

Session 2024-25
No. 10



Monday
2 September 2024

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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[I] indicates that the member concerned has a relevant registered interest. The full register of interests can be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/register-of-lords-interests/>

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Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on Trent	Whip
Baroness Blake of Leeds	Whip
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Lord Hermer	Attorney-General
Lord Hunt of Kings Heath	Minister of State, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
Baroness Jones of Whitchurch	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business and Trade and Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and Whip
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Lord Livermore	Financial Secretary, HM Treasury
Baroness Merron	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care
Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice
Baroness Sherlock	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
Baroness Smith of Malvern	Minister of State, Department for Education
Baroness Taylor of Stevenage	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Lord Timpson	Minister of State, Ministry of Justice
Baroness Twycross	Whip
Lord Vallance of Balham	Minister of State, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
Baroness Wheeler	Deputy Chief Whip

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Written Statements

Monday, 2 September 2024

Building Safety

[HLWS62]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: My Hon Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Building Safety and Homelessness (Rushanara Ali MP) has today made the following statement:

Today, I can update Parliament on fire safety and evacuation proposals; on the recognition of CE ('Conformité Européenne') marking for construction products; and on updates to the statutory guidance to the building regulations to remove references to outdated National Classes fire testing standards and make provision for sprinklers in new care homes.

Fire safety and evacuation

The Home Office will bring forward proposals in the Autumn to improve the fire safety and evacuation of disabled/vulnerable residents in high-rise and higher-risk residential buildings in England in response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 recommendations that relate to Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans, or PEEPs. These proposals will be called 'Residential PEEPs'.

Through them, residents with disabilities and impairments will be entitled to a person-centred risk assessment to identify appropriate equipment and adjustments to aid their fire safety / evacuation, as well as a 'Residential PEEPs statement' that records what vulnerable residents should do in the event of a fire.

The Government has committed funding next year to begin this important work by supporting social housing providers to deliver Residential PEEPs for their renters. Future years' funding will be confirmed at the upcoming Spending Review.

The Government has made progress on delivering recommendation 33.22[d] of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 report, on Evacuation Alert Systems ('sounders') for new builds, through amendment to statutory guidance to the building regulations in relation to high-rise residential building design (requiring sounders to be fitted in new buildings over 18 metres in height).

We will consider further the second part of the recommendation, relating to existing buildings, in light of further evidence or recommendations in the Phase 2 report. This will, like the work on fire safety improvements nationally, be part of the important task of reducing the likelihood and impact of future fires.

CE marking

Construction products are a pivotal part of the housing and infrastructure supply chain and make up 13% of the United Kingdom's (UK) entire manufacturing base by turnover. Ensuring continuing supply of products is critical to delivering house building targets and wider

infrastructure ambitions. These products must be safe. Evidence to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry revealed the scale of concern about construction products – products which are vital to all our buildings and infrastructure – and the system that oversees them remains inadequate.

A subset of construction products fall within scope of the current construction products regulations. These existing regulations set out rules for placing construction products on the market, providing a common technical language to assess the performance of products. Products within scope of these regulations must undergo an assessment of conformity with the relevant standard or technical assessment. Such products must also be affixed with a UKCA (UK Conformity Assessed) or a CE (Conformité Européenne) mark. Current Government guidance sets out that recognition of CE marking will end in June 2025.

I can announce today that the Government will extend the period of recognition of CE marking for construction products. The CE mark will continue to be available when placing construction products on the market across the UK.

We have listened to the findings from the Independent Review of the Construction Products Testing Regime. This was clear that there is currently insufficient testing and certification capacity in the UK alone to provide the volume of conformity assessment that would be required were CE recognition to end. We are also clear that ending recognition of CE marking without reforming the domestic regime would create trade barriers and negatively affect the supply of products that meet recognised standards.

I am also determined to address the inadequacies across the wider construction products regime. Residents and communities need to be confident that their homes will be safe and well-built now and in the future. To ensure this, the Government will want to take into account any recommendations from the forthcoming Grenfell Inquiry report to inform proposals for reform. Therefore, I am making this extension, and the longer-term future of CE/UKCA marking, conditional on this Government committing to system wide reform of the construction products regulatory regime.

The Government recognises the role of UK Conformity Assessment Bodies in ensuring compliance of goods on the market. As part of the reforms the Government will work with UK Conformity Assessment Bodies, the UK Accreditation Service, and the wider industry to strengthen the conformity assessment market.

Lastly, I recognise the need for industry to have sufficient certainty to support supply chains. I can confirm that any subsequent changes to the recognition of CE marking would be subject to a minimum 2-year transitional period.

National Classes and Sprinklers in care homes

I am also announcing, today, publication of two updates to the statutory guidance that accompanies Building Regulations. First, we are introducing a provision for

sprinklers to be installed in new care homes; and second, we are completing the withdrawal of the outdated National Classes fire testing standards, ending a long period of dual specification in favour of the more robust European standard. This implements the recommendation, made in the Hackitt Report, for a clearer, transparent and effective testing regime. Alongside guidance for second staircases in tall residential buildings that are more than 18m in height, which was published on 29 March 2024, these measures conclude the new policy responses to the Sprinklers in care homes, removal of national classes, and staircases in residential buildings consultation, which ran from 23 December 2022 to 17 March 2023.

Withdrawing the National Classes fire testing standards from 'Approved Document B' will end the dual classification system that has operated since the early 2000s in favour of the more rigorous, internationally recognised European standard (BS EN 13501). The current testing standard tests for both reaction to fire and fire resistance. I am aware that there are a small number of manufacturers who have only ever tested to National Class standards who will need time to re-test their products. We are providing industry with a transition period of five years for fire resistance and 6 months for reaction to fire. This is a generous yet critical approach and has been put in place to facilitate a smooth transition to the European standard that is not disruptive to supply chains.

A compassionate society protects its most vulnerable. Today, I am also publishing an update to 'Approved Document B' that makes provision for sprinklers in all new care homes. Sprinklers enhance fire protection where residents may be reliant on others for help and assistance, especially if a building evacuation is needed. Many care home providers already include sprinklers in new designs. For those that do not yet provide for sprinklers, again, I recognise that businesses and investors seek certainty. So, care homeowners and developers will benefit from a six-month transition period until the guidance comes into effect and will then have a further six months to enable work on current development projects that are underway, or about to start, to continue.

Cost of Living

[HLWS52]

Baroness Sherlock: My Right Honourable Friend, The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (The Rt Hon Liz Kendall MP) has made the following Written Statement:

Today we are announcing funding for an extension to the Household Support Fund which will enable Local Authorities in England to help vulnerable people and families, receive discretionary emergency crisis support as we help people through the winter.

Many councils also use the Fund beyond emergency support, including working with local charities and community groups to provide residents with key

appliances, school uniforms, cookery classes, and items to improve energy efficiency in the home.

The scheme will be worth £421m in England and will run until the end of March 2025. The devolved governments will receive consequential funding as usual through the Barnett formula to spend at their discretion.

The dire inheritance we face means more people are living in poverty now than 14 years ago – and this Government is taking immediate action to prevent a cliff edge of support for the most vulnerable in our society.

At the same time, we are taking action to fix the foundations of our country and spread opportunity and prosperity to every part of the country through our plans to grow the economy, make work pay, and Get Britain Working again.

That means delivering the biggest and boldest reforms to employment support for a generation, including through our upcoming White Paper to tackle the root causes of worklessness.

It also means reducing poverty and driving up opportunity through our Child Poverty Taskforce, taking action across Government so every child, no matter where they come from, has the best start to life.

We will also root out the unacceptable levels of fraud and error in our welfare system so that taxpayers' money supports those who need it most.

We are under no illusions about the scale of the challenge given our inheritance. We will not turn things around overnight, but our plan will transform lives.

By growing the economy and unlocking investment through the National Wealth Fund; launching Great British Energy to drive home-grown clean energy and lower bills; making work pay and developing a new Child Poverty Strategy to give children the best start in life – the Government is looking at all levers available to unlock the potential of millions across the country and give them the platform they need to thrive.

Further details for the forthcoming extension will be published ahead of the launch of the new scheme in the coming weeks.

This funding will work to help those in need. Pensioners and others struggling with the cost of living over the colder months should contact their local council to see what support may be available to them. If applicable, please direct residents in your area to their Local Authority who will be able to help them access the Household Support Fund in the coming months.

COVID-19 Vaccination: Autumn 2024

[HLWS60]

Baroness Merron: My Hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention (Andrew Gwynne MP) has made the following Written Statement:

His Majesty's Government (HMG) is committed to protecting people most vulnerable to COVID-19 through

vaccination as guided by the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

On 2 August 2024, the JCVI published advice on the COVID-19 vaccination programme for autumn 2024. Their advice is that a COVID-19 vaccine should be offered in autumn 2024 to those in the population most vulnerable to serious outcomes from COVID-19 and who are therefore most likely to benefit from vaccination. These groups are:

- adults aged 65 years and over;
- residents in a care home for older adults; and
- persons aged 6 months to 64 years in a clinical risk group, as defined in tables 3 and 4 of the COVID-19 chapter of the UK Health Security Green Book on Immunisation against infectious disease.

HMG has accepted the JCVI advice, and the above groups will be offered vaccination in England this autumn.

The JCVI also advised that health and social care service providers may wish to consider whether vaccination provided as an occupational health programme to frontline health and social care workers is appropriate in future years and that ahead of such considerations, health departments may choose to continue to extend an offer of vaccination to frontline health and social care workers and staff working in care homes for older adults in autumn 2024.

HMG has decided that frontline health and social care workers and staff working in care homes for older adults will continue to be offered vaccination in the autumn 2024 programme in England.

The JCVI has also advised which vaccines may be used in the autumn 2024 COVID-19 programme and in line with this advice the vaccines that will be supplied are the Moderna mRNA (Spikevax) vaccine and Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) vaccine.

Future programmes

The JCVI has advised that infection with SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19 disease) continues to occur throughout the year. The current trend indicates intermittent waves occurring every few months which are consistently peaking at lower amplitude. Winter remains the period of greatest threat from COVID-19 both in relation to the risk of infection to individuals and the pressures on health systems. Should population immunity to SARS-CoV-2 be maintained, it is anticipated that most people will experience relatively mild symptomatic or asymptomatic infections. JCVI will continue to review and advise on the optimal timing and frequency of COVID-19 vaccination beyond autumn 2024.

Notification of liabilities

I am now updating the House on the liabilities HMG has taken on in relation to further vaccine deployment via this statement and accompanying Departmental Minute laid in Parliament containing a description of the liability undertaken. The agreement to provide indemnity with

deployment of further doses increases the contingent liability of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

I will update the House in a similar manner as appropriate, as and when any future decisions impact the contingent liability of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Energy Infrastructure Planning Projects

[HLWS56]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: This Statement concerns an application for development consent made under the Planning Act 2008 by Ecotricity (Heck Fen) Limited for the construction and operation of a solar photovoltaic electricity generating station situated in Lincolnshire.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make a decision on an application within three months of the receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) of the Act to set a new deadline. Where a new deadline is set, the Secretary of State must make a Statement to Parliament to announce it.

The statutory deadline for the decision on the Heckington Fen Solar Park application was 9 August 2024.

Ecotricity (Heck Fen) Limited has requested that the Secretary of State extends the statutory deadline to allow time for further negotiations with landowners and to ensure the necessary permissions can be obtained. I have decided to allow a short extension and to set a new deadline of no later than 27 September 2024 for deciding this application for these reasons.

The decision to set the new deadline for this application is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant or refuse development consent.

European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts: Contingent Liability Notification

[HLWS55]

Lord Vallance of Balham: I am repeating the following Written Ministerial Statement made today in the other place by my Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology; Rt Hon Peter Kyle MP:

I am tabling this statement for the benefit of Honourable and Right Honourable Members to bring to their attention two new Contingent Liabilities for the activities of DSIT and the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts, here on referred to as ECMWF.

The UK has agreed to fully fund the construction of a new headquarters for ECMWF on the University of Reading (UoR) campus. This was a political commitment made to Member States at the ECMWF Council Meeting in December 2021. To enable this, an Agreement for Lease (AfL) has been negotiated with UoR to secure land and rights to build.

ECMWF is an independent international and intergovernmental organisation supported by 35 States, including the UK. ECMWF are considered experts in their field and attract talented scientists and engineers from across the world. The provision of the new ECMWF HQ will ensure approximately 270-300 skilled roles remain in the UK along with significant investment in the UK economy over the life of the building, generating a net present value of £97m. The continued hosting of ECMWF will help to maintain the UK's reputation as a world leader in weather and climate science.

