

Backbench Business Committee

Representations: Backbench Business

Tuesday 11 November 2025

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Members present: Bob Blackman (Chair); Jess Brown-Fuller; Jonathan Davies; Mary Glendon; Will Stone; Martin Vickers; Chris Vince.

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[I](#): Christine Jardine

[II](#): James Naish

[III](#): Sir Bernard Jenkin

Christine Jardine made representations.

Q1 **Chair:** Welcome to this meeting of the Backbench Business Committee, in which we will be considering applications from colleagues for debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall. The first application is from Christine Jardine for a debate on Children's Grief Awareness Week. This is a request for a debate in either the Chamber or Westminster Hall. Over to you, Christine; please present your case.

Christine Jardine: I admit that this subject is very personal, not just for me but for a number of other Members. It originally came to me from my sister, who at Sunday lunch said to me, "When dad died"—he died when she was eight years old—"we didn't hear from any social services or any organisations. We didn't get any support from anybody. We had never come across the radar of social services, so they weren't already looking out for us. I think it's still the same."

I got in touch with Winston's Wish, a charity that deals with children's bereavement, and it said, "Yes, it's exactly the same." We know that an estimated 46,000 dependent children lose a parent every year, which is 127 a day, but Winston's Wish does not know where they are, and they do not know where Winston's Wish and similar organisations are. We have no network in this country, other than schools, for helping children who are going through one of the most traumatic experiences you can go through—whether it is a parent, grandparent, sibling or friend. There is no resource and no support automatically available to them.

As I said, there is a wide range of charities and groups, but they have no way of knowing where the children are, and the children cannot reach them. We know that children who lose a loved one are, later in life, over-represented in the criminal justice system, very often because they have not had that support. They often achieve lower grades academically, and they can struggle to form relationships later in life. There are also groups for them, but again, they do not know where the children are.

Through both the House and the Government, I have tried to pursue a way of setting up a protocol so that when there is a death that will affect a child, those children are automatically contacted and information is sent out to put them in touch with the groups. The previous Government were, for various reasons, occupied with other things. The current Government have been more receptive to the idea, but again, like the previous Government, they have pushed it towards schools.

The issue with schools is twofold. First, they are already stretched. Teachers have so much to do nowadays that I wonder where they have the time to teach, and children are there only during school hours on weekdays—they are not there in the evenings or in the school holidays. For many children who have been through this trauma, next month—Christmas—will be the most difficult of the year, and their teachers will not be there. We really need to do something about this.



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There is a lot of public feeling out there. With 46,000 children a year being bereaved, a lot of people are affected. A short film about this very subject recently won a lot of awards at international festivals, and the director is one of the people who will be coming to an event during Children's Grief Awareness Week.

I feel this is something that Parliament has a will to do something about, and a debate would give Members a chance to discuss the impact on young people, and how to ensure that more young people not only know about the help available to them and the steps the Government can take to support them, but know that there are services that can help them through the trauma later in life, because it is often delayed. In fact, when I spoke to one charity about it, they warned me: "You do realise that you may be opening a can of worms for yourself?" So far, I am okay, but I appreciate that for a lot of people, it is something that lasts a lifetime and can blight not just childhood but future lives, careers and relationships, so I feel that it would be something for awareness week that would touch a lot of people, make a good point and help us move towards getting children more support.

Chair: Thank you. I can empathise because both my parents died while I was at university, and I had three younger sisters to look after, which was horrendous, I can tell you. Anyway, some colleagues have questions.

Q2 **Jess Brown-Fuller:** I declare an interest: I am on the all-party parliamentary group on grief support and the impact of death on society. Children's Grief Awareness Week, as you mentioned in your application, falls next week, but unfortunately, all the debates that are available next week have already been scheduled with colleagues across the House. We currently have 19 debates on our waiting list that would accept a Westminster Hall debate—that is not including Chamber debates—and we think that we will have 18 slots available up to parliamentary recess in February. My question is: would you be willing to wait for this debate, and if so, would you consider changing the title of the debate from "Children's Grief Awareness Week" to something like "Government support for bereaved children"?

Christine Jardine: I have been working on this for three years now in Parliament, and I know that one of the most valuable attributes here is patience, so I am prepared to be patient. Yes, I think that if it were later, it would be a good idea to change the name.

Q3 **Mary Glendon:** Christine, you noted in your application that Departments have previously struggled to identify who is responsible for this policy area. Which Department would you want to respond to it?

Christine Jardine: That is a very good one. I have thought about this a lot, and originally, we thought Education or the Home Office—the latter because when you register a death, that would be the appropriate point at which to let families know where they will get support. But there is also an argument that it should be Health and Social Care, because it is about mental health.



