Palliative and end of life care affect us all.

Many of us will know somebody who has used hospice services, and many of us support organisations like Marie Curie and Macmillan. These national charities, as well as small and independent providers across the country, are the reason why a recent Economist report listed palliative care in Britain as the best in the world. Last week, together with Baroness Ilora Finlay, I hosted a reception in Parliament to celebrate the work of the doctors, nurses and carers who support people at incredibly difficult times in their lives. It was a chance to recognise those who change people’s lives every day and to thank them and give them the chance to speak with their MPs about their experiences. We invited care assistants, consultants and nurses from all corners of England to come to meet their MPs in the beautiful setting of the State Rooms of Speaker's House.

I was very pleased that Heidi Alexander, the Shadow Health Secretary and Ben Gummer, Minister for Care Quality, joined us to speak. It is a year since the independent Choice in End of Life Care review was published and the Health Committee’s report into improving end of life care and this was a further chance to press for a full government response following on from the debate which I opened recently in Parliament.

It was inspiring to hear from Sarah Ezekiel, who lives with Motor Neurone Disease and continues her work as an artist and caring for her family with support from Marie Curie and the help of eye movement tracking technology.

Of course, as MP for Totnes, holding an event celebrating hospices, how could I not mention Rowcroft and St Lukes? The whole team at Rowcroft Hospice provide high quality palliative and end of life care across South Devon.

There is often the mistaken belief that our local hospices receive funding from the larger national cancer charities; and over the last 105 years Macmillan has become the shorthand term for cancer nursing. Understandably, when at the stage of needing palliative care, the name of the charity is not deemed important, but the standard of care; so Rowcroft Hospice and Macmillan have prepared a leaflet to show how people can benefit from both charities; the leaflet explains how they work independently and together, but are still two very separate organisations.

From their work in the community, including Hospice at Home to their inpatient units, I am incredibly proud that we have such excellent local hospices serving the people of South Devon in St Luke's, Plymouth, Rowcroft in Torbay and the Children's Hospice South West.