Two indemnities are required by the university. The first is due to the university having incurred costs on the basis that DSIT will subsequently complete the project. The costs cover relocating their Art Department to make space for the HQ and carrying out significant works in clearing the site by (amongst other things) demolishing existing buildings, removing asbestos/other contaminants and decommissioning services so that the site will be ready for development. The university are seeking an indemnity to ensure they would be partially reimbursed, should the project not be completed. They will not move forward with the project without this protection so without these indemnities, the deal to secure the site would be jeopardised along with the project as a whole.

This indemnity will be triggered should DSIT not achieve specific planning and construction milestones by specified deadlines. Since the planning requirements are nearly fulfilled with the grant of planning already in place, the risk of this indemnity crystallising is considered to be very low. The maximum costs to the Government are £14.4 million including VAT. If crystallised, the cost is likely to be the full capped value.

The detailed planning consent application was made in October 2023, with the grant of planning received on 24 July 2024. A six-week period following grant of planning permission during which the decision to grant planning permission could be judicially reviewed will expire in early September 2024. In the event that period expires without an application for judicial review being made, this indemnity will fall away entirely. This is considered to be likely given the planning application was not contentious.

The second indemnity relates to vacation and handover of the HQ at the end of the 50-year lease. If ECMWF do not vacate the premises at the end of the contractual term of the Lease (or if the Lease is otherwise determined before the end of the contractual term) and UK Government cannot return the building to UoR with vacant possession because ECMWF do not vacate, UK Government would be liable for UoR's associated costs. Given ECMWF's privileges and immunities, the inviolable status of its premises and the uncertain basis of its occupation of the property under domestic landlord and tenant law, UoR are concerned about their ability to recover vacant possession after the end of the Lease if ECMWF were to remain in occupation. This risk is being held by UK government as part of the lease agreement.

The UK would be under an obligation as host nation to provide alternative accommodation to allow ECMWF to move before the end of the tenancy, unless they depart the UK. There is a strong possibility that the university would agree to extend the lease or agree a new lease. UK Government and ECMWF are obliged to work together to avoid this kind of situation.

Costs in the event of this occurring are uncapped. Property and legal costs are estimated by the Government Property Agency to be around £500k (£600k incl. VAT). Other costs cannot be estimated at this stage due to the uncertainties involved. Costs comprise liabilities, expenses (including solicitors' and other professional costs), claims and damages. Losses (including any diminution in UoR's interest in the Property arising as a result of the breach of covenant to provide vacant possession at the end of the Lease) would also have to be covered. DSIT would be responsible for such costs.

Although the Agreement for Lease and Lease will be entered into by the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, DSIT as ultimate sponsor and funder of the project will have budgetary responsibility within Government for them, and will be responsible for any payments due under the first Indemnity and second Indemnity. DSIT are seeking approval of the indemnities as ultimate sponsor and funder of the project.

The Government will be subject to the new contingent liabilities, and I will be laying a Departmental Minute today containing a description of the liabilities undertaken.

Exports to Israel: Military Operations in Gaza

[HLWS64]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Business and Trade and President of the Board of Trade has today made the following statement:

The UK Government has been absolutely clear that Israel must, in taking military action to support its legitimate right to self-defence, do so whilst adhering to International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

Following a rigorous process in line with the UK's legal obligations, the UK Government has concluded that there is a clear risk that military exports to Israel, where used for military operations in Gaza, might be used in serious violations of international humanitarian law. To continue to permit these exports would therefore be inconsistent with our Strategic Export Licensing Criteria.

The Foreign Secretary has now considered detailed assessments and has determined that while Israel has the capability to comply with international humanitarian law and the most senior Ministers and officials have affirmed Israel's commitment to do so, there are significant doubts about its record of compliance. Consequently, he has advised me that there is a clear risk that some UK exports

to Israel might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law.

A thorough process has now been followed and the summary of the Government's assessment is being published.

I have therefore instructed officials to suspend licences for exports to Israel, where we have assessed those items are for use in military operations in Gaza. This includes approximately 30 export licences for items which could be used in the current conflict. This includes components for fighter aircraft (F-16s), parts for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), naval systems, and targeting equipment.

The Government condemned Hamas' barbaric attack on 7 October and supports Israel's right to defend itself in line with international law. The government is also working intensively with international partners to encourage wider regional de-escalation in the context of recent events.

This is not a blanket ban but targets relevant licences that could be used in military operations in Gaza. Assessments of Israel's commitment to international humanitarian law will continue, including with regard to the provision of food and medical supplies to civilians in Gaza and the treatment of detainees, and may change over time to allow reinstatement of these licences.

Affected exporters will be notified of that suspension.

The UK stresses that there is no equivalence between Hamas terrorists and Israel's democratic government. The UK remains committed to supporting Israel's self-defence. But to license arms exports to Israel, the UK must assess their compliance with international humanitarian law, notwithstanding the abhorrence of their opponents' tactics and ideology.

In the context of this suspension, I have also considered the particular issue of the F-35 strike fighter programme. I am grateful to the Defence Secretary for his advice on this issue.

The F-35 is an aircraft that operates globally, forming a key capability in the militaries of many of our allies.

The F35 programme has a significant dependence on the UK, which provides unique and critical components. Due to the nature of the F35 as an international collaborative programme, it is not currently possible to suspend licensing of F35 components for use by Israel without prejudicing the entire global F35 programme, including its broader strategic role in NATO and our support to Ukraine. This Government has an unwavering commitment to the security not just of this country but to our allies around the world, especially at a time when we face increased global insecurity and volatility.

In this context, with a view to ensuring international peace and security, exports to the global F-35 programme will be excluded from this suspension decision, except where going direct to Israel. This is in line with the Written Ministerial Statement that issued the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria on 8 December 2021, which provided that application of the Criteria would be without

prejudice to the application to specific cases of specific measures as may be announced to Parliament from time to time. This will be kept under review.

The UK continues to call for an immediate ceasefire to the conflict in Gaza, the release of all hostages and a significant increase in the amount of aid to civilians in Gaza.

The Foreign Secretary and I will provide further updates to Parliament as appropriate.

FCDO Services' Ministerial Targets 2024-25

[HLWS59]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: My Honourable Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Indo-Pacific (Catherine West MP) has today made the following statement:

FCDO Services operates as a trading fund of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). I have set the following performance targets for 2024-2025:

- i) An in-year surplus before interest, tax and dividend;
- ii) Achievement of the return on capital employed (ROCE) of at least 6.5% (weighted average);
- iii) A productivity ratio of at least 82%, measuring actual billable hours versus available billable hours;
- iv) An in-year customer satisfaction rating average of at least 82;
- v) An average Civil Service People Survey score for 'Employee Engagement' of at least 61%; and
- vi) An average Civil Service People Survey score for 'My Manager' of at least 65%.

FCDO Services will report to Parliament on its success against these targets through its Annual Report and Accounts for 2024-2025.

FCDO Services is a Trading Fund of the FCDO. It provides a range of integrated, secure services worldwide to the FCDO and other UK Government departments, supporting the delivery of government agendas. Services include protective security, estates and construction, cloud computing, communications and monitoring, logistics, translation and interpreting. This is combined with a portfolio of global maintenance work. FCDO Services also manages the UK National Authority for Counter Eavesdropping (UK NACE), helping protect UK assets from physical, electronic and cyber-attack.

Opportunity Mission: Education Reforms

[HLWS53]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: My Right Honourable Friend, The Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities (Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson), has made the following statement:

With immediate effect single headline grades will no longer be issued by Ofsted when they inspect state-funded schools, to drive high and rising school standards for children and increase transparency for parents.

For state-funded schools inspected in the 2024/25 academic year, parents will see four grades across the existing sub-categories: quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development and leadership & management.

The change delivers on the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and demonstrates the Prime Minister's commitment to improve the life chances of young people across the country.

Where schools are identified as struggling, government will prioritise rapid planning and action to improve the education and experience of children, rather than relying purely on changing schools' management.

The reform paves the way for the introduction of School Report Cards from September 2025, which will provide parents with a more complete picture of how schools are performing and where there is a need for improvement. The design and content of report cards will be developed over the coming months, including through extensive engagement with parents and schools.

From early 2025, the department will introduce Regional Improvement Teams to work with teachers and leaders in struggling schools to quickly and directly address identified areas of weakness.

For schools whose performance is causing the most serious concern – which would previously have been rated 'inadequate' – the government will continue to intervene. Ofsted is under a legal duty to identify schools causing concern (defined as schools requiring special measures or requiring significant improvement) and notify the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State is under a legal duty to issue an academy order to a local authority maintained school in either of the categories of concern. The removal of headline grades will not affect the legal position. The Secretary of State will also continue to use, where appropriate, the power to terminate the funding agreement of an academy identified as a school causing concern.

For schools that have previously received two or more consecutive judgements that were less than 'Good' and, as of today's announcement, are due to become academies or transfer to a new trust by 1 January, that process will continue. For schools that have received two or more consecutive judgements that were less than 'Good' but are due to convert or transfer in the new year, the government's intervention approach will change. The government will now put in place support for these schools from a high performing school, helping to drive up standards quickly. Schools with current Ofsted grades of below 'good' which are in receipt of a 'requires improvement' sub-judgement in Leadership and Management or Quality of Education in their next Ofsted inspection will also be eligible for this support.

The government is committed, in time, to replacing single headline grades in all the remits that Ofsted inspects – namely private schools, early years settings, colleges, initial teacher education and children's social care providers. Government and Ofsted will work in

partnership with sectors over the next year to develop alternative reporting arrangements. New arrangements will take account of the unique characteristics of each sector but will broadly reflect the report card approach that is being taken for schools. Providers in other sectors will continue to receive single headline grades in the meantime.

Today's changes build on the recently announced Children's Wellbeing Bill, which will put children at the centre of education and make changes to ensure every child is supported to achieve and thrive.

Today's announcement is the first step towards a school accountability system that sets the highest expectations on standards while making inspection a more powerful, more transparent tool for driving school improvement. The reforms represent a major step in the government's mission to break down the barriers to opportunity for every child at every stage. In doing so, the government will put education back at the forefront of national life and restore teaching as a valued profession which delivers for our children and our country.

Port Talbot Transition Board

[HLWS63]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Wales (Jo Stevens) has today made the following statement:

Today I can confirm that on 15 August I announced the release of £13.5million in funding to support supply chain businesses and individuals affected by Tata Steel's decision to transition to greener steelmaking.

This initial tranche of £13.5m in funding demonstrates that this government will act decisively to support workers and businesses in Port Talbot, working with Welsh Government, unions, and the wider community.

This funding, which is the first release from the Tata Steel / Port Talbot Transition Board fund, will target local businesses which are heavily reliant on Tata Steel as their primary customer, allowing them to turn towards new markets and customers where necessary.

The funding will also be available to workers affected by the transition, allowing them to retrain or to learn new skills for the employment market. We are also harnessing the generosity of the local community, with 50 employers so far pledging practical support for affected workers.

Negotiations with Tata Steel on the future of the site will continue separately. But this government will not wait for a crisis to overtake us before acting. We are putting a safety net in place now to ensure we can back workers and businesses, whatever happens.

We have reset our relationship with the Welsh Government and will continue to work closely with them and other partners to ensure we are delivering support on the ground.

Recognising the immediate need, support through the funds will be available imminently.

Businesses and Individuals can register an interest or send any enquiries to an email address if interested - tsukqueries@npt.gov.uk.

Publication of Statutory Consultation and National Energy System Operator Licences Jointly with Ofgem

[HLWS57]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: My hon. Friend the Minister for Energy Security and Net Zero (Michael Shanks MP) made the following Statement today:

Our nation stands at a pivotal moment in our energy and net zero journey. As we navigate the challenges of energy security and the urgent need for a sustainable future, I am proud to announce the publication of the joint Government-Ofgem response to the Statutory Consultation on National Energy System Operator (NESO) licences and other impacted licences.

NESO will be a trailblazing, independent entity, serving as a trusted voice at the core of our energy sector. It will spearhead strategic planning for our energy systems and networks, manage the electricity system with precision and play a crucial role in achieving our overarching energy strategy and objectives.

NESO's independence from commercial interests and operational control of the government will enable it to provide unbiased, expert advice on critical decisions that will shape our energy landscape for decades to come, including our Clean Power 2030 target.

As we move forward, NESO's role will be instrumental in achieving our net zero and energy security goals. By fostering innovation, enhancing system resilience, and promoting transparency, NESO will help navigate the complexities of our evolving energy system. We are enormously grateful for the valuable input from industry stakeholders, whose insights have been integral to shaping the future of NESO.