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I think it perhaps has to be one of the Ministers for Women and Equalities, who have a network throughout the various Departments. It could sit there. That way, you could bring in the educational, home affairs and health elements. It is sort of reverse engineering.

Chair: Given that the focus of the debate appears to be on bereaved children, presumably social care would come into it.

Christine Jardine: Yes, and Education.

Chair: Any other questions? The Clerks will be in touch in due course, but you have been told about the waiting list.

James Naish made representations.

Q4 **Chair:** Next up is James Naish with a request for a general debate on Government support for park home owners in Westminster Hall on a Tuesday.

James Naish: It is a pleasure to be here, in front of the Committee. One of the things that I have tried to do as a Member of Parliament is find a couple of issues in which small changes can make a big difference to a large number of people, so I have done a lot of work for the Hongkonger community.

The second area, which I have been thinking about a lot, is park homes. There are around 160,000 people living in park homes across the country. In my constituency, I am proud to represent residents from six sites, where approximately 500 people live. They contribute massively to our community, but they face a whole raft of different ways and means of living from the rest of us, as a result of being park home residents, so they are often overlooked and forgotten. Therefore, I would like to bring a debate to the House that gives us an opportunity to talk about park homes.

There has not been a debate specifically on park homes since 2022, so it would be good for this Parliament to start that process. There is a range of issues of concern to park home owners, which would be good to discuss. The most obvious one, which I am sure many Members are aware of, is the 10% sales commission on the resale of park homes. That remains a top concern. I was out on a park home estate only a few weeks ago, and it was referenced at least three or four times in the 12 or so conversations that I had. People genuinely feel trapped in their homes as a result, and given the amount that those park homes are now worth, that 10% figure is a huge amount of the equity. Residents regard it as a significant and unfair issue. It would be great for this Government to address it, and Members would benefit from the opportunity to talk about the issue.

More broadly, there is a need for a debate on how park home residents manage their sites, the site owners, site maintenance obligations, transparency around pitch fees, the energy costs and energy efficiency of living in park homes. Ultimately, a lot of the people living on these sites



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have very modest incomes, and we have an obligation to think about them, because of the particular way in which they are living.

This application has cross-party support from Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives, and I know that dozens of MPs—over 35 at the last count—have mentioned park homes on and off in the House since we were elected, so it would be great to bring all that effort together in a single debate. Ultimately, I would like to see us shape a fairer, more secure future for park home residents, and I would be grateful if the Committee gave us an opportunity to debate that with a Minister present.

Q5 Chris Vince: Thank you for your presentation, James. I know you have been before the Committee before. You have gone for a Tuesday in Westminster Hall, which would mean that we would have to depend on the departmental rota. Can you confirm the Department that you think would answer?

James Naish: I think MHCLG would be the best respondent. I think there are broader issues that other Departments would no doubt have a view on, but certainly the respondents to questions from MPs on this issue to date have largely been from MHCLG.

Q6 Martin Vickers: James, you will have heard as you were sitting in on the previous issue—

James Naish: I was here last week as well.

Martin Vickers: We have the problem of the waiting list. We actually have 13 debates on the waiting list for the Tuesday, and we will have nine to allocate between now and February. Are you willing to wait?

James Naish: The sad reality is that a lot of people living in park homes, including on the site that I was out on, have been there for 30 years-plus. Selling is something that they are actively thinking about. I really do not want this Parliament to wait, but I understand the pressure and the demand for time in both Chambers. We will wait for that, and I am sure that, in the meantime, park home residents will be tracking down their MPs to make sure that they are present to talk when we get that opportunity.

Martin Vickers: I assure you that they are, because I have some.

James Naish: I suspect most of you have.

Chair: Anyone else? No. The Clerks will be in touch in due course, but you understand the waiting list.

James Naish: I do. Thank you very much.

Sir Bernard Jenkin made representations.

Q7 Chair: Finally, we have the application from Sir Bernard Jenkin and others for a debate in the Chamber on the war in Ukraine.



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Sir Bernard Jenkin: Thank you very much; it is good to see you all. The main reason for asking you to give time for this debate is that there has not been a proper debate about Ukraine. There was an Adjournment debate in Government time, I think, in February, but there has not been a debate where a motion was tabled and agreed by the House, setting out a statement of policy, since 2023.

