

Points of Order

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health and Social Care Committee, Chair, Liaison Committee (Commons), Chair, Liaison Committee

On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Thank you for being one of the great reforming Speakers; it is you who is trying to take back control for this Parliament, and others should learn from your example. You have also been a great champion of Select Committees, and, as Chair of the Liaison Committee, I would like to thank you for that. You have also been a champion of allowing Back Benchers to hold the powerful to account. That is what my point of order is about now, and it is further to a previous point of order. Not only are NHS staff entitled to raise genuinely held concerns about patient safety, but they have a duty to do so, and they must be able to do this without fear of intimidation or bullying from people in positions of power, including Members of this House. Last week, the Leader of the House made highly offensive comments about Dr David Nicholl. I reiterate: unless the Leader of the House comes to this place to make an apology from the Floor of the House, what message does that send to NHS whistleblowers and what does it mean for patient safety?

John Bercow Speaker of the House of Commons, Chair, Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, Chair, Speaker's Committee for the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, Chair, Commons Reference Group on Representation and Inclusion Committee

I thank the hon. Lady for what she has said. She is an extremely distinguished denizen of the House, both in respect of her constituency work and of her chairing of very important Committees—the Health and Social Care Committee and the Liaison Committee. She speaks with considerable authority and gravitas by virtue of those roles and the reputation she has garnered. I do not want to pick an argument with the Leader of the House—he and I get on extremely well—but points have been made and the hon. Lady has underlined them. If she is dissatisfied, my advice to her is the advice I regularly give to Members wanting to know how they can take a matter forward—the word begins with "p" and ends in "t". My advice is: persist, persist, persist. There is nothing to prevent her from returning to the matter when we come back after the conference recess. On the Conservative Benches, Dr Lewis, who is not in this place—I believe he is chairing various Committees this afternoon or attending Committee meetings—taught me decades ago that in politics quantity, persistence and, above all, repetition are at least as important as the quality of your argument. It is not good enough to have a good point and make it once—you have to keep going. If I may say so, at the risk of causing some disquiet on grounds of courtesies, I would suggest to the hon. Lady that she should follow the Churchill adage in pursuit of her cause: KBO—keep bugging on—at all times.

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Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health and Social Care Committee, Chair, Liaison Committee (Commons), Chair, Liaison Committee

On a point of order, Mr Speaker, on behalf of the Liaison Committee. The Prime Minister gave an undertaking that he would appear before the Committee this Wednesday at 3.30 pm. The Committee met today, and we have written to the Prime Minister asking whether he

will still appear, becauseâ€”

John Bercow Speaker of the House of Commons, Chair, Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, Chair, Speaker's Committee for the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, Chair, Commons Reference Group on Representation and Inclusion Committee

Order. I recognise the hon. Lady's sincerity and the strength of her conviction. If she wishes to contribute to the debate in an orderly way, on her feet, in a speech, because she has caught my eye, she can do so, but she should not use the device of a bogus point of order.