

Backbench Business Committee

Representations: Backbench Debates

Tuesday 21 April 2026

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 21 April 2026.

Watch the meeting

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

Questions 1-6

Representations made

[I](#): Clive Jones

[II](#): Peter Prinsley

Clive Jones made representations.

Q1 Chair: Welcome to this meeting of the Backbench Business Committee, where we will be considering applications from colleagues for debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall on a Tuesday and Thursday. The first application is from Clive Jones, for a debate on domestic abuse and safeguarding in the family justice system. It is for a debate on a Tuesday morning in Westminster Hall. Clive, please present your case.

Clive Jones: Thank you very much, Chair and members of the Committee, for letting me speak to my application this afternoon. I am seeking time for a Westminster Hall debate on domestic abuse, post-separation abuse and safeguarding in the family justice system.

The family justice system plays a critical role in determining child arrangements and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children following parental separation. However, there is growing concern among my constituents that domestic abuse, especially post separation, is too often minimised or misunderstood in family court proceedings, which can also be used as a tool to further abuse victims, survivors and their children. These concerns have been highlighted by survivors, legal practitioners, specialist organisations and Kaleidoscopic UK, which is based in my constituency.

Domestic abuse is present in the vast majority of cases in the family court. The Domestic Abuse Commissioner's "Everyday business" report, published in October 2025, found evidence of abuse in around 87% of cases they examined, yet concluded that it is frequently not recognised as an active safeguarding issue. While recent reforms, including the removal of the presumption of parental involvement, are welcome, there is clear evidence that abuse is continuing through litigation and court processes themselves. Survivors report that systems intended to protect them are in some cases enabling further harm to them and their children, and not recognising the patterns of abusive parents.

The consequences become deeply serious. Women's Aid has documented 67 child deaths linked to unsafe contact arrangements with abusive parents over the past 30 years. In addition, Home Office data recorded 98 suspected suicides following domestic abuse in the year to the end of March 2024.

This debate would provide an important opportunity to examine whether the introduction of independent domestic abuse advisers in the family courts, on a case-by-case basis, could improve the process and outcomes, and support better-informed decision making, drawing on their insight and expertise. The introduction of advisers would challenge any attempt at DARVO, highlight any patterns and generate important safeguarding recommendations. The debate would allow Members from across the House to raise constituency cases and reflect the lived experience of survivors navigating the system. Given the scale of the issue and the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

severity of the consequences, this is a timely and necessary debate, and I hope the Committee will look favourably on my application.

Chair: Thank you, Clive.

Q2 **Will Stone:** You have put down that you want the Home Office to be the answering Department. Given that courts come directly under the oversight of the Ministry of Justice, do you think that that might be a better Department to respond to your debate?

Clive Jones: I would have thought that the Home Office was the right one, but if you feel that it should be the Ministry of Justice, I would be happy with that.

Q3 **Mr Dillon:** Hi, Clive. You have requested a Tuesday debate in Westminster Hall. The waiting list for Tuesdays is much longer than for Thursdays. Would you also consider a Thursday Westminster Hall debate?

Clive Jones: I would.

Q4 **Alison Hume:** Thank you for that presentation. You mention assumptions and outdated myths. Would you include the discredited term "parental alienation" in that?

Clive Jones: Yes, I think so.

Chair: As you know, Clive, we will shortly be prorogued. Your application will be considered by the Committee in private later, but it will be added to the waiting list, because we do not have any time to allocate until the new Session, when the new Committee comes into operation. The Clerks will be in touch with you in due course about the potential for you to have your debate.

Clive Jones: I am very happy to be patient, Chair. I hope that you will decide that we can do it. Thank you very much.

Chair: Patience is a virtue.

Peter Prinsley made representations.

Q5 **Chair:** The next application is from Peter Prinsley for a debate in the Chamber on the state of the water industry.

Peter Prinsley: Thank you very much, everybody, for agreeing to listen to me for a minute. I am requesting this debate on behalf of a large number of other Members of Parliament who have signed the application. I declare an interest as an honorary president of the Bury Water Meadows Group, in Bury St Edmunds, which looks after precious water meadows in the town centre, but I do not have shares in any water companies.

This has really come to the fore because of the Channel 4 TV programme "Dirty Business", which some of you may have seen. Has anybody seen it?

Chair: Yes.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Peter Prinsley: It tells the story of the problem we have had since the water companies fell into private ownership. It has had an impact somewhat like the impact of the ITV show "Mr Bates vs the Post Office", which I think many of you also saw.

Many Members of Parliament are exercised by this issue, and many of us are receiving correspondence from our constituents. I was particularly involved with a constituent called Mr Binks, who took me on a tour of the River Gipping in Stowmarket. He has taken serial photographs of the state of this precious chalk stream for over 50 years, and you can see that the whole thing has deteriorated over that period; it is now a shadow of its former self.

The reason we would like to have a debate is to highlight the problems we have with our rivers, particularly chalk streams, which as you know are particularly precious English natural resources. We would like to have a debate in the Chamber of the House of Commons, because a very large number of MPs would like to speak.

Q6 **Martin Vickers:** Peter, the debate title should relate directly to areas of Government responsibility. As you will appreciate, private companies are not the direct responsibility of a Government Department. Would you be happy to amend the title to "Regulation of the Water Industry"? That would bring it within scope.

Peter Prinsley: Yes.

Chair: Thank you, Peter. As always, we wish you well in your recovery. As I said earlier, because the Committee ceases to exist on Prorogation, your request will be considered by the Committee now and then, if it is approved, it will be added to the waiting list. You will hear in due course about the opportunity for a debate.

Peter Prinsley: Thank you very much for your time.