NESO will be regulated by Ofgem through two new licences, and this consultation response marks a significant milestone in establishing NESO's regulatory regime. The final step will be for the Secretary of State to grant NESO these licences under the powers conferred by the Energy Act 2023. The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and Ofgem are aiming to establish NESO this year.

Our response addresses thematically the feedback raised by stakeholders to the consultation on the contents of these licences published in March 2024. The key themes include NESO transparency and industry feedback, incentives and performance, energy resilience and critical national infrastructure, network planning, NESO transitional service agreements, future roles, UNC Arrangements, and on NESO's advisory role.

Alongside this response document, we are also publishing updated versions of NESO's licences.

The establishment of NESO is intended to apply only to England, Scotland, and Wales. Energy is generally devolved in Northern Ireland.

I will place copies of the Statutory Consultation Response on the National Energy System Operator's licences in the House Libraries.

UK Accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership: Entry into Force

[HLWS61]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: My Rt Hon Friend the Minister of State for Trade Policy and Economic Security has today made the following statement:

The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) is set to enter into force for the UK by 15 December 2024. This follows Peru's ratification of the UK's Accession Protocol to the Agreement.

The Accession Protocol sets out that the agreement will enter into force for the UK 60 days after all Parties and the UK have each notified the CPTPP Depository. Notification would follow the completion of relevant domestic procedures. However, after 15 months have passed since signature (which falls in mid-October 2024), the mechanism changes and the Protocol can enter into force 60 days after a minimum of six Parties and the UK have each notified. If at least 6 Parties and the UK have already notified within 15 months of signature, entry into force would take place 60 days after the October date. Given Peru is the sixth Party to notify their ratification, we currently expect the UK's accession to CPTPP to enter into force by 15 December 2024.

Before Peru, five other CPTPP Parties had already ratified the terms of the UK's accession, including Japan, Singapore, Chile, New Zealand and Viet Nam. This means that the agreement will come into force between the UK and those Parties by the end of the year, and with other Parties depending on when they ratify. The UK continues to work closely with remaining Parties, who are completing their own processes as quickly as possible.

This Department is helping British businesses ready themselves to take full advantage of the opportunities CPTPP presents. As the first country to accede to this agreement, the UK will be perfectly positioned to shape its future development, from influencing the future development of the CPTPP rulebook to championing the group's expansion to new economies.

UK COVID-19 Inquiry Response Costs: Quarter 1 2024-25

[HLWS54]

Baroness Smith of Basildon: My Rt. Hon. Friend the Paymaster General and Minister for the Cabinet Office, Nick Thomas-Symonds MP, has today made the following statement:

The Covid-19 pandemic impacted each and every person in the UK. The work of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry is crucial in examining the UK's response to and impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. There are evidently lessons to be learnt from the pandemic and the Government is committed to closely considering the Covid-19 Inquiry's findings and recommendations, which will play a key role in informing the Government's planning and preparations for the future.

The Government recognises the unprecedented and wholly exceptional circumstances of the pandemic, and the importance of examining as rigorously as possible the actions the state took in response, in order to learn lessons for the future. The Inquiry is therefore unprecedented in its scope, complexity and profile, looking at recent events that have profoundly impacted everyone's lives.

The independent UK COVID-19 Inquiry publishes its own running costs quarterly. Following the publication of the Inquiry's Financial Report for Quarter 1 2024-25 on 29 July 2024, I would like to update colleagues on the costs to the UK Government associated with responding to the UK COVID-19 Inquiry.

Figures provided are based upon a selection of the most relevant departments and are not based on a complete set of departmental figures and are not precise for accounting purposes. Ensuring a comprehensive and timely response to the Inquiry requires significant input from a number of key government departments, including, but not limited to, the Cabinet Office, the Department for Health and Social Care, the UK Health Security Agency, the Home Office and HM Treasury, many of which are supported by the Government Legal Department. While every effort has been made to ensure a robust methodology, complexities remain in trying to quantify the time and costs dedicated to the Inquiry alone.

It should be noted that alongside full-time resource within departments, Inquiry response teams draw on expertise from across their organisations. The staff costs associated with appearing as witnesses, preparing witnesses and associated policy development work on the Covid Inquiry are not included in the costs below.

Breakdown of Staff & Costs

The Government's response to the UK COVID-19 Inquiry is led by Inquiry Response Units across departments.

- contingent labour costs (Q1).

Total Inquiry Response Unit Legal Costs

Inquiry Response Units across government departments are supported by the Government Legal Department, co-partnering firms of solicitors, and legal counsel. These associated legal costs (excluding internal departmental advisory legal costs) for April - June 2024 are below.

- Q1 legal costs: £4,236,000.

UK-Ukraine Digital Trade Agreement: Entry into Force

[HLWS58]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: My Rt Hon Friend the Minister of State for Trade Policy and Economic Security has today made the following statement:

I am pleased to announce that the UK-Ukraine Digital Trade Agreement (DTA) entered into force on 1 September, following the completion of the necessary domestic procedures on both sides. This historic trade agreement will help Ukraine rebuild its economy and support livelihoods following Russia's illegal invasion.

This is the deepest digital trade agreement that the UK has negotiated. Digital trade is rapidly becoming the dominant form of trade. Seizing the opportunities in this area is fundamental to our prosperity. UK and Ukrainian businesses of all shapes and sizes, and across all sectors of the economy (whether trading in goods or services) will benefit from the agreement.

Ukraine's recovery from Putin's illegal and barbaric war will be a symbol of the power of freedom and democracy over autocracy. Our DTA with Ukraine creates a digital UK-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement by modernising our bilateral trade in the digital era and deepening our economic ties with Ukraine.

Greater digitalisation of the economy is a key priority for President Zelenskyy's Government. This Agreement will boost productivity, jobs and growth, and allow us to help Ukraine deliver on their digital ambitions by:

- Ensuring open digital markets, including through commitments such as a ban on imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions.
- Supporting cross-border data flows, including financial data, and prohibiting the unfair imposed localisation of data as well as committing to high standards of personal data protection.
- Championing digital trading systems to cut red tape and make trade cheaper, faster, and more secure for Ukraine and UK businesses.
- Upholding consumer benefits and business safeguards in trade, including cybersecurity and online consumer protection.

This Agreement further cements the UK's commitment to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Ukrainian allies in response to the ongoing conflict and play our part in securing Ukraine's future as a prosperous, stable and democratic partner in Europe.

I hope the House will join me in celebrating this important milestone for UK and Ukrainian businesses.

Written Answers

Monday, 2 September 2024

Abortion: Clinics

Asked by **Lord Jackson of Peterborough**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many abortion clinics run by (1) the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, (2) MSI Reproductive Choices, and (3) National Unplanned Pregnancy Advisory Service, have (a) never been inspected by the Care Quality Commission, and (b) not been inspected in the past three years. [HL423]

Baroness Merron: The following table shows the number of abortion clinics which have never been inspected by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), as well as the number of clinics which have not been inspected in the past three years:

Name of provider	Have never been inspected	Have not been inspected in the past three years
British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS)	0	6
MSI Reproductive Choices	3	6
National Unplanned Pregnancy Advisory Service (NUPAS)	4	2

Source: Care Quality Commission

There are four NUPAS clinics that do not have any rating. This is because these were registered in the last 12 months.

There are three MSI Reproductive Choices clinics that do not have a rating. Two of these clinics do not have a rating because they were registered in the last 12 months. One of these clinics was registered nearly two years ago but has not yet had an inspection. This is because the transition to the Single Assessment Framework (SAF) has delayed inspection in some cases.

Under Section 46 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008, the CQC must update the health and social care sectors as to how frequently they will assess the providers they regulate. The CQC plans to publish an interim statement in August 2024 about how frequently they plan to assess each type of service.

Abortion: Demonstrations

Asked by **Lord Jackson of Peterborough**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the policing of safe access zones around abortion clinics will be consistent with the College of Policing's wider guidance on managing protests. [HL424]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The College of Policing has published an authorised professional practice (APP) to ensure police forces in England and Wales take a consistent and effective approach to planning and policing public order and public safety, including the management of protests. Any guidance on how the wider legislative framework should be applied specifically in the context of abortion safe access zones would be a matter for the College.

Asked by **Baroness O'Loan**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that police receive adequate training in ECHR rights with regard to policing safe access zones around abortion clinics. [HL521]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Under section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998, the police have an obligation to comply with the ECHR in all aspects of their work. Officer training is a matter for individual forces, which are independent of the Government.

Abortion: Drugs

Asked by **Baroness Eaton**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that any risks to a woman's health are accurately assessed before she may be sent abortion pills to be taken at home. [HL494]

Baroness Merron: The wellbeing and safety of women accessing abortion services, including early medical abortion at home, is our first and foremost priority. Before prescribing abortion medicine for use at home, either an in-person or a virtual consultation is held with the woman concerned. If any health issues are identified during a virtual consultation which could make home use of early medical abortion medicine potentially unsuitable, the woman will be asked to attend an in-person appointment for further assessment.

Asked by **Baroness O'Loan**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that abortion providers verify that a woman is not being coerced into an abortion before she is sent abortion pills to be taken at home. [HL522]

Baroness Merron: Abortion providers are required to have effective arrangements in place to safeguard children and vulnerable adults, in compliance with the Department's required standard operating procedures for the approval of independent sector places for termination of pregnancy in England. Providers must ensure that all staff are trained in recognising the signs of potential abuse and coercion in adult women, and how to respond.

In addition, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) has published national safeguarding guidance for under 18-year-olds accessing early medical abortion services, which will ensure that robust safeguarding processes are embedded across all abortion

services. We expect all providers to have due regard to the RCPCH safeguarding guidance.

Afghanistan: Hazara

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the situation facing the Hazara community in Afghanistan, particularly with regard to the findings of the 2022 Hazara Inquiry and the February report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan; and what consideration they have given to initiating proceedings before the International Court of Justice against Afghanistan for its failure to prevent and punish the crime of genocide, as per Article 1 of the Genocide Convention. [HL474]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Hazara Inquiry report has done much to raise awareness of the situation of Hazaras in Afghanistan. In line with the report's recommendations, we continue to monitor and document discrimination and abuses against Hazaras. The previous Government also welcomed the Special Rapporteur's February report and noted its recommendations. While the Government currently has no plans to initiate a case against Afghanistan at the ICJ, we continue to consider all available accountability measures.

More broadly, officials from the UK Mission to Afghanistan regularly press Taliban acting ministers and Afghan officials on human rights abuses in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan: Refugees

Asked by Baroness Coussins

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to amend the eligibility criteria for the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme to allow visas for the UK to be issued to those who were employed indirectly as well as directly to work for UK government departments or armed forces. [HL26]

Lord Coaker: The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme already provides resettlement routes within the existing criteria for those formerly employed, directly or indirectly, by the UK Government. There are no current plans to widen the eligibility criteria.

The scheme's full eligibility criteria can be found via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy-information-and-guidance>.

The new team of Ministers have made ARAP an early priority for the Department, to tackle problems which have been faced with processing ARAP applications and ensure the scheme delivers on our commitments to those brave Afghans who worked in support of UK objectives in Afghanistan.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy [Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-07-17/HL26>

Age: Discrimination

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the level of ageism in England and Wales; and whether it is decreasing or increasing. [HL144]

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of current legislation in combating ageism. [HL145]

Baroness Twycross: Age discrimination that cannot be objectively justified is unacceptable and unlawful across a range of fields under the Equality Act 2010. It is the strong protections in the 2010 Act that enable older people and their representatives to challenge such unlawful behaviour and ultimately seek redress in the courts or, in the case of older workers, an employment tribunal.

In addition, as regards to the public sector, the Public Sector Equality Duty places a duty on Government Departments, local authorities, the NHS and other bodies to have due regard to meeting equality requirements, including to eliminate unlawful age discrimination, where this is relevant to their policies and activities.

Age discrimination complaints to an Employment Tribunal stood at 2,434 in the year prior to the pandemic (2019/20) and fell slightly to 2080 in the 12 months to June 2023.

Agriculture: Land

Asked by Lord Bradshaw

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that high-quality agricultural land is protected from other development proposals to ensure food security. [HL387]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: This Government places great importance upon our agricultural land and food production. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out how the best and most versatile agricultural land should be reflected in planning policies and decisions. The Framework is also clear that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.

Agriculture: Land Use

Asked by *Lord Mott*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the approval of the Sunnica, Gate Burton and Mallard Pass solar farms on food production. [HL142]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero assessed the solar farms' impact on agricultural land in each of his relevant Decision Letters. These Decision Letters are publicly available on the Planning Inspectorate's website.

