

Backbench Business Committee

Representations: Backbench Debates

Tuesday 20 May 2025

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Members present: Jess Brown-Fuller; Jonathan Davies; Mary Glendon; Alison Hume; Will Stone; Martin Vickers; Chris Vince.

In the absence of the Chair, Martin Vickers took the Chair.

Questions 1-13

Representations made

[I](#): Joe Powell

[II](#): Jim Shannon

[III](#): Mr Tom Morrison

[IV](#): Alison Bennett

Joe Powell made representations.

Q1 **Chair:** Welcome to the Backbench Business Committee. We have a number of applications to consider, the first of which comes from Joe Powell. Over to you, Joe.

Joe Powell: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Committee. I am bringing forward an application for a debate on London as an engine for growth. This proposal is from a cross-party group of London MPs, and we wish to have it considered before the spending review. We want to look at how we can make London more productive and increase its contribution to the UK economy.

Members are keen to discuss a few specific areas, including housing, where, at the moment, our new starts have dropped significantly; transport, where different MPs would like to talk about specific projects that could promote growth and jobs in their constituencies and unlock homes; and policing, which is obviously important to us all, and where the Met has an ask of the spending review in terms of its budget and staffing.

Those are the issues we would like to bring forward in time for the Government to consider what funding might be available in the spending review for those different areas.

Chair: Do Members have any comments or queries?

Q2 **Will Stone:** Who do you want as the answering Department? You have covered transport, policing, housing and finance, so what is your desired Department to respond to the debate?

Jess Brown-Fuller: Would it be Business and Trade, if you are thinking economic growth, or MHCLG, if you think there is an issue with housing?

Joe Powell: That is a good question. The envelope in the spending review has already been set by the Treasury, so I suspect it would be MHCLG, in terms of the settlement to London and specifically housing. We want a cross-cutting discussion about all these different issues, so we will take the Government's advice on who is best to respond.

Q3 **Chair:** If it is on a Tuesday morning, you will have to go when it is one of the weeks for MHCLG. You have mentioned a Chamber debate, but if you go for that, it will be a long wait. Are you content with the Westminster Hall options?

Joe Powell: Our main goal is to do it before 11 June.

Chair: In that case, it will definitely have to be in Westminster Hall. Any other questions? No? Thanks, Joe.

Jim Shannon made representations.

Q4 **Chair:** It is unusual to see you here, Jim.

Jim Shannon: I am surprised myself, but there we are. It is nice to see you in the Chair, Mr Vickers, and to see hon. Members. My request for a Backbench Business debate is on a subject that I believe has never been

discussed before: the ethical concerns of IVF egg donation in young women in the UK. I have been able to galvanise 11 Members—four from the Conservative party, four from Labour, two independents and myself.

Why is this important? The issue is not whether IVF—egg fertilisation—is right or wrong; the issue is the impact that it has on young people. I am concerned that women as young as 18 are being targeted in open advertising across the country, in public places and on social media, for their eggs. There seems to be a growing, surging demand.

The problem is that young women perhaps do not always know what the health risks will be. The money offered from fertility clinics has risen from £750 to almost £1,000. Therefore, many more young, working-class women might find themselves, due to financial constraints, moving towards something without knowing all the issues in relation to what is happening.

Across the UK, young women are being asked for donations to be used by much older women in IVF, including for cases of surrogacy, while not being appropriately advised of the risks to their health. I want to make sure, in the system we have, that when it comes to health issues, young women have all the knowledge that they should have.

In December 2024, the DHSC admitted that thousands of young women on the lowest incomes have undergone egg donation. I put forward a question back in December, and the DHSC confirmed that it had undertaken no research into the long-term impact of egg retrieval on women's bodies. It is disappointing that the departmental response did not seem to indicate that they were of a mind to do anything, so I felt, after some time, that it would be appropriate to have a debate on this issue.

I would be quite happy with a Westminster Hall debate, if that is what suits; I will take whatever one is offered.

Q5 Chair: I presume that the Department of Health and Social Care would reply.

Jim Shannon: Yes.

Q6 Chair: So it would have to be a Tuesday when the Department is on the rota.

Jim Shannon: I am happy to take whatever time would be appropriate.

Chair: Any comments?

Q7 Jess Brown-Fuller: I am interested in why this issue landed in your postbag, Jim. Were you contacted by a constituent who had been adversely affected by egg retrieval?

Jim Shannon: Everything I do in this place originates from the constituency of Strangford. Yes, I have been made aware of it by constituents, and also other people—other family members—who have expressed concern about this issue as well. It applies across the United

Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, so it would obviously have to be discussed here as well.

Chair: Are there any more comments or questions? Okay—thanks very much, Jim.

Jim Shannon: Much appreciated; thank you.

Mr Tom Morrison made representations.

Q8 **Chair:** Tom, over to you.

