

Backbench Business Committee

Representations: Backbench Debates

Tuesday 9 December 2025

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Members present: Bob Blackman (Chair); Mary Glendon; Alison Hume; Will Stone; Jonathan Davies; Chris Vince.

Questions 1-9

Representations made

I: Susan Murray

II: Wendy Chamberlain

III: David Mundell

Susan Murray made representations.

Q1 Chair: Welcome to this meeting of the Backbench Business Committee, where we will consider applications by colleagues for debates in Westminster Hall on a Tuesday and Thursday, and in the main Chamber on days that the Government allocate to us. The first application is from Susan Murray, which is for a debate on the housing needs of young people. This is for a debate in the main Chamber. Over to you, Susan.

Susan Murray: First of all, thank you very much, Chair and Committee, for considering my application. I have a history of being connected with young people through my own children. I have two sons who are in their early 30s. In their younger years, I supported a charitable group of young people who funded and built a skate park in the area. I have always had the ear of that generation, and I am proud to say that some of them considered me an honorary skater. Now that I have progressed and am in this place, I feel it is important to raise the issues that they raise with me.

Also, I should mention other people in the 25-to-35 age group who feel the challenge of trying to buy, trying to get on the property ladder, or even trying to rent affordable accommodation, and you are all well aware of the way the market is going. According to the figures that I have from the House of Lords Library, from 1997 to 2017, house prices went up by 173%, while salaries went up by 19%. You can see the challenge, particularly for those who do not have the bank of mum and dad to back them. They feel a deal of frustration, because they perceive our generation as having had easier access to mortgages, and access to—as they see it—gold-plated pension schemes and various other opportunities. They feel that those are being taken away from them.

It is important that we get a chance to debate the opportunities, to raise potential solutions that people may have and to highlight to the Government that a generation of young people are being held back. That generation may choose not to start families, or they might move to other countries to start their families, but we need them as part of our economy and to give us the income to keep things working, such as all our statutory services, our NHS and all those things. If we have no young people, or we are overburdening young people with the costs of those things, that is clearly not the bright future that I am sure the Government want for our aspirational entrepreneurs, graduates, tradespeople and skilled people who we need to drive our economy forward.

Q2 Alison Hume: Thank you, Susan—it is a really important debate. The Committee currently has 16 Chamber-only debates awaiting allocation, which means that the debate is likely to be scheduled for March at the very earliest. Are you happy to wait that long, or would you be willing to accept a Westminster Hall debate, which may come along sooner?

Susan Murray: As soon as we are on the list, then we get nearer to that date, but fundamentally, a Westminster Hall debate would be acceptable, with a preference for the main Chamber.

Alison Hume: That is very pragmatic.

Q3 **Chair:** What would you hope to come out of the debate?

Susan Murray: Just to be able to raise the issues with the Government and to highlight that these are young people who have done everything that has been expected of them. They may have taken an apprenticeship, gone to college or taken a university degree, but the housing market situation is limiting them. We have to prioritise an understanding in Government of the urgency for policies to provide a solution to the housing problem for everybody who wants an affordable home. It is also important to highlight that affordable homes do not always have to be for rent. We cannot always build five-bedroom houses, and we need to encourage the building of affordable houses to mortgage, and others in that whole environment, so that we have houses for people to downsize into.

Chair: Thank you very much. The Clerks will be in touch with you. We will amend your application to include Westminster Hall. If the chance comes up for an earlier debate, we will allocate it accordingly.

Susan Murray: Thank you very much.

Wendy Chamberlain made representations.

Q4 **Chair:** Next up is Wendy Chamberlain. This is a request for a debate in either the Chamber or Westminster Hall on a Tuesday morning, on diagnosis and treatment of paediatric acute-onset—I will leave you to finish that. Obviously, it is quite a key issue. Please present.

Wendy Chamberlain: Thank you very much, Chair. We commonly refer to the conditions as PANS and PANDAS. Some members of the Committee may never have heard of them, but once you have been presented with a constituent who has a child or young person experiencing either of the conditions, you will not forget. It is a devastating condition where a normally healthy, happy child contracts, in the case of PANDAS, a strep infection—a sore throat—and psychiatrically they completely change overnight, with OCD and tics.

The constituent who came to me in the first instance—their child had been a high achiever at primary school, but then she did not wash, change her clothing or brush her teeth, and she ate only white bread in very small quantities. That went on for months, and she was completely absent from education and completely cut off from her family, which was devastating to see.

The condition interacts with our mental health services for young people, where wait times for CAMHS and so on are extensive. With these conditions, quite straightforward antibiotics treatment can make the difference, but again, with these kinds of conditions, the length of time for diagnosis means that the tics become quite ingrained and CBT and other treatments are required. Therefore, the conditions are little understood, and when a family presents at a GP, the treatments offered and even the



beliefs about what might be going on with the young person can be very varied.

Since the election last year, I have taken over chairing the APPG. We have a good number of Members from across parties—you will see that a good number of them have signed up. We have not had a debate since 12 September 2023. We had a positive response from the then Government, but we still need research funding. It has been recognised by WHO as a condition, but we still do not have clear guidelines, which means that we get challenges with diagnosis and pathways. How we can get these young people back into education so that we can produce better outcomes is an increasing issue, particularly with some of the challenges with SEND—and, dare I say it, that is exactly the same in Scotland.