Agriculture: Seasonal Workers

Asked by *Lord Rose of Monewden*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the report by the Migration Advisory Committee Review of the Seasonal Worker Visa, published in July, whether they intend to commit to the long-term continuation of the Seasonal Worker Scheme; and what consideration they have given to providing notice of five years or more of any withdrawal from that scheme to allow adjustments to be made by the agricultural and retail sectors. [HL182]

Asked by *Lord Rose of Monewden*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to continue the Seasonal Worker Visa Scheme as part of a national food security strategy. [HL183]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Government is carefully considering the Migration Advisory Committee's review of the Seasonal Worker route and will announce a detailed response in due course.

Air Quality Grant Scheme: Finance

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Douglas-Miller on 24 May (HL4084), whether they will consider reinstating funding for the Air Quality Grant Scheme and, if not, what plans they have to better deliver positive outcomes for local air quality and public health. [HL530]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: No decisions have been made yet on the future of the Air Quality Grant.

Alcoholism

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many clinical diagnoses of alcoholism there were for men in (1) 2019, (2) 2020, (3) 2021, (4) 2022, and (5) 2023. [HL308]

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many clinical diagnoses of alcoholism there were for persons aged

10–19 in (1) 2019, (2) 2020, (3) 2021, (4) 2022, and (5) 2023. [HL309]

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many clinical diagnoses of alcoholism there have been for young people aged 20–24 in (1) 2019, (2) 2020, (3) 2021, (4) 2022, and (5) 2023. [HL310]

Baroness Merron: We do not hold this data centrally, in the format requested. The Department publishes Estimates of alcohol dependent adults in England: Summary, which can be viewed on the GOV.UK website, in an online only format. This is an estimate of the number of adults who are dependent on alcohol, many of whom will have never received a clinical diagnosis of alcohol dependence by National Health Services, or by accessing alcohol treatment.

Alcoholism: Health Services

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many individuals aged 10–19 received treatment for alcohol abuse in (1) 2019, (2) 2020, (3) 2021, (4) 2022, and (5) 2023 [HL311]

Baroness Merron: The information is not available in the format requested. The number of people who have received alcohol treatment is collected and published by the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System (NDTMS), with treatment numbers being published from April to March each year. The following table shows the number of people aged 10 to 19 years old who received treatment for their alcohol use, from 2018/19 to 2022/23:

Year	People between 10 and 19 years old who received treatment for their alcohol use
2018/19	8,220
2019/20	7,659
2020/21	6,060
2021/22	6,955
2022/23	7,123

Source of Data: National Drug Treatment Monitoring System.

Alcoholism: Women

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many clinical diagnoses of alcoholism there were for women in (1) 2019, (2) 2020, (3) 2021, (4) 2022, and (5) 2023. [HL358]

Baroness Merron: Alcoholism is not a clinical diagnosis, instead individuals who use alcohol in a dependent way are diagnosed with alcohol dependence.

Whilst we don't collect this data centrally in the format requested, the Department publishes *Estimates of alcohol dependent adults in England: Summary*, which can be viewed on the GOV.UK website in an online only format. This is an estimate of the number of adults who are dependent on alcohol, many of whom will never have received a clinical diagnosis of alcohol dependence in the National Health Service or by accessing alcohol treatment. This publication provides estimates covering the years 2015 to 2020 and are shown in the table below:

Year	Estimated number of alcohol dependent adults in England
2015 to 2016	595,856
2016 to 2017	589,101
2017 to 2018	586,780
2018 to 2019	602,391
2019 to 2020	608,416

Source: Estimates of alcohol dependent adults in England: Summary

Animals: Electronic Training Aids

Asked by **Baroness Fookes**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to introduce regulations to ban the use of electronic collars for animals. [HL253]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Government will introduce the most ambitious programme for animal welfare in a generation and will bring forward plans in due course. The Government is considering available evidence around the use of electronic collars and their effects on the welfare of animals.

Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences

Asked by **Baroness Hodgson of Abinger**

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to the continued implementation of the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative strategy in its final year, and whether they have considered extending the strategy after that point. [HL340]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) Strategy, launched in 2022, sets out the UK's approach to tackling conflict related sexual violence (CRSV). It covers the period 2022-2025. Decisions on exact future strategies will be taken by ministers in due course.

Empowering women and girls and preventing the conflicts that disproportionately impact on them is a key priority for this new government. We are working to prevent and respond to CRSV, including as vice chair of the International Alliance on PSVI and by providing medical, psychosocial, and legal support to thousands of survivors around the world.

Asked by **Baroness Hodgson of Abinger**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to re-appoint a Special Representative for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict. [HL341]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The current set of Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) envoys is presently under review. FCDO Ministers will take decisions on envoys in due course, and appointments of any new envoys will be announced publicly.

Asked by **Baroness Hodgson of Abinger**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they are taking steps to strengthen the global response to conflict-related sexual violence by (1) addressing the root causes of sexual violence, (2) improving justice for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, and (3) enhancing support for survivors of, and children born from, sexual violence in conflict. [HL343]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) Strategy, launched in 2022, sets out the UK's approach to tackling conflict related sexual violence (CRSV). It covers the period 2022-2025. Discussions on exact future strategies will be taken by ministers in due course.

Empowering women and girls and preventing the conflicts that disproportionately impact on them is a key priority for this new government. We are working to prevent and respond to CRSV, including as vice chair of the International Alliance on PSVI and by providing medical, psychosocial, and legal support to thousands of survivors around the world.

Armed Forces: Northern Ireland

Asked by **Lord Rogan**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether Armed Forces personnel engaged in military operations in Northern Ireland will be eligible to receive the Wider Service Medal; and if not, why. [HL271]

Lord Coaker: A small number of operations have already been considered and confirmed as eligible for the Wider Service Medal. Work is ongoing to consider the eligibility of a large number of other operations, which is likely to include operational activity in Northern Ireland. This is expected to be completed by autumn 2024 when the details of all operations that have been approved for the medal will be published.

Arts and Cultural Heritage

Asked by **Baroness Bull**

To ask His Majesty's Government how the creative industries, arts, and heritage sectors will be represented in Government, and how the interests of these sectors will be protected. [HL208]

Baroness Twycross: We are in the early stages of the new Government and Ministers are considering the full

range of policy options to support the creative industries, arts and heritage sectors to thrive and meet our manifesto commitments. These sectors play a central part in providing good jobs and wages in every part of our country and will be a key part of delivering on the government's missions. They are a key driver of economic growth, they help shape our national identity and they bring enjoyment and fulfilment to many millions every week. They are a key sector and we are conscious that we cannot help them thrive without engaging directly with them at every stage of developing our economic and industrial strategy.

Arts: Brexit

Asked by The Earl of Clancarty

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will conduct a formal review of the effect of the UK leaving the EU on the arts and creative industries. [HL213]

Baroness Twycross: The Government is dedicated to fostering the growth and global leadership of the arts and creative sectors, which significantly bolster the UK's economic prosperity, contributing 5.7% of the UK's total Gross Value Add in 2022 (£124.6 billion). They enrich people's lives, and play a vital role in presenting the UK as an attractive location to visit and invest.

We are determined to improve the UK's trade and investment relationship with the EU by dismantling unnecessary barriers to trade. For the arts and creative sectors, this includes helping UK performing artists tour within the EU, enabling easier trade in the art, publishing and advertising sectors and facilitating greater cultural exchanges with the EU, as set out in the Government's manifesto and *Creating Growth: Labour's Plan for the Arts, Culture and Creative Industries*.

We have no immediate plans to conduct a formal review of the effect of leaving the EU on the arts and creative industries. Our focus is on working to reset the relationship with our European friends, neighbours and allies. The Prime Minister has had early positive early calls and meetings, including with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and key leaders in EU Member States. The Minister for the Constitution and European Union Relations and the Foreign Secretary have also held early senior ministerial engagements with European counterparts, including at NATO and the European Political Community. Further engagements will be taking place over the coming weeks and months.

We recognise that strengthening the relationship will take time, but this Government is ambitious and wants to move forward at pace, with clear manifesto priorities for the creative and cultural sectors.

Arts: Teachers

Asked by The Earl of Clancarty

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will review the amounts payable for Initial Teacher Training bursaries for arts subjects [HL209]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: For those starting initial teacher training (ITT) in the 2024/25 academic year in art and design and music, the department is offering a £10,000 bursary.

The bursaries that the department offers are designed to incentivise more applications to ITT courses. The department reviews bursaries each year before deciding the offer for trainees starting ITT the following academic year. In doing this, the department takes account of a number of factors, including historic recruitment, forecast economic conditions and teacher supply need in each subject.

The government is committed to delivering 6,500 new expert teachers. To deliver that commitment, the department will review the way bursaries are allocated and the structure of retention payments. The department will announce its recruitment and retention incentive offer for 2025/26 in due course.

All trainees on a tuition fee-funded ITT course can apply for a tuition fee loan and maintenance loan to support their living costs. Additional funding is also available depending on individual circumstances, such as the Childcare Grant. More information about teacher training funding can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/teacher-training-funding>.

Asylum: Accommodation Centres

Asked by Lord German

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to continue the use of large-scale asylum accommodation centres, including (1) RAF Scampton, and (2) MDP Wethersfield. [HL417]

Lord Hanson of Flint: We are determined to restore order to the asylum system so that it operates swiftly, firmly, and fairly; and ensures that the rules are properly enforced.

The Home Secretary will decide on the future of current Home Office policies in due course.

Asylum: Applications

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their forecast of the number of people currently seeking asylum that will still need to have their case decided by the end of (1) 2024, and (2) 2025. [HL315]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office routinely publishes information on a quarterly basis, including the number of cases outstanding. Data on the total number of outstanding cases in the asylum system ('asylum work in progress'), asylum decision makers, processing times and productivity is published in the 'Immigration and Protection' data of the [Migration transparency data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/migration-transparency-data).

We are unable to forecast the number of people with outstanding case decisions as each case is decided on its

own individual merits and there are many factors that can delay and contribute to the length of time to process asylum claims.

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have had with the police, the Local Government Association and other stakeholders on the impact of their plans for fast-tracking, and granting, multiple asylum applications, in respect of (1) public safety, (2) national security, (3) community cohesion, (4) the probation service, and (5) local government finance. [HL425]

Lord Hanson of Flint: On 23 July 2024, the Home Secretary laid a Statutory Instrument in Parliament which removed the retrospective application of the Illegal Migration Act 2023. This has enabled decision-makers to resume their work in processing asylum claims from those who arrived in the UK from 7 March 2023 onwards. This is an important step to restore order to the asylum system and ease the burden on the taxpayer.

Each asylum claim will be considered on its individual merits and all claimants are subject to mandatory security checks. Those who qualify are normally granted five years' limited leave and have access to the labour market. Those found not to need protection are refused.

The Home Office does and will continue to engage with other Government Departments and a number of external stakeholders regarding the impact that the asylum system has on other areas.

Asylum: Housing

Asked by Lord Empey

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the cost of housing asylum seekers in the United Kingdom. [HL496]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office does not publish a breakdown of statistics which disaggregates asylum accommodation costs by type. The total expenditure on asylum is published in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts, available at [HO annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/123456/2023-24-annual-report-and-accounts.pdf).

The government is determined to restore order to the asylum system so that it operates swiftly, firmly and fairly. This includes our accommodation sites, as we continue to identify a range of options to reduce the use of hotels. Additionally, the Government will be reviewing current Home Office arrangements to ensure efficiency and delivering value for money.

The number of asylum seekers in receipt of Section 95 support is published quarterly. At the end of quarter four 2003 published statistics indicate that there were 47,148 people housed in Dispersal Accommodation and a further 30,362 in receipt of subsistence only support. The geographical location of these supported asylum seekers was not published at that time. Since 2019 data on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation

has been published at [Asylum and resettlement datasets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/123456/2023-24-annual-report-and-accounts.pdf)

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Dataset [asylum-seekers-receipt-support-datasets-mar-24-second-edition (1).xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-07-30/HL496>

Asked by Lord Empey

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they are considering alternatives to the current forms of asylum seeker accommodation and, if so, what they are. [HL497]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office does not publish a breakdown of statistics which disaggregates asylum accommodation costs by type. The total expenditure on asylum is published in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts, available at [HO annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/123456/2023-24-annual-report-and-accounts.pdf).

The government is determined to restore order to the asylum system so that it operates swiftly, firmly and fairly. This includes our accommodation sites, as we continue to identify a range of options to reduce the use of hotels. Additionally, the Government will be reviewing current Home Office arrangements to ensure efficiency and delivering value for money.

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Asylum: Human Rights

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask His Majesty's Government which countries are regarded as unsafe in human rights terms and to which their citizens cannot be deported from the United Kingdom. [HL297]

Lord Hanson of Flint: All asylum and human rights claims are carefully considered on their individual facts and merits in accordance with our international obligations.

