the change they were promised.

Most ordinary folk work hard, play by the rules, pay their taxes and expect certain public services to be there for them when they need them. Even when they become pensioners, they may well still be working. I hear time and again that pensioners want certainty. They have worked for their entire lives, they know how much money they have coming in and they need to know how much money is going out. They need to budget. When a shock comes along—whether something like the mini-Budget, a cut to the winter fuel payment or sky-high energy prices—they do not know what to do. They have far less capacity than other people to increase their income. Increasingly, pensioners have caring responsibilities, not just for their spouses but for their children, grandchildren or, even in some cases, their great-grandchildren. I take the petition as a cry for help.

As the Liberal Democrat spokesperson, I am incredibly proud that our policy when we were in government was to raise the personal allowance. That went through, and by April 2015, more than 3 million people had been taken out of paying income tax all together. It remains our priority to raise the tax-free personal allowance, as the best and fairest way of cutting tax when the public finances allow. And there is the rub, because the public finances are under enormous pressure and strain and, at the same time, there are very few signs of economic growth. We know that the public finances are in a terrible state in large part because of the mess left behind by the Conservative Government; in part, too, because of the growth-crushing Labour Budget, but also because of President Trump's trade war. We have a toxic combination that means that people are seeing their seeing their taxes go up but not seeing services improve. It is leading to that cry for help.

As has been mentioned, the House of Commons Library briefing estimates that this measure alone would cost around £50 billion, and additional measures to equalise it with national insurance could cost £60 billion to £65 billion. If I remember correctly, I think the pandemic cost £40 billion, so this would be 1.5 pandemics, which is a staggering amount of money. None the less, we should not dismiss the call.

There are other things that we could do. We Liberal Democrats have said that the key to sorting out the public finances is to get more economic growth. We think that a key way of doing that is to improve our trading relationship with the European Union. Liberal Democrat research has shown that since the Brexit deal came into effect, small businesses have had to fill in 2 billion pieces of paper—enough paper to go round the world 15 times. The cost of that red tape is falling on to the shoulders of small businesses and, through them, their customers as well. Sorting out that trading relationship and ripping away that red tape will improve our economic growth.

We have also said that there are fairer ways of raising taxes. We have suggested that the Government look at increasing the digital services tax on the 20 largest online social media platforms and search engines. We have suggested that the Government look at increasing the remote gaming duty on those big gaming companies that made an enormous amount of money—billions of pounds in profits—during the pandemic, who we believe could pay a little bit more to help public services back on their feet.

[Daisy Cooper]

We know that the Labour Government have gone some way to reforming capital gains tax. We have suggested alternative ways of reforming it to raise even more money than the Labour Government have raised, but also that we should raise that money from the 0.1% richest—the super-wealthy. There are fairer ways in which this Government could raise taxes from those with the broadest shoulders—those big corporations—to bring in billions of pounds in order to support people at the other end of the ladder.

There are other things that the Government could do. We have suggested that a home insulation scheme not only would be good for the planet by reducing carbon emissions, but would reduce people's energy bills, meaning that the money that they do have would go further. Equally, by improving investment in our farming and reducing the cost of healthy, locally grown food, people would not have to spend so much of their money on food bills.

I thank Mr Frost again, and everybody who signed the petition. We as policymakers should take this challenge very seriously. We see it as a cry for help from those who are struggling the most at this incredibly difficult time. I urge the Minister again, as I have done many times in previous months, to look at some of the suggestions from the Liberal Democrats and to engage in those conversations about how we raise tax in a fairer way and support those who are struggling at this very difficult time.

4.53 pm

**James Wild** (North West Norfolk) (Con): In the last Westminster Hall debate that I took part in I think we were limited to 90-second speeches, so it is a pleasure to have the opportunity to expand at some considerable length this afternoon.