When we had the last debate, we had a good turnout with a number of Members. One thing I wanted was to hear directly from the young people. Before I made my speech, I had spoken with their youth board online to understand the challenges directly from them in order to pre-empt questions. As part of this debate, the APPG would like to invite the youth board to Parliament to speak to MPs directly. The logistics for families in relation to this condition mean that we are not looking for something until late February or early March at the earliest. If that is a consideration in terms of a Chamber debate, because, as I say, we could get good numbers, I want to say that we are not looking for something sooner rather than later; we want to take the time and make sure that the children who will potentially engage with us are properly supported.

Q5 Mary Glindon: Thanks, Wendy. With regard to Westminster Hall debates, Tuesday has an even longer waiting list than the Chamber. Is there any reason why you wouldn't consider a Thursday in Westminster Hall?

Wendy Chamberlain: I'll be blunt—I am obviously sitting here as the third party Chief Whip. It is about attendance and that demand for people to be in their constituencies. There is no doubt that a Chamber debate on a Thursday would attract more attention, and therefore the people who have signed up would be more willing to commit to that. My preference would be for the Chamber on a Thursday, given the length of time that we are willing to wait.

Q6 Chair: What action are you expecting to get from the Government on this issue?

Wendy Chamberlain: There are two streams to it. From a health perspective, although there were warm words and increased recognition from the previous Government, and there has been similar from this Government, we have challenges with a couple of very specific studies that need to be done to support NICE pathways. I am trying to get a commitment from the Government to that kind of investment—and we are talking tens of thousands of pounds, not hundreds of thousands, so it is straightforward. From an educational perspective, given the expected publication of the SEND review, we want to ensure that the Government are properly recognising PANS and PANDAS within SEND provision.

Q7 Alison Hume: On the figure of 7,200 families from the PANS PANDAS UK report, my own experience suggests that it will be much higher. Would you agree?

Wendy Chamberlain: I would absolutely agree. As constituency MPs, we all will have experienced the challenges around mental health and young people. A lack of understanding of this condition means that some young people will be receiving mental health support when it is actually a physical condition causing their symptoms. From the perspective of longer-term economic activity and so on, we need to get around that. It would not surprise me if every school had at least one child experiencing PANS/PANDAS but does not know it.

Chair: Thank you. The Clerks will be in touch in due course.

David Mundell made representations.

Q8 Chair: The final application is from David Mundell. This is an application for a Westminster Hall debate on modernising marriage regulations, on either a Tuesday or a Thursday.

David Mundell: I declare my first interest, in that I am the MP for Gretna Green, which still considers itself to be the wedding capital of Europe, and I would think it proportionately is—there are weddings every day in Gretna and people come from all over the United Kingdom and afar.

The purpose of the debate is actually to have a debate; I am not coming with a defined view as to what the specific outcome should be. Like you, Chair, I have been around this Parliament for a while, and I do not recall us having any significant debates on marriage. Yes, we have had debates on who could get married, but we have not had a debate and discussion around the process of marriage.

One of the things that has become clear, certainly through polling, is that people are put off from getting married by what they perceive as the cost and bureaucracy of the process. There has not been a catch-up in terms of going online; we are all familiar with many other services going online, but, in relation to most aspects of marriage, you cannot do things online. They have to be done either in person or on paper. There are also specific and complicated rules if something happens and one of the parties becomes unwell, or is called away on work or whatever.

Other countries do have much shorter pre-wedding periods, generally, or allow a ceremony to take place and then the paperwork—the legal part of the process—to be completed later. I think those are interesting new ideas to be discussed. As I say, my purpose for having the debate is to have a discussion; I am not advocating for those, and I am certainly not advocating for a reduction in the essential part—the bride and groom being able to prove who they are and that they are in a position to get married.

Marriage is one of the most important institutions in our society—some would say the most important—and I think therefore it is appropriate that



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Parliament should debate it. It is ironic that it is much easier to get divorced, which you can do online, compared with getting married, or at least the preliminaries to getting married. That is why I would like to bring forward a genuine debate to have a discussion of these issues within Parliament.

Q9 Will Stone: Thank you for bringing this along, David. The topic covers a fair amount of ground, so who do you envisage being the answering Department, should we grant this debate on a Tuesday?

David Mundell: I would have thought it would have been the Home Office, in terms of some of the core parts that go right across the United Kingdom, but obviously MHCLG, in its latest iteration, is a relevant Department. DCMS has an important role because the wedding industry—I don't think it is unfair to use that term—is a significant generator of income for venues across the United Kingdom.

But as I say, I am looking for a debate where issues of concern to Members are able to be discussed more widely. One colleague raised with me her experience that, in a civil ceremony, recorded music was not allowed to be played because of the regulations that applied. I think Members will approach this with their own individual aspects; it is not an ask where I am coming and saying, "I want x and y changed specifically"; I want to have a genuine debate.

Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation; the Clerks will be in touch in due course. That concludes the public session of the Committee. The Committee will now go into a private session to consider the applications and allocations.