Mr Morrison: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the Committee for your time. I am bringing an application for a debate on an injury in service award. This was inspired by one of my constituents, Jane Notley, a former police officer whose career was sadly cut short after she was tragically injured in the line of duty. Because of these injuries, Jane was forced to retire, but despite her bravery and dedication to public service, she did not receive the recognition for her work. When I met with Jane, she told me how upsetting that was, because she loved being a member of the police force. It was her true calling in life, and therefore, having no acknowledgment of her time there was very distressing.

This will be a familiar story to many of our former police officers, fire officers and paramedics who have had to retire after being injured while doing the job that they love. That includes people like Tom Curry, a former police officer in Sussex. Tom has led a very public campaign for an injury in service award and has tenaciously driven awareness of this issue into the public agenda.

This debate will be an important step in helping to get Tom, Jane and all those other emergency service personnel the recognition that they deserve. My application is backed by 41 Members from across seven different parties—it is truly cross-party. Committee members will also see the breadth of people who are backing this debate, who cover almost all of the political spectrum in this House.

I have also published an EDM on this subject that has received 100 signatures of support. It is the third most signed EDM in this Session.

There is an opportunity for the House to show real support for those people who have risked everything for our communities. It would therefore be an honour if the application was accepted.

Q9 **Chair:** Thank you, Tom. Just for the record, I am No. 34 on the list of supporters. You are asking for a Chamber debate, but the Chamber is very oversubscribed at the moment. Is this time-sensitive in any way?

Mr Morrison: Well, it is time-sensitive in that the people deserve recognition. I do think this is worthy of a Chamber debate. For the people we will be talking about—I know that we will have many constituents who will feel passionately about this issue, and who will have been impacted by some of the stories that I have told—I think it would be a fitting honour to have this debate in the Chamber.

Alison Hume: I would like to register the fact that I support this application—I am No. 11 on the list. I concur that this would make a good Chamber debate.

Chair: Any other comments? No. Thanks very much, Tom. The Clerks will be in touch with our decision.

Mr Morrison: Thank you very much.

Alison Bennett made representations.

Q10 **Chair:** Over to you, Alison.

Alison Bennett: Thank you for hearing my application. I would like to secure a Backbench Business Committee debate on the adoption and special guardianship support fund. I have just come from a Westminster Hall debate about Government support for children in adoptive and kinship placements, which was in part about the ASGSF, but it had a broader remit, in terms of the overall Government support in this space.

The Westminster Hall debate I just went to was well attended, with about 25 Members and good cross-party support. For Members who are not aware, the ASGSF is a £50 million fund. It provides vital therapy to children who have been adopted or who have had special guardianship orders awarded for them.

In the run-up to the new financial year, the renewal of the fund was not announced by Government. It was delayed and, ultimately, my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham secured an urgent question the day after the funding had expired. The Minister came and said that the fund was going to be renewed. We thought that this was good news, but during recess, it was announced that, actually, the eligibility per child was being cut back by 40%. That means that each child will be able to access only £3,000 of support instead of £5,000. Within that, £2,500 for initial assessment of what treatment is required has to be included. The allocation per child is totally unrealistic.

In today's Westminster Hall debate, the Minister was sympathetic. I think that members of the Labour party understand that she really understands this issue. It feels very much as though her hands are tied by the Treasury. I mentioned that I was coming to your Committee this afternoon, and actually, she supports my application for a Backbench Business Committee debate on this issue. I hope that you will consider that in your deliberations.

Finally, in terms of where money should come from—recognising that within the remit of the spending review, things are tight—my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham pointed out that last year, the Department for Education spent £46.5 million on advertising, marketing and consultancy. If that budget were halved, it could be much better used by being put into the ASGSF, which prevents adoptions from breaking down and, ultimately, prevents the state from having to spend a lot more money on these very vulnerable children who need that support.



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Q11 **Chair:** Thanks, Alison. As you heard from previous discussions, the demands on the Chamber are such that it would be a considerable time before you had a debate there. So would you be content with Westminster Hall at this stage?

Alison Bennett: Whatever we can do to get publicity for this issue will help, because we are talking about really vulnerable children who have had terrible starts in life. We need to make sure that we get the funding so that organisations across the country can make sure that they are getting the support and therapy they need.

Q12 **Chair:** Would the Department for Education be answering?

Alison Bennett: Yes.

Chair: So if it was a Tuesday, it would have to be when the DFE was on the rota.

Q13 **Chris Vince:** Would it definitely be Education and not Health and Social Care?

Alison Bennett: The answering Minister in Westminster Hall was Janet Daby, who has responsibility for children, families and wellbeing.

Chris Vince: You are absolutely right.

Chair: The Clerks will be in touch after we have deliberated on the issue, Alison.

Alison Bennett: Thank you.

Chair: That concludes the public part of the meeting. We will now go into private session to discuss the applications.