I thank the hon. Member for Sunderland Central (Lewis Atkinson) and the proposer Mr Frost for bringing forward this petition for debate on behalf of the 250,000 signatories, nearly 500 of whom come from my constituency. The petitioners have called on the Government to increase the income tax personal allowance to £20,000 to help low earners and pensioners. A bit of a spoiler alert: I think that they will be disappointed, because we have all seen the Government's response that there are no such plans. It is worth noting that over the past 60 years, no Labour Government have left office with the tax burden lower than when they started. That is similar to employment; Labour Governments have always left the rate of unemployment higher than when they inherited it.

The tax burden as a percentage of GDP is forecast to hit its highest level since the second world war by the end of this Parliament. The cause of that pattern is philosophical: the belief that there is such a thing as Government money. In fact, there is only taxpayers' money, and we Conservatives want people to keep more of it. As the shadow Chancellor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Central Devon (Sir Mel Stride), has said that we must drive taxes lower and do so in a responsible manner.

Other Members have referred to research by the House of Commons Library, that estimates a cost of between £50 billion to £65 billion—depending on the choices made on other parts of the allowance—to raise

the personal allowance for everyone to £20,000, as the petition calls for. That is about what we spend on the defence budget. To introduce such a policy, people have to be very clear about the choices they are proposing: the spending that they would cut, the increases in other taxes they would make or, indeed, if they would fund this through borrowing. Anyone promising such an increase has to be honest about it, and set out their choices clearly and openly. The Conservatives will be doing that before the next general election.

The last Conservative Government increased the personal allowance significantly to benefit low earners—we made that a priority. It increased by 40% in real terms from 2010, from £6,475 to the £12,570 it is today. That change has benefitted millions of UK taxpayers. Of course, I also acknowledge that the last Government had to take the difficult decision to freeze that threshold until 2028. That decision was unwelcome and unpopular—I do not think it won us any votes—but it followed the hundreds of billions of pounds that we put in place to protect lives and livelihoods during the covid pandemic. Other parties were calling on us to spend even more, as I recall. That decision supported the poorest people the most.

Billions more were spent in response to the energy price shock—again, that money needs to be paid back. However, it is also the case that if the personal allowance had simply been uprated by inflation every year since 2010, it would only have been around £9,650 in 2023-24, which is lower than the current level.

At the last election, it was Labour that promised not to raise taxes on working people, which it broke in the October Budget with increases in national insurance. That was justified on the grounds of restoring financial responsibility and economic stability—referred to in the Government's response to the petition. But it is hard to see that stability. The Government's actions have led to a collapse in business confidence, and have seen taxes and borrowing rise at record levels. Meanwhile, growth—meant to be the overriding priority—has flatlined.

Last week's cut in interest rates was welcome, but Labour's policies are expected to mean that interest rates stay higher for longer than they would have done under our plans. Only last week, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research assessed that the Chancellor would miss her fiscal rules by £63 billion by the end of the forecast period. That came after the emergency Budget only a few weeks ago, that saw rushed cuts to welfare budgets, which colleagues across the House are concerned are untargeted. That was simply to spare the Chancellor the blushes of missing her own fiscal rules.

As a result of the Government's actions, questions are being asked about the levels of personal taxation, particularly the personal allowance—the subject of the petition—which the Government pledge to unfreeze in 2028. The Chancellor made much of this at the autumn Budget, saying:

“From 2028-29, personal tax thresholds will be uprated in line with inflation once again. When it comes to choices on tax, this Government choose to protect working people every single time.” —[*Official Report*, 30 October 2024; Vol. 755, c. 821.]

I think we might disagree about the second part of that quote.

The statement about the policy was clear and unambiguous, and it maintained the position of the last Conservative Government—to lift that freeze in 2028.

According to recent reports in the media, this is an issue that the Treasury is looking at as it tries to keep in the too-limited headroom that the Chancellor has in place. Will the Minister give an unambiguous commitment and restate the pledge to unfreeze the personal allowance from 2028? It does not go anywhere near as far as the petitioners would want, but it would at least be something.

The petition refers particularly to the position of pensioners; the hon. Member for Sunderland Central referred to that. Millions of people who are in receipt of only the state pension now face paying income tax on it. Of course, many with modest private provision already face that situation. Forecasts suggest an estimated 9 million pensioners will pay income tax on their state pension from April 2026. At the general election, we had a very clear policy: the triple lock plus commitment, which would have ensured that people relying on the state pension as their only source of income would never pay income tax on it. Labour refused to match our policy at that time; in government, it has maintained opposition to it.