The Home Office's assessment of the situation for different groups in different countries is set out in the relevant country policy and information note, which are available via <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/country-policy-and-information-notes>.

Asked by **Baroness Hoey**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many people in each of the last three years have been allowed to remain in the United Kingdom as a consequence of a country having been declared unsafe on human rights terms. [HL298]

Lord Hanson of Flint: All asylum and human rights claims are carefully considered on their individual facts and merits in accordance with our international obligations.

Asylum: Rwanda

Asked by **Lord Kempson**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have fully terminated the UK–Rwanda migration and economic development partnership agreement; and, if not, when they plan to do so. [HL263]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Migration and Economic Development Partnership has finished. We are currently carrying out a legislative review which includes consideration of the repeal of the Safety of Rwanda Act. More details will be set out in due course.

Asked by **Lord Roberts of Llandudno**

To ask His Majesty's Government what has been the total cost of preparing the Rwanda deportation plan. [HL86]

Lord Hanson of Flint: In her statement to the House on 22 July, the Home Secretary said the Rwanda-UK partnership had cost £700 million, which encompasses the direct costs of the partnership as detailed in the National Audit Office report released March 1, 2024, as well as expenses related to preparing for relocation flights to Rwanda and implementing the Illegal Migration Act (IMA).

Asylum: Temporary Accommodation

Asked by **Lord Empey**

To ask His Majesty's Government whose responsibility it is to determine where asylum seekers are temporarily housed while their cases are being considered, and what criteria are applied in order to reach such decisions. [HL499]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office has a statutory obligation to support asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute. The criteria for accommodation allocation can be found in the following link: [Allocation](#)

of asylum accommodation policy (accessible) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Allocation of Asylum Accommodation
[Allocation+of+accommodation.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-07-30/HL499>

Badgers: Disease Control

Asked by **Lord Banner**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they continue to view badger culls as being “for the purposes of preventing the spread of disease” within the meaning of section 10(2) of the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, given the acknowledgment in the Labour Party Manifesto 2024 that they are “ineffective”; and if they do not, whether existing cull licences will be revoked under section 10(8) of the 1992 Act or, if they will not be revoked, why not. [HL246]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Licences for badger culling are issued by Natural England under section 10(2)(a) of the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. The current round of licences, that is, licences that have already been issued, will be honoured. This gives us time to work closely and constructively with farmers and scientists to build an eradication package that will beat bovine TB.

Bahrain: Human Rights

Asked by **Lord Scriven**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have raised concerns with the government of Bahrain over human rights issues since taking office; if so, when and to whom; and if not, whether they intend to do so. [HL185]

Lord Collins of Highbury: His Majesty's Government has not made representations to the Government of Bahrain regarding human rights since taking office. The UK supports Bahrain's reforms and will continue to encourage their government to meet international and domestic human rights commitments.

Balkans: Politics and Government

Asked by **Baroness Helic**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the current security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Western Balkans, and of the extent of Russian influence in the region. [HL219]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: Instability in the Western Balkans undermines regional security and economic growth. Ministers are engaging with Western Balkan leaders to promote stability and prosperity,

including in my meeting in July with the Bosnian Presidency Chair, Denis Becirovic, and the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary's engagement with regional leaders at the European Political Community and NATO Summits. The UK is also working with European and US allies to strengthen collective engagement. Across the region, Russia uses disinformation and other hybrid techniques to undermine sovereignty and democracy. Through UK programmes and policy, we are actively building resilience to counter this interference.

Bangladesh: Demonstrations

Asked by Lord Hussain

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the government of Bangladesh's response to the ongoing student protests in that country; and what representations they are making to that government to ensure a peaceful resolution, and justice for students who have been mistreated or killed. [HL505]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The Foreign Secretary and Minister West have publicly raised concerns about the violence following protests in Bangladesh. The UK is clear that peaceful protestors must not be subject to violence. We are concerned by the high number of arrests and reports of mistreatment in detention. The British High Commissioner to Bangladesh has engaged with Bangladesh government ministers to reinforce messages of peaceful resolution. The UK and international partners will continue to push for progress towards accountability and justice through an independent, impartial and transparent investigation into alleged human rights violations.

Bangladesh: Elections

Asked by Lord Hussain

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Bangladesh to commit to free and fair elections in the near future. [HL506]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK noted the results of the 12th Parliamentary Elections in Bangladesh, which took place on 7 January 2024. Democratic elections depend on credible, open, and fair competition. Respect for human rights, rule of law and due process are essential elements of the democratic process. These standards were not consistently met during the election period. The UK will continue to work with likeminded partners to encourage all political parties to address their differences and find a common way forward in the interests of the people of Bangladesh.

Bank Services: Disadvantaged

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve access to banking services for individuals who rely primarily on cash because of digital exclusion. [HL470]

Lord Livermore: The Government is committed to protecting access to cash for individuals and businesses. The Financial Conduct Authority is the regulator responsible for access to cash further to the Financial Services and Markets Act 2023, with powers to seek to ensure the reasonable provision of cash withdrawal and deposit facilities for individuals and businesses, including free withdrawal services for individuals.

The FCA published its final rules on access to cash on 24 July. Under its rules, designated firms will be required to undertake assessments of a community's cash needs following the closure of a service or a community request, and to put in a new service if necessary. These rules come into force on 18 September.

The Government also recognises the importance of banking services to communities and high streets and has committed to work closely with the banks to roll out 350 banking hubs over the next five years.

Beavers: Conservation

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to support the spread of beaver populations in England. [HL203]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Government supports species reintroductions where there are clear benefits for nature, people and the environment. All reintroductions in England are expected to follow the Code for Reintroductions and other Conservation Translocations. We will continue to work with Natural England to develop our approach to beaver reintroductions in England.

Bibby Stockholm

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to continue to use the "Bibby Stockholm"; and, if so, for what purpose and at what budgeted cost. [HL89]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Bibby Stockholm will continue to be in use until the contract expires in January 2025.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: EUFOR

Asked by *Baroness Helic*

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to rejoining the EUFOR–Althea peace stabilization force under the military aspects of the Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and as part of their plan to seek a new security pact to strengthen cooperation between the UK and EU. [HL220]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK government recognises the vital importance of EUFOR–Althea to peace and security in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The UK is committed to a broad and ambitious UK-EU security pact. While the UK does not currently participate in any EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions, it is open to exploring future opportunities for cooperation.

Bovine Tuberculosis: Disease Control

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the impact of the badger cull on the long-term viability and health of badger populations, and (2) the findings of Rogerson et al, in Absence of effects of widespread badger culling on tuberculosis in cattle, published in Scientific Reports on 15 July; and whether it plans to stop this cull. [HL409]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Government is currently studying the existing information surrounding the long-term viability and health of badger populations and considering commissioning research to fill any information gaps. It is important to this Government that any policy is informed by adequate scientific research and information.

We are currently considering the findings of the published Torgerson et al paper, which is a reanalysis of the Randomised Badger Culling Trial carried out in the 2000s.

The Government included a commitment in their election manifesto to work with farmers and scientists towards a package that can create bovine TB free status, including rolling out vaccinations, herd management and biosecurity to protect farmers' livelihoods. This Government will end badger culling.

More details of the Government's approach to tackle bovine TB and to end badger culling will be set out in due course.

Bread

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans, if any, they have to introduce a legal definition of (1) sourdough bread and (2) other sourdough products. [HL410]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Government has no current plans to introduce a legal definition to specifically cover the use of the term 'sourdough'. The UK maintains high food standards including on requirements relating to food labelling and information. Existing legislation ensures the labelling and marketing of food, including sourdough products, does not intentionally mislead consumers.

Breakfast Clubs

Asked by *Baroness Boycott*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that kitchen facilities in primary schools are sufficient for new breakfast clubs to provide healthy and nourishing breakfasts. [HL334]

Asked by *Baroness Boycott*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to update the school food standards to ensure that breakfasts served in free breakfast clubs are nutritionally beneficial. [HL335]

Asked by *Baroness Boycott*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to expand the monitoring and enforcement of school food standards to ensure that free breakfasts are nutritionally beneficial. [HL336]

Asked by *Baroness Boycott*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure children that are from the most deprived households will be able to access free breakfast clubs. [HL337]

Asked by *Baroness Boycott*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that primary schools have sufficient resources and staff time for free breakfast clubs to be delivered effectively. [HL338]

Asked by *Baroness Boycott*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they expect to introduce free breakfast clubs in primary schools. [HL339]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government is committed to breaking down barriers to opportunity and giving every child the best start in life. Breakfast clubs will remove barriers to opportunity by ensuring every child, no matter their circumstances, is set-up for the day and ready to learn by providing a supportive start to the day. The government is committed to making quick progress to deliver on its commitment to offer breakfast clubs in every primary school.

The department has taken decisive action by announcing in the King's Speech that, under the Children's Wellbeing Bill, every primary school in England will offer a breakfast club. Legislating for breakfast club provision will give schools the certainty

they need to plan for the future. Before the legislation comes into force, the department will work closely with the sector to make sure the right support, including funding, guidance and resources are in place.

British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Mauritius about the sovereignty of the British Indian Ocean Territory; and what is their policy on the British Indian Ocean Territory. [HL513]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary met the Mauritian Prime Minister on 23 July and committed to continuing negotiations on the exercise of sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory/Chagos Archipelago. It is too early to speculate on timelines or conclusions, but it is the Government's priority to resolve this long standing and important issue, including ensuring the long-term secure and effective operation of the joint UK/US military base on Diego Garcia.

Broadcasting and Conferences: Sign Language

Asked by Lord Hannett of Everton

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to including British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation in Government broadcast communication; and what discussions they have had with non-Government political parties about encouraging the use of BSL interpretation at party conference events. [HL256]

Baroness Twycross: The Government is committed to ensuring that its communications are available and accessible across multiple channels and in a number of alternative formats in order to meet a range of needs, including BSL.

It is the responsibility of individuals and organisations to abide by the law as set out in the Equality Act 2010, which places an anticipatory duty on service providers to make reasonable adjustments to improve access to services so that disabled consumers are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled consumers.

Bus Services

Asked by Lord Bradshaw

To ask His Majesty's Government how they plan to ensure that private bus operators who provide a good service retain a viable role following any review of bus regulation. [HL170]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The Department for Transport is committed to working at pace with bus

operators, local transport authorities and passengers to deliver on the government's plan for better bus services. For local areas who choose to franchise their bus services, operators will have the opportunity to bid for contracts to run services. The assessment of those bids to determine which local bus operators can best deliver the contracts will be for the franchising authority to conduct. Local transport authorities operating enhanced partnerships rather than franchising to deliver their bus services will continue to work collaboratively with their operators to ensure that standards are improved and maintained as required.

Asked by Lord Bradshaw

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to support the bus industry when the £2 bus fare cap comes to an end on 31 December. [HL385]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: Delivering reliable and affordable public transport services for passengers is one of the Government's top priorities and we know how important this is for passengers and for local growth. The Government is urgently considering the most effective and affordable ways to deliver on these objectives.

Buses: Manufacturing Industries

Asked by Lord Bradshaw

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of competition from China on the UK's bus manufacturing industry; and what steps they are taking to prevent unfair competition. [HL386]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The impact of competition from overseas manufacturing on the UK's bus manufacturing industry continues to be monitored. The UK bus manufacturing industry has been successful in winning most of the orders for the zero emission bus regional areas (ZEBRA) programme.

Where UK industry believe that they are being injured as the result of unfair foreign trading practices, such as dumped or subsidised imports, they can apply to the Trade Remedies Authority as the UK's independent body responsible for the conduct of trade remedy investigations.

Business: Environment Protection and Human Rights

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have for a public consultation on the need to introduce legislation to prevent corporate human rights and environmental harms and to ensure proper remedy for those affected by such harms. [HL483]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The Government is clear on the need to prevent environmental harms and human and labour rights abuses in both private and public sector supply chains and will take an evidence-based

approach as we assess the best ways to achieve this. The Department for Business and Trade regularly engages with stakeholders in business and civil society on these issues, as do other Government departments. We will consult with stakeholders as we consider any further action.

Business: Human Rights

*Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to convene a cross-department unit on business and human rights. [HL486]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The Government does not currently have plans to convene a cross-departmental unit on business and human rights. The Department for Business and Trade works closely with teams in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the Home Office and other departments to prevent and address corporate human rights abuses, including through the Modern Slavery Act, supporting the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises, and through operating the UK National Contact Point for Responsible Business Conduct.