The motion is designed to capture all the issues that are current in people's minds. It includes something that has also been raised with you by another Member with regard to a debate about the determination not to recognise the occupied territories that have already been annexed by Russia. It also includes a condemnation of the atrocities, particularly the abduction of children, because that issue was raised by Members as I was building support for this. It includes the need for tougher economic sanctions; the reaffirmation of our overall support for Ukraine and for our NATO allies who are under attack; how to react to the nuclear intimidation; and how we should respond to this sense that some countries seem to fear a defeat for Russia in Ukraine—we have to address that—and the need for increased military support and the release of frozen assets and increased economic sanctions.

Throughout this conflict, there has been a sense that things could be at a tipping point, yet they have dragged on. I feel that a reaffirmation of our support would now be very timely, particularly as various analysts suggest that Russia has only about another year to deliver a victory—a conclusion that would satisfy. At the same time, Russia is increasing its hybrid attacks on NATO countries. Just this weekend we had the closure of an airport in Belgium. The question for this House is whether we are to carry on as though peace is still reigning in our country and we can carry on as normal, or whether we need to pinch ourselves and remind ourselves that, in the words of Eliza Manningham-Buller, the former head of MI5, we may already be at war with Russia. In the words of the Government's strategic defence review, we need to mobilise our country to be "ready for war" if we do not want to be involved in a war ourselves. It is hardly an unimportant issue, but it tends to get sidelined by the daily politics we experience. I very much hope that the Committee will allow time for this debate on the Floor of the House. I have what I hope is a fairly impressive line-up of relevant Select Committee Chairs and senior Members who support this debate.

Q8 **Will Stone:** Thank you for bringing this forward. Obviously, it is an incredibly important debate. There was a debate in February that lasted three hours and the amount of time that Members were able to speak for was dramatically cut down. You have a phenomenal number of people supporting your debate. Do you think you would require a longer debate, perhaps a day's worth?

Sir Bernard Jenkin: I am quite certain that if you gave us a full six hours, we could fill them. I am also mindful of the Committee's injunction that people should not support this debate unless they intend to speak. However, a lot of the Members sponsoring this motion are Chairs of Select Committees and are very busy. Depending upon the date you choose, they

may or may not be able to be available. That is inevitable. But the longer you can give us, the better.

Will Stone: I am sure that you will fill it regardless.

Sir Bernard Jenkin: Three hours would be fantastic.

Q9 **Jonathan Davies:** Sir Bernard, as you have heard from the other pitches that we have heard today, there is a long list of applications waiting for the Chamber and Westminster Hall. The Committee has 17 debates on its waiting list wanting Chamber time, and it is only likely to have a maximum of 16 debates to allocate between now and the February recess. That means that we might not get to yours as quickly as all of that. Are you willing to wait?

Sir Bernard Jenkin: I have to wait as long as you want me to. I would say that there is no other issue that is existential for our own and European security and the survival of western democracy. What is at stake over the war in Ukraine is whether Russia is going to emerge ascendant, or whether we are going to demonstrate that we are determined that it shall fail. That is not necessarily about getting rid of Putin but about making sure that Russia is contained. It is long overdue that the House of Commons signals its determination and support for the Government. I have consulted the Government about the wording of this motion. They have not come back to me with any complaints. Obviously, if they were to ask me to adjust the wording, I would, because I think it is very important that the House of Commons makes a clear statement of intent that unites the whole House and represents the whole nation.

Q10 **Chair:** Because there was a debate in February, and we have a long queue, the Committee must decide whether we should grant this earlier, so that it jumps the queue. What is your justification for asking for the debate to be earlier rather than waiting until, say, the anniversary of the debate we had in February?

Sir Bernard Jenkin: A number of issues are very current, such as the statement that Ukraine has particularly asked all the national Parliaments to make about the non-recognition of annexed territories; the urgent question of the missing children; the very urgent question of the frozen assets and what the Government are doing to try to release those assets for Ukraine to spend on its own protection; the desperate need for long-range weaponry so that Ukraine can strike at the heart of the Russian war machine; and the urgent question, currently being raised by President Trump, of intensifying sanctions on the oil and gas that is funding the Russian war machine. There is now an urgency. The time for a clear statement of intent is now. I cannot think of any other issue—apart from perhaps the Budget—that eclipses this question. I urge the Committee to give it precedence, not for my sake, but for the sake of the leadership role that this country has in NATO and among our allies. Indeed, we must signal to the United States that it needs to toughen up its game as well.

Chair: As there are no further questions from the Committee, the Clerks will be in touch in due course.



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Sir Bernard Jenkin: Thank you very much, indeed. I am most grateful.

Chair: The Committee will now go into private session to discuss the applications, and to determine which debates will be debated when.