I have tabled several parliamentary questions to him, but the Minister has been reluctant to give the Treasury estimates of the number of pensioners who receive only the state pension whom he expects to pay income tax and when they will do so. Perhaps today he will come clean with the figures that the Government must have about how many pensioners will have to pay income tax, when all they have in income is the state pension. I assume he is aware of those figures and assessed their impact when the Government were deciding to cut the winter fuel payments, again from very vulnerable people.

Towards the end of the last Parliament, I supported measures by the then Government to cut taxes for working people through reductions in employee national insurance, the last of which, last March, was worth £10 billion. We believe in people keeping more of their own money, and the Minister should give the signatories of this petition clear answers to the following questions. Will the Government stick to their promise to increase the personal allowance from 2028? Are the Government committed to not raising the rates of income tax and VAT in this Parliament? Will the Minister rule out any further increases in national insurance rates? I look forward to his response.

5.1 pm

**The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (James Murray):**

It is a pleasure to speak with you in the Chair, Mr Stuart; this is our second debate together in the last few days. I extend my thanks, as many others have, to my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland Central (Lewis Atkinson) for opening the debate, and I congratulate Mr Frost, who created the petition. I also thank all other hon. Members who have contributed to the debate for setting out their views.

I know that this petition has attracted almost 250,000 signatures, so, given the public interest in this topic, it is important that we are debating it. I recognise the views of everyone who has put their name to the petition, and let me be clear that, as a Government, we want taxes on working people and on pensioners, who have worked hard all their lives, to be as low as possible. We were elected to put more money in people's pockets and, crucially, we were elected to do so in a fiscally responsible way. That is a critical point to understand.

We want to keep taxes on working people and pensioners as low as possible, but if we were to follow the calls of some Opposition parties and abandon fiscal responsibility, it would lead to economic chaos and the collapse of public services, and that would harm working people and pensioners the most.

Raising the personal allowance to £20,000 would cost more than £50 billion. That is more than the £45 billion of unfunded tax cuts announced by Liz Truss in her disastrous mini-Budget. Conservative and Reform MPs may have cheered Liz Truss on, but like the British people, we in the Labour party know the damage that that caused, and we will never let it happen again. To put it another way, if £50 billion was taken out of public services, that would be equal to wiping out almost the entire UK defence budget or slashing the NHS by a quarter. The British people will not be the winners if public services collapse or chaos returns to the economy.

The Chancellor has taken the right decisions to get the UK's public services back on their feet and to restore fiscal responsibility and economic stability. We will fight to protect those hard-won gains from those who want to see them squandered. In that critical context of fiscal responsibility, however, the Government are doing everything we can to support working people and pensioners. In our first Budget, we decided not to extend the freeze on personal tax thresholds, meaning that people will be able to keep more of their income. We are supporting hard-working families and pensioners through the plan to make work pay and through our significant increases to the national living and minimum wages and the state pension. We know that we will be able to keep taxes down only by delivering sustainable economic growth, which is why our plan for change and our trade deals are so important to make people better off.

Of course, an important context for this discussion is the autumn Budget, in which the Government reset public spending and put the public finances back on a sustainable path. The decisions in the Budget were underpinned by the most ambitious package ever to close the tax gap—the difference between what taxpayers owe and what is paid to His Majesty's Revenue and Customs—alongside tax changes that make the tax system fairer and more sustainable while protecting people's payslips. The Government are determined to close the tax gap as far as we can, because ensuring that everyone pays the tax they owe is critical for a well-functioning economy, for protecting revenue to fund our public services and for helping to keep taxes on working people as low as possible. In the spring statement, the Chancellor went further and faster to close the tax gap, raising an extra £1 billion in revenue for the public finances.