Business: Sustainable Development

*Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the EU's Directive on corporate sustainability due diligence, and whether they plan to introduce a comparable law in the UK. [HL484]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The Government has noted the EU's adoption of the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive and has been in regular contact with the European Commission on this issue through the Trade Specialised Committee on Level Playing Field. The Directive will apply to UK companies with a turnover generated in the EU of more than €450 million.

The Government will assess the best ways to prevent environmental harms, modern slavery and human and labour rights abuses in both private and public sector supply chains including effective due diligence rules.

Caffeine: Children

*Asked by **Baroness Boycott***

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the timeline for banning the sale of high caffeine energy drinks to children under 16. [HL381]

*Asked by **Baroness Boycott***

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to the lack of verifiable identification such as driving licences for 16-year-olds with regards to the introduction of a ban on the sale of

high caffeine energy drinks to children under 16. [HL382]

Baroness Merron: As set out in the King's Speech, we plan to bring forward the necessary secondary legislation to deliver on our commitment to end the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks to under 16-year-olds in the first parliamentary session. We are developing plans which will take into account enforcement and other issues, and will set these out in a consultation in due course.

Canadian Solar

*Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, in approving Canadian Solar's application for the Mallard Pass solar power project, of the use of Uyghur slave labour within Canadian Solar's supply chains. [HL108]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The reasons for the Secretary of State's planning decision on the Mallard Pass project are set out in the Decision Letter. Ethical procurement is considered at paragraphs 4.104-109.

The consent requires the applicant to submit a list of suppliers to be made available to the local planning authorities, and to upload their modern slavery and human trafficking statement annually to the Home Office Register to enable monitoring [paragraph 4.105].

Carer's Allowance

*Asked by **Lord Bradley***

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to review (1) the level of the Carer's Allowance, and (2) the eligibility threshold for the Carer's Allowance. [HL206]

Baroness Sherlock: This Government recognises the challenges unpaid carers are facing and is determined to provide them with the help and support they need and deserve. It is looking closely at how the benefit system currently does this, notably through Universal Credit and Carer's Allowance.

With respect to benefit levels, the Secretary of State has a statutory obligation to review the rates of State pensions and benefits each year. In the case of Carer's Allowance, the relevant statute provides that it must rise at least in line with the increase in prices over the preceding year. The review to set rates for 2025/26 will take place in the autumn.

Other support is available through the benefit system. Full-time unpaid carers on low incomes may also be eligible for means tested support, such as Universal Credit and Pension Credit. These benefits can be paid to carers at a higher rate than those without caring responsibilities through the carer element and the additional amount for carers respectively. Currently, the Universal Credit carer element is £198.31 per monthly assessment period. The

additional amount for carers in Pension Credit is £45.60 a week.

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Southwark

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to revise (1) the limits on earnings and the number of hours that can be worked, and (2) the rate at which earnings above those limits can be reclaimed, for those in receipt of Carer's Allowance. [HL464]

Baroness Sherlock: The Government recognises the challenges unpaid carers are facing and is determined to provide them with the help and support they need and deserve. It is looking closely at how the benefit system currently does this.

Universal Credit provides support to carers on low incomes, whether they are in paid employment or not. Carer's Allowance, by contrast, is available to all unpaid carers, provided they are not in 'gainful employment'. This is currently defined as having earnings not exceeding £151 a week net of allowable expenses. This level is reviewed annually alongside the Secretary of State's statutory review of State pension and benefit rates. Many Carer's Allowance recipients are in households also receiving Universal Credit, where the structure of tapers and work allowances (where applicable) effectively takes precedence over 'gainful employment' test in Carer's Allowance.

With respect to overpayments of Carer's Allowance due to the interaction with earnings, the Government is moving quickly to understand exactly what has gone wrong so that it can set out its plan to put things right.

Carer's Allowance: Overpayments

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Southwark

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report, Carer's Allowance Overpayments, published by Carer's UK on 26 July. [HL463]

Baroness Sherlock: The Government recognises the invaluable service provided by the millions of unpaid carers across the country who provide care and continuity of support for vulnerable people every day. It recognises the challenges they face and is determined to provide them with the support they deserve.

The Government welcomes the report published by Carers UK, and is considering its findings. Ministers were pleased to meet with the organisation, and with carers, to discuss the issues raised shortly after publication of the report.

More broadly, in respect of overpayments of Carer's Allowance, the Government is moving quickly to understand exactly what has gone wrong so that it can set out its plan to put things right.

Cayman Islands: Nature Conservation

Asked by Lord Randall of Uxbridge

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the changes proposed by the Cayman Islands government to the National Conservation Law and their implications for standards of governance in the territory; and what discussions they have had with the Cayman Islands government on these issues. [HL524]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK is committed to strengthening our partnership with the Overseas Territories (OTs) to protect and sustainably manage our unique and globally significant environments. However, responsibility for environment and climate change policy is a devolved matter. We understand the Cayman Islands Government's draft National Conservation Bill is not yet finalised but will be published for public consultation before it is debated in Parliament.

Children in Care: Minority Groups

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the relative number of children being taken into care from families from different minoritised communities; and what plans they have to provide support to families and social services to enable children to remain with their families, particularly among communities where levels are high. [HL199]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The department's intention is to deliver better life chances for all, including by improving services for the most vulnerable children and families. The 2023 data on children looked after showed that children from black and mixed ethnic groups are more likely to become looked after compared to the general 0-17 population (making up 7% and 10% of the looked after population respectively, compared to 6% and 7% of the general child population).

	<i>Children Looked After (2023)</i>	<i>0-17 year old population (2021 census)</i>
Other Ethnic Group	5%	3%
Black or Black British	7%	6%
Asian or Asian British	5%	12%
Mixed	10%	7%
White	71%	73%
Unknown	1%	

The department knows that there is a strong evidence base for early intervention to support families before they reach crisis point. The department is currently testing the impact of multi-disciplinary targeted support provided at the earliest opportunity to help families overcome

challenges sooner, so that they can stay together and thrive.

The department is also committed to supporting more children from all backgrounds to remain with family through kinship care and are considering how best to support both kinship carers and the children in their care.

The Family Network Pilot is currently testing the impact of providing flexible funding for extended family networks through Family Network Support Packages (FNSP). The pilot will look at how FNSPs can unlock barriers and enable family networks to play a more active role in providing loving, stable homes for children through financial and other practical means. The pilot aims to help keep families together and children out of care, where this is in the best interests of the child. The pilot launched in four local authority areas, Brighton and Hove, Gateshead, Sunderland and Telford and Wrekin, and recently launched in a further three areas, Hammersmith and Fulham, Hartlepool and Staffordshire. The pilot will end in March 2025.

Children: Poverty

Asked by Lord Touhig

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to reduce stress for children in poverty in schools and other educational settings in order to improve their mental health outcomes, and how they will assess the effectiveness of interventions in this area. [HL373]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: Child poverty has gone up by 700,000 since 2010, with over four million children now growing up in a low-income family. This not only harms children's lives now, but it also damages their future prospects and holds back the economic potential of the country.

My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister announced the appointment of my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education to be the joint leads of a new ministerial taskforce to begin work on a child poverty strategy. The government is committed to delivering an ambitious strategy to reduce child poverty, to tackle the root causes and give every child the best start at life.

This government is committed to improving mental health support for all children and young people. This is critical to breaking down barriers to opportunity and learning. The right support should be available to every young person that needs it, which is why the government will provide access to specialist mental health professionals in every school.

The government will also be putting in place new Young Futures hubs, including access to mental health support workers, and will recruit an additional 8,500 new mental health staff to speed-up access to treatment for children and adults.

China: Foreign Relations

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what security concerns they raised during the meeting between the Foreign Secretary and the Foreign Minister of China at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers meeting held in Vientiane on 26 July, and whether they discussed the use of Chinese surveillance technology in the UK, the presence of Chinese intelligence agents in the Palace of Westminster, the infiltration by China of research programmes in British Universities, and China's military threats against Taiwan during this meeting. [HL403]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: On 26 July, the Foreign Secretary met China's Director of Foreign Affairs Commission Office and Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers meeting in Vientiane, Laos. The Foreign Secretary outlined this government's vision for a long-term, consistent and strategic approach to UK-China relations. He set out that the government would cooperate where we can, compete where needed and challenge where we must. The Foreign Secretary made clear the UK would always stand firm in prioritising our national security and set out the government's position on Taiwan.

China: Human Rights

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what human rights concerns they raised during the meeting between the Foreign Secretary and the Foreign Minister of China at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers meeting held in Vientiane on 26 July, and whether they raised the case of Jimmy Lai and the imprisonment of pro-democracy campaigners in Hong Kong, and the reported genocide of Uyghur Muslims in China during this meeting. [HL402]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: On 26 July, the Foreign Secretary met China's Director of Foreign Affairs Commission Office and Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers meeting in Vientiane, Laos. The Foreign Secretary outlined this government's vision for a long-term, consistent and strategic approach to UK-China relations. He set out that the government would cooperate where we can, compete where needed and challenge where we must. The Foreign Secretary made clear this government will stand firm in its support for upholding human rights, underlined the importance of Hong Kong to the UK and raised the case of British national Jimmy Lai.

China: National Security

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they consider the government of China a strategic (1) threat, or (2) challenge, to the UK. [HL510]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: This Government will bring a consistent, long-term and strategic approach to managing the UK's relations with China, driven by the national interest. We will co-operate where we can, including on global net zero, health and trade; compete where we have different interests; and challenge where we must, to protect our national security and values. We will improve the UK's capability to understand and respond to the challenges and opportunities China poses through an audit of the UK's relationship with China as a bilateral and global actor.

China: Uyghurs

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their response to the House of Commons Resolution passed in April 2021 that Uyghurs and other ethnic and religious minorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region are suffering Crimes Against Humanity and Genocide. [HL379]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: It is the long-standing policy of the British Government that any judgment as to whether crimes against humanity or genocide has occurred is a matter for a competent national or international court, rather than for governments or non-judicial bodies. It should be decided after consideration of all the evidence available in the context of a credible judicial process. Regardless of any court's decision, this Government will stand firm on human rights, including China's repression of Uyghurs and others in Xinjiang.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Long Covid: Research

Asked by Baroness Scott of Needham Market

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Statement by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on 12 May 2022 (HCWS23), what plans are in plans to publish the cross-Government delivery plan for myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome. [HL452]

Asked by Baroness Scott of Needham Market

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Statement by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on 12 May 2022 (HCWS23), whether the cross-Government delivery plan for myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME)/chronic fatigue syndrome will include provision for hospital treatment and full consideration of how to safely prevent malnutrition in very severe ME. [HL453]

Asked by Baroness Scott of Needham Market

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the percentage of the research budget allocated for myalgic encephalomyelitis and Long Covid, and whether they plan to increase this amount. [HL454]

Baroness Merron: A consultation was run in 2023 on the interim delivery plan for myalgic encephalomyelitis, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS). In the World ME Day Westminster Hall debate in May 2024, the current Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention pushed for the publication of a response to the consultation. It is now a priority for the Department, and it is our intention to publish a response in the coming months. The consultation responses, along with continued close engagement with stakeholders, will inform the development of the *Final Delivery Plan*, which we aim to publish in the winter of 2024/25.

No specific assessment has been made of the proportion of the research budget allocated for ME/CFS or long COVID. Over the last five years, the Department, through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), has allocated £6.64 million of funding to support 10 research projects, including the £3.2 million DecodeME study, co-funded with the Medical Research Council. Over the same period, the NIHR and UK Research and Innovation have awarded over £50 million for long COVID research. The NIHR remains committed to funding high-quality research to better understand the causes and health impacts of ME/CFS and long COVID, and to identify and evaluate new treatments and interventions.

It is not usual practice for the NIHR to ring-fence funds for particular topics or conditions. The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including ME/CFS and long COVID. These applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money, and scientific quality.

Civil Proceedings: Finance

Asked by Lord Sandhurst

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to by reintroduce the Litigation Funding Agreements (Enforceability) Bill, originally introduced in the last Parliament, and if not, what steps they plan to take to mitigate the impact on third party litigation funding of the judgment in *R (on the application of PACCAR Inc and others) v Competition Tribunal and others*, [2023] UKSC 28. [HL449]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: The Government recognises the critical role third-party litigation funding plays in ensuring access to justice.

Following the PACCAR judgment, concerns have been raised about the need for greater regulation of Litigation Funding Agreements, or greater safeguards for claimants.

The Government is keen to ensure access to justice in large-scale and expensive cases, whilst also setting up adequate safeguards to protect claimants from unfair terms.

The Civil Justice Council is considering these questions and others in its review of third-party litigation funding, and hopes to report in summer 2025. The Government will take a more comprehensive view of any legislation to address issues in the round once that review is concluded.

