Oral Answers to Questions

Sarah Wollaston Totnes

In asking a question about mental health, may I remind the House that I am married to an NHS forensic psychiatrist, who is also registrar of the Royal College of Psychiatrists? Have the Government looked carefully at today’s report from the independent commission on improving mental health services, particularly its finding that provision nationally for the most severely ill acute patients is inadequate? Will the Government set out what measures they will take to make sure we really see progress on parity of esteem and on improving access to such severely ill patients?

Alistair Burt The Minister of State, Department of Health

I thank my hon. Friend for her question, and the Royal College of Psychiatrists for its work on Lord Nigel Crisp’s commission, which we have supported. The report and recommendations have only just come to us, but they certainly travel in the direction in which the Government are already going. We want to reduce out-of-area placements. The NHS is already committed to that, and is working on moving to a definitive target to reduce the number of them and, I hope, eventually to scrap them. I was up in Hull last week to look at problems in that particular area. The recommendations on waiting times are very important. As we all know, this area has been undervalued in the past. It is under greater scrutiny, and more investment and support are going in through the Government. Today’s report will help us in relation to that.