Turning to the personal allowance, it is worth beginning by recognising that the UK has one of the more generous personal tax allowances in the OECD, and the most generous in the G7. As we have heard in today's debate, it was the previous Government who made the decision to freeze the personal allowance at its current level of £12,570 until April 2028. In the Budget last autumn, this Government decided not to extend that freeze and we kept the basic, higher and additional rates of income tax, employee national insurance contributions and VAT unchanged, meaning that people will keep more of their income. We also had to take a number of difficult but necessary decisions on tax, welfare and spending to



[*James Murray*]

restore economic stability, fix the public finances and support public services, given the situation that we inherited from the previous Government.

**Jamie Stone** (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I think the reason so many people signed the petition is that the plight of some of the poorest and most vulnerable in our society is on our collective conscience. I may have a helpful suggestion. I should declare an interest right away: my wife is disabled and I am her carer. I know of people who are carers and live in terror of an unexpected cost coming their way, such as the boiler breaking down in the north of Scotland or some horrifying bill throwing the finances out completely. I wonder whether it would be a kindly and humane step for the Government, or any Government, to provide for a mechanism whereby, when a nasty, surprise bill comes the way of a person caring for someone who is long-term sick or disabled, that bill could be offset against the tax payable by that person, or the married couple together.

**James Murray:** Of course, having a well-functioning welfare state is, in many ways, precisely about protecting people when they have unexpected shocks to their lives. I am not sure that the tax system is the best way to address that, but I think the hon. Gentleman's broader point about ensuring that the state provides a safety net or cushion against unexpected shocks to people's lives is an important principle.

The focus of today's debate is very much on tax thresholds, particularly the personal allowance, so I will return to my comments on that. When we took office in July last year, no responsible Government could have let things carry on as they were. Likewise, no responsible Government could now raise the personal allowance to £20,000 at a cost of more than £50 billion, as such a move would put public services back on their knees or risk economic chaos that would push up inflation, mortgages and taxes.

The petition suggested that

"raising the personal allowance would lift many low earners out of benefits".

We know that our benefits system is currently failing on all fronts; it is failing those who receive benefits, by not helping them to work where they can, and failing taxpayers more widely, through soaring costs to the public purse. We are fixing that by reforming the benefit system to make it more pro-work, while protecting those who cannot work. When people are in work, we want them to be better paid, which is why in April 2025 we increased the national living wage to £12.21 per hour, the third largest proportional increase since 2016, and that is expected to benefit over 3 million workers.

We have published the "Get Britain Working" White Paper, which sets out the Government's plans to reform employment, health and skills support to tackle economic inactivity and support people into good work. Our plan to make work pay represents the biggest upgrade in employment rights in a generation, bringing the UK back into line internationally. It tackles poor working conditions and job security, and by making work more flexible and family friendly, it will support our wider programme across employment, health and skills policy to get Britain working.

**James Wild:** The Minister referred to the Employment Rights Bill. Has he seen the survey from the Britain Retail Consortium in which 70% of the businesses that were surveyed, which are major retailers that employ half a million people, said that the legislation would damage their business, and half said that it would make them less likely to take people on?

**James Murray:** Many employers recognise that having a productive, secure workforce who can take pride in their jobs and contribute to their fullest ability at work is important not just for the employees themselves but for the productivity of the businesses. That is why we want to see workers with employment rights that will be upgraded through our plan to make work pay, alongside, as I mentioned a few moments ago, a stronger national living wage and national minimum wage under this Government.

That focuses, however, on working people and their rights at work and their incomes. The petition also raised concerns about the state pension being subject to income tax. In 2025-26 the personal allowance will continue to exceed the basic and full new state pension. That means that pensioners whose sole income is the full new state pension or basic state pension without any increments will not pay any income tax. The state pension continues to be the foundation of support available to pensioners, backed by the Government's commitment to the triple lock.

This year, over 12 million pensioners have benefited from a 4.1% increase to their basic or new state pension, which means that those on the full new state pension will get an additional £470. Over the course of this Parliament, the yearly amount of the full new state pension is currently projected to go up by around £1,900, based on the latest forecast from the Office for Budget Responsibility. The Government also support pensioners through a range of other means, including free eye tests, NHS prescriptions and bus passes. For pensioners who are eligible for means-tested support, we provide pension credit and housing benefit.

