Sarah Wollaston (Totnes, Conservative)

I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman has mentioned older people. Does he accept that although health inequalities are very important in setting funding formulas, age is one of the greatest predictors for establishing need? It is absolutely vital to include such factors as age and rurality in deciding funding formulas, and it is precisely to remove the politicisation of such decisions that we are handing them over to another body.

Andy Burnham (Shadow Secretary of State for Health; Leigh, Labour)

The hon. Lady must have misunderstood me. I am not saying that age is unimportant; I am saying that age is important, but so is need. In my view, those two must have equal weighting in the system, as they do at the moment. As I understand it, the proposal is to deprioritise need or deprivation as part of the funding formula, which will have the effect of removing funding from communities in which the expectancy for a healthy life is already shortest. I do not believe that that is defensible, and I would be surprised if she found that it was.

Sarah Wollaston (Totnes, Conservative)

Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Andy Burnham (Shadow Secretary of State for Health; Leigh, Labour)

I shall do so once more, but then I must make some progress.

Sarah Wollaston (Totnes, Conservative)

The right hon. Gentleman is being generous in giving way. The point is that we are discussing the Care Bill and how need relating to age is the single greatest predictor of someone’s need. I accept that health inequality is a very important factor, but the formula currently does not take enough note of age-based need and multiple long-term conditions.