Civil Servants: Clothing

Asked by *Baroness Jenkin of Kennington*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their policy on civil servants wearing fetish clothing in the workplace. [HL346]

Baroness Twycross: Within the Civil Service, workplace dress code is delegated to individual departments to decide as part of their terms and conditions of service.

Civil Servants are required to dress appropriately for work and this would not include fetish clothing.

Civil Servants: Equality

Asked by *Baroness Jenkin of Kennington*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Statement by the then Minister without Portfolio in the Cabinet Office on 14 May (HCWS464), whether they will place in the Library of the House a list of every diversity network recognised (1) across government, and (2) within individual departments, broken down by department. [HL427]

Baroness Twycross: There are no current plans to place a list of every diversity network recognised (1) across government, and (2) within individual departments, broken down by department in the Library of the House.

Civil Servants: Sexuality

Asked by *Baroness Jenkin of Kennington*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the motion proposed at the PCS Union's annual conference 2023 requesting the establishment of a staff support network for Bondage, Domination, Sadism, and Masochism; and what representations, if any, they have received from PCS Union in this regard. [HL426]

Baroness Twycross: The PCS union has not made any representations to the Cabinet Office with regard to this matter and therefore we have not made any assessment of the motion.

Civil Service: Equality

Asked by *Lord Jackson of Peterborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government how much network time, in terms of working hours and full-time equivalent, is given to the Civil Service LGBT+ Network. [HL345]

Baroness Twycross: Allocation of working time spent on cross-government staff networks is an agreement between the staff network volunteers and their departments as employers.

The majority of staff time spent on the Civil Service LGBT+ Network is voluntary and unpaid.

Civil Service: Expenditure

Asked by *Baroness Neville-Rolfe*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Statement by the Baroness Neville-Rolfe on 14 May (HLWS462), whether they intend to (1) continue with the ministerial spending controls and presumption against external equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) spending, (2) centralise and consolidate all EDI guidance across the Civil Service; and what is their policy on restricting diversity network time during core working hours in the Civil Service. [HL517]

Baroness Twycross: The controls outlined in the Civil Service Equality Diversity and Inclusion Expenditure Guidance which was published on 14 May, including those relating to ministerial controls, a presumption against external equality, diversity and inclusion expenditure and centralisation of equality, diversity and inclusion guidance remain in place.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Staff Network time allocation is agreed between networks and departments as the employer. The majority of staff time spent on diversity staff networks is voluntary and unpaid.

Climate Change

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to remarks by the Secretary of State for the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero on 18 July that "the biggest threat to nature and food security ... is the climate crisis" (HC Deb col 189), what plans they have to appoint a Climate Envoy. [HL270]

Lord Collins of Highbury: We cannot address the urgency of the climate and nature crisis without co-ordinated global action. Failure to act would cause environmental devastation, fuelling displacement, conflict and famine. We are committed to reinvigorating the UK's international leadership on climate and nature, working with our international partners. We will set out further details of our approach in due course.

Climate Change: Cayman Islands

Asked by *Lord Randall of Uxbridge*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of proposed changes by the Cayman Islands government to the National Conservation Law on their ability to minimise the effects of climate change in the territory. [HL525]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK is committed to strengthening our partnership with the Overseas Territories to protect and sustainably manage our unique and globally significant environments. However, responsibility for environment and climate change policy is a devolved matter. We understand the Cayman Islands Government's draft National Conservation Bill is not yet finalised but will be published for public consultation before it is debated in Parliament.

Climate Change: Fires

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the increase in the risk of wildfires as a result of climate change, what plans they have to ensure the safety of firefighters and communities in light of this increased risk, and whether they plan to introduce a national wildfire plan. [HL202]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Preparing for the future not only means tackling the climate emergencies, but also adapting to the changes they will bring to our environment.

The Home Office works closely with other departments including the Met Office, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and stakeholders including National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the England and Wales Wildfire Forum (EWWF) to understand and mitigate the risk of wildfire as set out in the Wildfire Framework for England. The framework can be found at [Wildfire Framework for England | Fire England](#).

In 24/25, the Home Office is funding a new National Resilience Wildfire Advisor to assess what additional wildfire national capabilities might be needed to increase resilience to the wildfire risk and to ensure coordination of approaches across the sector.

Coastal Erosion

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of England's coastal flood defences. [HL431]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Environment Agency applies the same methodology for condition assessment and allocation of maintenance funding for all flood assets and does not differentiate between coastal and other assets.

At the last Spending Review in 2021 the government increased funding for maintenance of flood defences by £22 million per year. In 2023/24, £25 million was reallocated from the capital programme to fund maintenance, meaning that the total allocation for last year was over £220 million.

The Environment Agency visually inspects its assets to assess their condition. The results inform their expected

performance when operated either on a daily basis or during a flood event. Our target based on available funding for 2024/25 is for 94.5% of high consequence assets to meet the target condition.

The Environment Agency plans to publish an updated national flood risk assessment in December 2024.

Compulsorily Detained Psychiatric Patients: Death

Asked by Lord Bradley

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to change the way that deaths of patients detained in secure settings under the Mental Health Act 1983 are investigated. [HL24]

Baroness Merron: There are currently no such plans at this time to change the way that deaths of patients detained in secure settings under the Mental Health Act 1983 are investigated.

The Mental Health Bill will deliver our manifesto commitment to modernise the Mental Health Act 1983. It will give patients greater choice, autonomy, enhanced rights and support, and ensure everyone is treated with dignity and respect throughout treatment. The Bill will make the Act fit for the 21st century, redressing the balance of power from the system to the patient and ensuring people with the most severe mental health conditions get better, more personalised, care.

The Patient Safety Incident Response Framework sets out the NHS's approach to developing and maintaining effective systems and processes for responding to patient safety incidents for the purpose of learning and improving patient safety. The Framework became a requirement in the NHS standard contract from April 2024. Under this framework a locally-led patient safety incident investigation is required for deaths of patients detained under the Mental Health Act (1983) or where the Mental Capacity Act (2005) applies, where there is reason to think that the death may be linked to problems in care (i.e., the incident meets the "learning from deaths" criteria, the investigation explores decisions or actions as they relate to the safety event).

In addition, all deaths among people detained under the Mental Health Act 1983 are reported to the Care Quality Commission and referred to the Coroners Office.

Conditions of Employment: Legal Costs

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address concerns from businesses about the potential increase in costs and legal disputes as a result of their proposed employment law reforms. [HL275]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: Through the Plan to Make Work Pay we will deliver a new deal for working people. A number of these measures already have strong support from businesses, and we will consult with them as

we put these plans into practice to ensure they are as effective as possible. We also expect that stronger employment practices could aid recruitment and retention, and ultimately save business costs.

Construction: Skilled Workers

Asked by Lord Hardie

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to ensure that there are adequate skilled employees in all construction trades necessary for infrastructure and housebuilding projects in the (1) short, (2) medium, and (3) long, term. [HL258]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Government recognises that it is critical for industry to access a labour market with the right skills and training. To build 1.5 million homes in the next parliament we will support the construction workforce to deliver the additional capacity that is needed.

We will work across government and with industry to make sure there is the right eco-system for training and skills to deliver sufficient high-quality training opportunities to build a diverse workforce that is fit for the future.

Consumer Goods: Northern Ireland

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they had with the European Union on its General Product Safety Regulation and its implementation in Northern Ireland. [HL388]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The Government maintains a dialogue with the EU on matters of mutual interest. The updated General Product Safety Regulation largely formalises the reality of how businesses are already operating in the UK and the measures are therefore likely to have limited impact. Where businesses need to make changes, we expect that they will be adapting anyway in order to continue trading with the EU. We are providing more guidance in this area, will keep this under review and continue to engage businesses directly to ensure we are supporting them to trade freely across the UK.

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the likely effect of the EU's General Product Safety Regulation on trade between businesses in Great Britain and customers in Northern Ireland. [HL389]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The updated General Product Safety Regulation (GPSR) largely formalises the reality of how businesses are already operating in the UK and the measures are therefore likely to have limited impact in practice. Where businesses need to make changes, we expect that they will be adapting anyway to

be compliant with the new Regulation to continue trading with the EU. However, we are providing more guidance in this area, will keep this under review and continue to engage businesses directly to ensure we are supporting them to trade freely across the whole of the UK.

Contactless Payments

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the increasing popularity of the use of digital wallets, what steps they are taking to ensure the (1) security, and (2) privacy, of consumers using digital wallets for contactless payments. [HL372]

Lord Livermore: The government recognises the importance of ensuring payment methods, including digital wallets, offer a high level of security and privacy to consumers.

Between them, the independent Payment Systems Regulator and Financial Conduct Authority are responsible for ensuring payments systems and financial markets are working well for consumers.

These regulators have jointly published a Call for Information to better understand the impacts of the increasing popularity of digital wallets on consumers and businesses, including in relation to security and privacy. This Call for Information is open for responses until 13 September.

Copper: Supply Chains

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to bring copper within the remit of the UK Critical Minerals Strategy; and what steps they intend to take to secure the supply of copper in the UK. [HL162]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: Minerals are classed as 'critical' if they are both vitally important to the economy and experiencing major risks to their security of supply. We recognise the importance of copper in the energy transition and continue to assess the UK's needs for the evolving electrical grid and associated technologies.

Customs and Import Controls

Asked by Baroness Neville-Rolfe

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have for (1) the Border Target Operating Model, and (2) the Single Trade Window. [HL515]

Baroness Twycross: The Government is working on reducing frictions at the border as part of the reset of our relationship with the European Union. We look forward to discussing with EU partners, and with UK and EU industry, how best to achieve this.

Work is ongoing on the Border Target Operating Model and the Single Trade Window.

Dance and Music: Education

Asked by *Baroness Fraser of Craigmaddie*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the current status of the Music and Dance Scheme for school pupils and the Dance and Drama Awards for students. [HL126]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The Music and Dance Scheme and the Dance and Drama Awards are current programmes in operation to provide support for exceptionally talented children and young people to access specialist education and training in music, dance and drama.

Asked by *Lord Boateng*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the role of (1) music, and (2) dance, in the school curriculum. [HL166]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: Music and dance are both important parts of a rich and broad school curriculum, underpinned by the existing national curriculum programmes of study for music from age 5 to 14 and for physical education (PE) from age 5 to 16, which incorporates dance.

The government recently announced the independent expert-led Curriculum and Assessment Review. This will seek to deliver a broader curriculum, so that children and young people do not miss out on subjects such as music, the arts, sport and drama, as well as vocational subjects.

The Review will ensure that the new curriculum provides breadth of opportunity for every child and young person, including supporting their cultural development and allowing them to develop their creativity.

The government will also take more immediate action by launching a National Music Education Network to help parents, teachers and children to find courses and classes. In addition, the department will enable children to be more active by protecting time for PE. We will also support children to study a creative or vocational subject until they are 16 and ensure accountability measures reflect this.

Darfur: Armed Conflict

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of fatalities and people displaced in the conflict in Darfur, and what part they are playing in ensuring that those responsible are brought to justice. [HL400]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The limited access environment and ongoing internet and telecommunication disruptions in Sudan means that reporting on the ground is extremely restricted, so there is no accurate estimate of the number of people killed or injured. Recent estimates suggest that there are 5.2 million people internally displaced in Darfur. We continue to take a leading role in supporting processes for justice and accountability in

Sudan. The Human Rights Council adopted the UK-led 'Sudan Core Group' resolution in October 2023, mandating the creation of a Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), which will ensure that credible allegations of human rights violations and abuses, including acts of conflict-related sexual violence by all sides, will be investigated impartially in order to support future accountability efforts.

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the situation in Darfur, particularly with regard to the findings of the Darfur Inquiry published in April 2023 and subsequent concerns raised, including by the UN Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, about the serious risk of genocide there. [HL475]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK condemns in the strongest terms the escalating violence across Sudan, particularly in Darfur. We continue to call for those responsible to be held to account. On 13 June, the UNSC adopted a UK-led resolution demanding a halt to the Rapid Support Forces' siege of El Fasher and calling on the warring parties to immediately end hostilities and to allow safe and unimpeded humanitarian access. The UK continues to support the ICC Prosecutor's continuing investigation into the allegations of atrocity crimes committed in Darfur since 1 July 2002, including consideration of the atrocities committed in the ongoing conflict.

Deep Sea Mining: Licensing

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to continue support for a moratorium on commercial deep sea mining, and their opposition to the issuance of any exploration licences; and, if so, what steps they plan to take to support these goals. [HL16]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK recognises the impacts of deep sea mining are not fully understood and will continue to support a moratorium on the granting of mining licences by the ISA until sufficient scientific evidence is available to assess the potential impact of deep-sea mining activities on marine ecosystems, and strong, enforceable environmental regulations, standards and guidelines are adopted by the ISA. The UK does not oppose the granting of exploration licences by the ISA and the UK government is the sponsor of two existing licences for exploration in the Eastern Pacific.