I recognise the substantial support for this petition. Hard-working people and pensioners who have worked hard all their lives want taxes to be as low as possible; I understand that. However, as we have set out today, we inherited a mess from the previous Government and have had to take tough choices to set us on a path to generate economic growth. Raising the personal allowance to £20,000 would undermine the work that the Chancellor has done to restore fiscal responsibility and economic stability, and it would slash the funding available for vital public services. This Government remain committed to keeping people's taxes as low as possible while ensuring fiscal responsibility. Fiscal recklessness hits working people and pensioners the hardest. Parties promising to raise the personal allowance to £20,000 would have to explain how they would cut the NHS by a quarter, or why they want a rerun of the economic disaster we saw under Liz Truss.

We as a Government are determined to go further and faster to deliver our plan for change with its key goal of putting more money in people's pockets by kick-starting economic growth. We will always keep taxes as low as possible while never putting security for families and pensioners at risk. I thank all hon. Members who have spoken.

5.12 pm

**Lewis Atkinson:** I will be brief. I thank all hon. Members for their contributions. A debate on tax policy can be somewhat dry, but it is important to remember, as hon. Members on both sides of the House have reflected, that there are personal stories and circumstances behind all the signatories to this petition and the emails in our mailboxes. People are struggling to make ends meet and trying to do the best for their families and raise their standard of living. It is important to remember that.

On behalf of the Petitions Committee, I thank the Minister for his response to the debate and all the Members who attended. I particularly thank Mr Frost

for instigating the petition and all the petitioners who signed it. We have had a short but important debate this afternoon on the nub of the key economic policy debates facing the country.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered e-petition 702844 relating to the Income Tax Personal Allowance.

5.13 pm

*Sitting adjourned.*





# Written Statements

Monday 12 May 2025

## DEFENCE

### **LGBT Financial Recognition Scheme: Recruitment of Independent Panel and Appeals Board**

**The Minister for Veterans and People (Al Carns):** The LGBT financial recognition scheme includes two types of payments: the “LGBT FRS Dismissed or Discharged Payment” and the “LGBT FRS Impact Payment”. The impact payment is available to all those who experienced pain and suffering directly related to the ban on homosexuality in the armed forces, including harassment, invasive investigations and imprisonment. There will be three tariff bands: level one or £1,000-£5,000; level two or £5,000-£10,000, and level three or £10,000-£20,000 and this will be determined by an independent panel who have now been appointed.

The independent panel will consist of Lord Paddick, chair, Alison Brown OBE, Frances Castle MBE, Dr Matthew Gould, Hannah Graf MBE, Craig Jones MBE, Caroline Paige MBE, Annabel Poate-Joyner and Emma Riley. The independent panel will sit as the chair plus four members, except in exceptional circumstances.

An appeals process has also been set up for both the “LGBT FRS Dismissed or Discharged Payment” and the “LGBT FRS Impact Payment”.

The appeals board will consist of Douglas Bosphore-Ward MBE, chair, Judith Henry, Rachel Ruxton, and Professor Tracy Myhill. The appeals board will sit as the chair plus two members, except in exceptional circumstances.

Both independent panel and appeals board members are appointed for a period of two years as direct ministerial appointments.

[HCWS625]

## EDUCATION

### **Roll-out of Early Years and Childcare**

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Stephen Morgan):** This Government’s plan for change sets out a commitment to give children the best start in life, breaking the link between background and opportunity. We are ensuring that families in every community across the country can access affordable childcare places that deliver high-quality early education.

We have set a milestone of a record proportion of children starting school ready to learn. We will measure our progress through 75% of five-year-olds reaching a good level of development in the early years foundation stage profile assessment by 2028.

From 12 May, all eligible working parents of children who will be at least nine months old on or before 31 August can apply for 30 hours of Government-funded childcare for September 2025 as part of the next phase of the Government’s childcare expansion.

The increase in childcare places is already having a hugely positive impact on parents and children. Around half a million children have already accessed places, and the findings from our childcare experiences survey shows the positive impact of providing more Government-funded childcare places for more children in the first two phases of our roll-out. An overwhelming majority of parents—97%—who received a childcare eligibility code have gone on to claim the childcare offered, and 93% of parents were able to secure their first choice of provider. Families with lower incomes have seen the biggest benefits, with one in five households earning between £20,000 and £40,000—and 14% of respondents overall—increasing their working hours.

The crucial role that all early years providers and local authorities play in delivering the childcare expansion ensures that families across the country can access the support they need.

This roll-out includes up to 6,000 new nursery places in schools across the country, backed by £37 million, with up to 4,000 available from this September, helping to grow our vibrant childcare market, which gives parents access to affordable and high-quality provision where they need it.

Parents who currently receive 15 hours for working families should reconfirm as usual and the code will work for the 30-hours offer in September, providing they remain eligible. Codes need to be reconfirmed every three months, so if parents have applied prior to June, they may need to reconfirm their code before taking up a place in September.

#### *Floor space requirements*

We are removing barriers for early years settings to help them meet the demand for approximately 60,000 places by September 2025. To help achieve this, we are consulting on potential changes to the early years foundation stage statutory framework to include free-flow outdoor space in the current indoor space requirements. This includes considering whether there should be a cap on how much providers can use this to increase their capacity to try to mitigate potential risks to overcrowding. This change to the EYFS could help some nurseries to increase capacity safely and efficiently where the physical structure permits.

This proposed change is in response to the Department’s November 2023 “Pulse surveys of childcare and early years providers”, in which the majority of providers—70%—said they would be likely to use flexibilities in space requirements while ensuring continued high-quality provision for children.

Outdoor play provides huge benefits to children—including improved memory and problem-solving skills, the development of social skills like self-regulation and negotiation, and better mental and physical health—and it boosts school-readiness and learning. By consulting on this change, we will ensure that we can support nurseries to expanding their capacity while maintaining the highest standards of safety and quality in early education.

The consultation can be accessed at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/space-requirements-in-early-years-childcare-settings-in-england>

[HCWS627]

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### Sustainable Farming Incentive 2024

**The Minister for Food Security and Rural Affairs (Daniel Zeichner):** This Government inherited farming schemes which were underspent, meaning millions of pounds were not going to farming businesses.

As set out in the plan for change, the Government are focused on supporting our farmers, driving rural economic growth and boosting Britain's food security. Now is the right time for a reset via the reformed sustainable farming incentive offer, which will support farmers, deliver for nature and target public funds fairly and effectively towards our priorities for food, farming and nature.

In October, the Labour Government outlined plans to invest a record £5 billion into farming, the largest budget for sustainable food production in our country's history.

As a result of this investment, a record number of farmers are now in farming schemes, and more money is being paid to more farmers under the SFI than ever before.

Earlier this year, the Government have successfully allocated the entire SFI budget and could therefore no longer accept new applications for the scheme.

There are more than 37,000 live SFI agreements currently in place, under which money continues to be paid to farmers this year and over future years.

However, an error was made when the current scheme was closed to new applications, the budget having been allocated.

I was not aware that people who had started an application and then saved it without submitting had been shown a "We've saved your application" screen containing two messages:

"If we need to close applications, we will give you six weeks' notice. We will publicise this information on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and email you". This message was shown in error due to a technical issue which meant that the message was carried over unintentionally from the online application used for the SFI 2023 offer.

"Your application will be available for two months for you to continue. If you have not submitted your application by then, we will delete it". This message was intentional.

The first message should not have been included and I apologise for the confusion it caused.

I am addressing the situation and have remade the decision to close the SFI 2024 scheme to new applications, without notice, on 11 March 2025, taking into account the message that was published in error on the screen.

I have decided to allow applications to be made to the SFI 2024 scheme by those who had started an application within two months of 11 March 2025, but who had not submitted the application by that date. This is relevant to around 3,000 applications which were started on 12 January 2025 or later. Eligible applicants will be given a six-week window in which to make an application. My Department will shortly be contacting applicants who are eligible to let them know when this window will open and close.

Agreements will be offered to eligible applications subject to the following restrictions:

Only one application may be submitted per farm business.

Agreements will be offered up to a maximum value of £9,300 per year for the duration of the agreement—excluding the SFI management payment, which would not count towards the value limit. This maximum value reflects the median average agreement value for existing SFI 2024 agreements.

Agreement holders will not be able to add more land to "rotational" SFI actions after year 1 of their agreement.

I acknowledge that these restrictions are not part of the published SFI 2024 scheme. I have taken the decision to put these restrictions in place in order to be as fair and reasonable to the affected applicants as possible, while also ensuring the prudent use of public money and the wider public interest. Given that the budget for the SFI 2024 scheme has been fully allocated, any further agreements entered into under the SFI 2024 scheme will need to be funded from other areas of DEFRA's departmental budget. I have therefore borne in mind the need to avoid creating unfairness to others or undermining other important objectives by unreasonably diverting funds from the wider farming and countryside programme.

My Department will announce further details on how this approach will be implemented shortly, including the timing of when applications from eligible applicants can start.

This decision does not change arrangements for small groups we previously announced would be able to make applications for agreements under the SFI 2024 scheme despite the closure of applications—namely farmers who were in the SFI pilot, assisted digital applications, and applicants with known system issues that prevented them from submitting applications. We will be contacting these groups shortly to explain the details of how this will be taken forward.

For all other farmers, SFI remains closed to new applications for the time being, pending the launch of the reformed SFI offer, which we will publish more detail about this summer. Work on this offer is already well under way. We are developing it in partnership with sector stakeholders, and the scheme will target public funds more effectively to meet the needs of both farmers and the environment.

Every penny committed through more than 37,000 live SFI agreements that were in place before 11 March will continue to be paid to farmers over the coming years. All eligible applications submitted before applications closed have been taken forward.

This decision will not impact the planned payment rate increase for farmers in higher level stewardship agreements, details of which are due to be released shortly.

We are investing £30 million to increase HLS payment rates so farmers in HLS agreements can continue to restore habitats, support rare species, preserve historical features and maintain traditional landscape features in our iconic countryside.

We are going further to develop a 25-year farming road map to make the sector more profitable in the decades to come with Baroness Minette Batters, former NFU President and farmer, appointed to lead a review of farm profitability.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### Nursing: Professional Regulation

**The Minister for Secondary Care (Karin Smyth):** Nurses play a critical role in our healthcare system, and this Government recognise the vital role that nurses play in delivering safe, effective and compassionate care. Today we are proposing to protect the title “nurse” in law to ensure that only those registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council can use it, with limited exceptions.

The protection in law of certain professional titles is important for public safety. Protected titles are used by healthcare professionals to indicate their field of practice to patients and the public, providing assurance to the public that the person using that title is competent and safe to practise.

Currently, the title “registered nurse” is protected in law. However, the Government are aware of concerns, most recently raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Brent East (Dawn Butler) and the #ProtectNurse campaign, that this is not sufficient to safeguard the public, as it does not address the misuse of the title “nurse” by unregulated professionals.

This Government intend to amend the criminal offence of “misuse of professional titles” so that the title of “nurse” is protected. This amendment will be made as

part of the Government’s professional regulation reform programme, which will modernise the legislative frameworks for the General Medical Council, the Nursing and Midwifery Council, and the Health and Care Professions Council during this Parliament.

As part of reforms to the Nursing and Midwifery Council’s legislative framework, we will create a new protection of title offence, making it a criminal offence for an individual who is not a registered nurse with the Nursing and Midwifery Council to call themselves a nurse.

The Government are aware that the term “nurse” is used across multiple professions, for example, “dental nurse”, “veterinary nurse” and “nursery nurse”. It is not our intention to prevent the legitimate use of the title “nurse” within these instances. The legislation will therefore include exemptions to allow other professionals to use the title legitimately, without the risk of prosecution.

The Government will continue to work with key stakeholders, including the Nursing and Midwifery Council, the devolved Governments, the Royal College of Nursing, trade unions, other professional representatives and the social care sector, on developing the protection of title offence.

This proposal demonstrates the Government’s respect for the nursing profession, dedication to patient safety and the pivotal role nurses have in our society.

[HCWS628]





# Petition

Monday 12 May 2025

## OBSERVATIONS

### ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

#### East Park Energy solar farm

*The petition of residents of Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire,*

Declares that the announced proposal by Brockwell Storage and Solar to build a 1,900-acre solar farm, known as East Park Energy, has caused great concern among residents of Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire, who are deeply worried as to the scale of the development, and that the development has been classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, which has raised additional concerns about its impact on residents; further declares that the proposed site would result in the loss and permanent damage of Grade 2 and 3a agricultural land, removing it from food production; and notes that an online petition on this matter received 1,067 signatures.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to not approve the East Park Energy proposal and to take immediate action to remove its Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project status.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Ben Obese-Jecty, *Official Report*, 6 March 2025; Vol. 763, c. 541.]

[P003050]

*Observations from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (Michael Shanks):*

The application for development consent for the proposed East Park Energy project is expected to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate—PINS—between July and

September 2025. Proposals are at the pre-application stage of the planning process under the Planning Act 2008. This stage of the planning process, including the consultation process, is developer led. The developer held a round of consultations between 24 September 2024 and 29 October 2024, details of which can be found at the following link:

<https://eastparkenergy.co.uk/document-library>

Once the pre-application stage is completed and the application is officially submitted, PINS has 28 days to review the application and to decide whether or not to accept it for examination. It is important to note that the panel of inspectors who will conduct the examination of the proposal, should the application be accepted by PINS, are appointed by PINS without involvement from this Department.

The Planning Inspectorate has a project page for East Park Energy where you can track the progress of the proposal and, later, register as an interested party if the project is accepted for examination:

<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN010141>

Further information on the pre-application and examination stages of the national infrastructure planning process can be found here:

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/application-process/the-process/>

Given the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial role in taking decisions on applications for development consent for energy infrastructure proposals, it would not be appropriate to comment on specific matters related to the proposals, as this could be seen as prejudicing the decision-making process.

In taking the decision on any application for development consent, the Secretary of State will follow the requirements of the Planning Act 2008 and have regard to matters that are relevant to her decision.





# Written Correction

*Monday 12 May 2025*

## Ministerial Correction

### ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

#### Planning and Infrastructure Bill

*The following extract is from the fourth sitting of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill Committee on 29 April 2025.*

**Michael Shanks:** Secondly, as clause 14 amends schedule 8 to the 1989 Act to allow the Secretary of State or Scottish Ministers to make regulations about applications

made to Scottish Ministers, amendments have been made so that proposed new paragraph 1A will apply only to applications made to the Secretary of State, not to those made to Scottish Ministers.

[*Official Report, Planning and Infrastructure Public Bill Committee, 29 April 2025; c. 167.*]

*Written correction submitted by the Under-Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, the hon. Member for Rutherglen (Michael Shanks):*

**Michael Shanks:** Secondly, as clause 14 amends schedule 8 to the 1989 Act to allow the Secretary of State or Scottish Ministers to make regulations about applications made to Scottish Ministers, amendments have been made so that proposed new paragraph 1A will apply only to applications made **to Scottish Ministers**, not to those made to **the Secretary of State**.



# ORAL ANSWERS

Monday 12 May 2025

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Monday 12 May 2025

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LGBT Financial Recognition Scheme:		Sustainable Farming Incentive 2024 .....	3WS
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# PETITION

Monday 12 May 2025

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East Park Energy solar farm .....	1P	

# WRITTEN CORRECTIONS

Monday 12 May 2025

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
<b>MINISTERIAL CORRECTION</b> .....	1WC	<b>MINISTERIAL CORRECTION—continued</b>	
Energy Security and Net Zero .....	1WC	Planning and Infrastructure Bill .....	1WC



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Monday 19 May 2025**

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