Dental Services

Asked by *Lord Shipley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to introduce a statutory right of patients to be registered as an NHS patient of a dentist. [HL316]

Baroness Merron: We have no immediate plans to introduce a statutory right for patients to be registered as a National Health Service patient. The Government will tackle the immediate crisis with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments, and to recruit new dentists to the areas that need them most.

Asked by Baroness Benjamin

To ask His Majesty's Government how many NHS practices either terminated or did not renew their contract to provide NHS dental services in each of the past three years; what was the average size and annual income of these practices during the term of contract; and how that compares with the average income for NHS dental services for practices of a comparable size. [HL324]

Baroness Merron: In the last three financial years, the number of dental contracts terminated by contractors, based on Primary Care Activity Report data held by the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA), are as follows:

- 80 in 2021/22;
- 107 in 2022/23; and
- 12 in 2023/24.

The monthly data for all contracts is published by the NHSBSA, and is available on their website, in an online only format. The dataset also shows the commissioned activity and contractual payments for all National Health Service dental services provided for each financial year, at a national, commissioner, and contract level.

Dental Services: Fees and Charges

Asked by Baroness Benjamin

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to introduce to a 'fee per item' system in NHS dental practices. [HL322]

Baroness Merron: To rebuild dentistry in the long term, the Government intends to reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of National Health Service dentists. As part of this, we will continue to consider how a full range of payment models can best support the delivery of dental care to patients.

Dental Services: Standards

Asked by Lord Shipley

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the role of the Care Quality Commission when inspecting dental businesses; and whether they have any plans to ask them also to consider the availability of NHS appointments when carrying out dental inspections. [HL317]

Baroness Merron: The Care Quality Commission (CQC) regulates all health and social care services including dental services in England. CQC carries out assessments of primary dental services to determine if they are compliant with regulations. CQC inspects 10% of dental services each year, as they are considered to pose a lower risk to patient safety than other regulated sectors, though they can, and do, inspect more frequently if concerns are raised. Instead of a single rating, CQC displays ticks and crosses against each of their five key questions to show if any enforcement or improvement actions are required. This results in a 'regulations met' or 'regulations not met' judgement. The availability of NHS dental appointments is not a condition of registration, nor is it a regulated activity, and so is not something that would be inspected. CQC does not currently look at wider areas, such as access to dental services, equity of access, efficiency of care provision, or the effectiveness of dental services. The ongoing review of the CQC by Penny Dash – and the broader regulatory landscape – will consider wider issues of how to assess, and improve, access to care, innovation in care delivery and use of resources – for all health and care services.

Integrated Care Boards took control of commissioning NHS dental activity in April 2023.

Activity in NHS dentistry is measured by the number of Units of Dental Activity (UDAs) commissioned and delivered and by the number of courses of treatment delivered. The number of appointments delivered are not used as a measurement of dental activity. Data on the number of UDAs commissioned and delivered is published each month on the NHS Business Services Authority Open Data Portal in an online format only.

Dentistry: Pay

Asked by Baroness Benjamin

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of any inequality in pay between NHS dental practices (1) with, and (2) without, high 'unit of dental activity' values. [HL323]

Baroness Merron: No assessment has been made. As dental practices are private businesses, it falls to them to set employee pay and conditions.

Asked by Baroness Benjamin

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to increase pay for qualified dental nurses. [HL325]

Baroness Merron: As dental practices are private businesses, it falls to them to set employee pay and conditions. Dental care in England could not function without the vital contribution of its dental care professionals, including dental nurses. Department officials are exploring how we can better support the whole dental team, including dental nurses, when working in National Health Service dentistry.

Department for Work and Pensions: Equality

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government how many staff in the Department for Work and Pensions are permitted to undertake diversity-related network time during core working hours; and what is the percentage of overall working time they are permitted to spend on such network activity. [HL344]

Baroness Sherlock: Currently 7 National Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Networks are given pro rata time allocation to support respective network activity.

Time allocation

The National EDI Network Co-Chairs have a 25%-weekly time allocation and the Strand Lead/Board Member/Committee roles have a weekly 10%-time allocation. Each Network can recruit up to 10 Committee members (please note that not all Networks have up to 10 Committee members).

7 National EDI Networks with allocated time equates to:

1 x 25% time allocation 37-hour week contract equates to 9.25 hours for each co-chair or 18.5 hours for both per week or 962 hours year for each of them

1x10% time allocation 37-hour week contract equates to 3.7 per committee member, or for each committee member 10 x 10 % equates to 37 hours a week or 1,924 hours annually for all members of a Committee.

Across all 7 Networks:

- 70* people support network activity at 10% with 90% of their time focused on their contracted job role.
- 14 people spend 25% of their time on network activity, with 75% of their time focused on their contracted job role.

*note that not all Committee roles are filled.

Cross Civil Service Networks

Alongside DWP EDI Networks there a number of cross Civil Service Networks. DWP colleagues who take up the role of Co-Chair for a recognised cross government EDI Network can receive 5% time allocation to carry out their duties. Colleagues are welcome to be a member of any Staff Network but are only able to receive time allocation for one role on an EDI Network at any time.

The 2 chairs of the Civil Service LBGT+ Network both sit in DWP. They have 37-hour week contracts and 5% of this equates to 1.85 hours each a week – or 96.2 hours a year for each them.

Departmental Responsibilities

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking, if any, to ensure that there is ministerial leadership dedicated to women, peace and security. [HL342]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK remains committed to advancing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

The Rt Hon Anneliese Dodds was appointed on 8 July 2024 as Minister of State for Development at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and will assume responsibility for WPS. She is also Minister for Women and Equalities at the Department for Education. The Minister will attend Cabinet.

The Ministry of Defence lead on WPS will be the Minister for the Armed Forces, Luke Pollard, who will be supported by the Minister for the House of Lords, Lord Coaker.

Devolution: Wales

Asked by Baroness Smith of Llanfaes

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent on 26 July (HL190), what specific plans they have to deliver enhanced protection for Welsh devolution. [HL458]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The Government is fully committed to strengthening the Sewel Convention by setting out a new memorandum of understanding outlining how the nations will work together for the common good. We will work closely with the devolved governments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, to reach consensus on matters regarding legislation in service of people across the United Kingdom.

Asked by Baroness Smith of Llanfaes

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent on 26 July (HL190), what specific plans they have to deliver strengthened intergovernmental working. [HL459]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The UK Government is resetting its relationship with the devolved governments to strengthen the UK through greater respect. This stronger intergovernmental working will be spearheaded by a new Council of the Nations and Regions, bringing together the Prime Minister, the First Ministers of Wales and Scotland, the First and deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland and the Mayors of Combined Authorities in England, to enable greater collaboration on shared challenges and opportunities.

Asked by Baroness Smith of Llanfaes

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent on 26 July (HL190), what specific plans they have to deliver enhanced powers for the Senedd and Welsh Government. [HL461]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: As set out in our manifesto, the Government is committed to devolving employment support funding to the Welsh Government,

to working with the Welsh Government to consider the devolution of youth justice, and to conducting a strategic review of probation governance, which will include considering the benefits of devolved models.

Drugs: Packaging

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Chelmsford

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to encourage sustainable packaging for all medication distributed by the NHS, including sustainable alternatives to plastic blister packs for pills. [HL251]

Baroness Merron: NHS England is working collaboratively with a range of partners including the Department, the pharmaceutical industry, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), and others to support achievement of net zero ambitions for the National Health Service, as summarised in the *Delivering a net zero NHS* report published in October 2020. Action on packaging, alongside a wide range of other activities, will support achievement of these ambitions, often also improving efficiency and reducing cost.

NHS England is supporting specific initiatives such as *Circularity in Primary Pharmaceutical Packaging*, a not-for-profit collaborative which aims, amongst other ambitions, to improve the circularity of blister packs. The MHRA provides regulatory and scientific advice to companies improving the environmental sustainability of their products, and can assist with changes to packaging materials.

Patient safety will always be our primary objective, with increased environmental sustainability in pharmaceutical packaging playing an important part in mitigating the long-term impacts of climate change on our patients.

Drugs: Shortages

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to address supply chain challenges with the shortages of some medicines in the UK, including for treatment of ADHD, asthma and psychosis; and what are the reasons for the shortages in such medicines. [HL305]

Baroness Merron: Medicine supply chains are complex, global, and highly regulated, and there are a number of reasons why supply can be disrupted, many of which are outside of the Government's control. These include manufacturing difficulties, access to raw materials, sudden demand spikes or distribution issues, and regulatory issues. There are approximately 14,000 licensed medicines, and the overwhelming majority are in good supply.

The Department has been working hard with industry to help resolve the supply issues with some attention deficit

hyperactivity disorder medicines, which are affecting the United Kingdom and other countries around the world, due to increased demand and manufacturing site capacity constraints. As a result of this intensive work, some issues have been resolved. All strengths of atomoxetine capsules and guanfacine prolonged-release tablets are now available. However, medicine supply issues remain for some strengths of lisdexamfetamine and methylphenidate.

We are engaging with all suppliers of methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets and lisdexamfetamine capsules to assess the challenges faced, and their actions to address them. We have asked suppliers to secure additional stocks, expedite deliveries where possible, and review plans to further build capacity to support continued growth in demand for the short and long-term.

Supply of salbutamol nebulas, used to treat asthma, has now improved, although there may still be some short intermittent interruptions in supply experienced. We are also aware of issues with ipratropium nebulas due to constrained supply from a manufacturing plant. We are working with NHS England to manage the supply issues and mitigate risks to patients. Communications advise all pharmacy teams to work with prescribers to use unlicensed imports, where licensed supplies are unavailable, or alternative treatments that are available.

Supply issues affecting some strengths of quetiapine tablets, used in the treatment of schizophrenia and bipolar disorders, have been caused by increased demand on some companies as other companies exited the market, and by active pharmaceutical ingredient constraints. Supplies of other strengths of quetiapine are being closely monitored. Serious Shortage Protocols have been issued to enable pharmacists to supply patients alternative strength tablets if those prescribed are not available. We are also aware of intermittent disruptions in the supply of olanzapine (Zypadhera) prolonged-release suspension for injections due to a global manufacturing capacity constraint. NHS England is actively working with the supplier to address these manufacturing issues as quickly as possible, to ensure that UK patients have access to this medication. Comprehensive guidance will be issued to healthcare professionals in the coming days.

Economic Growth

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking in collaboration with the Office for Budget Responsibility to ensure that economic growth forecasts are (1) realistic, and (2) aligned with the fiscal targets that have been set. [HL319]

Lord Livermore: The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) produces its forecasts independently from the Government.

The OBR is required by primary legislation to publish an annual assessment of the accuracy of its forecasts. All previous Forecast Evaluation Reports are available on the OBR's website.

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the recommendations of Lord Myners published in March 2001 in Institutional Investment in the United Kingdom: A Review will form part of their growth and productivity plans. [HL362]

Lord Livermore: Institutional investment is vital for growth, and investment in starts ups and scale ups is an important part of that. The Myners Report contains valuable insights that are still valuable today. However, the pensions market in particular is now significantly different than it was in 2001. The Chancellor has launched a landmark pensions review which will focus on increasing investment, improving saver returns and tackling waste in the pensions system. This is alongside other major initiatives to drive economic growth such as the National Wealth Fund to mobilise private capital and institutional investment.

Economic Situation: Brexit

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to commission a study on the benefits and disbenefits of the UK's departure from the EU, and in particular its impact on the UK economy. [HL113]

Baroness Twycross: The Government is currently focused on looking forwards and resetting the relationship with our European friends. As such the Prime Minister hosted 45 leaders from across Europe to the European Political Community on Thursday 18 July, to enhance cooperation on European security and other shared challenges the continent faces. Publicly available research on the interactions between the UK-EU relationship and the UK economy is widely accessible.

Elections: Proof of Identity

Asked by Lord Rennard

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential cost savings over the next decade from (1) scrapping compulsory photo ID at polling stations, and (2) including forms of ID acceptable for the purposes of collecting a parcel at a Post Office and official polling cards in the list of forms of ID that may be used to confirm eligibility to vote. [HL438]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: As our manifesto made clear, the government will address the inconsistencies in voter identification that prevent legitimate electors from voting, specifically including veterans of HM Armed Forces. We are considering what changes we wish to make in order to achieve this and will bring forward proposals in due course.

The Electoral Commission is the independent electoral regulator and will be reporting on the administration of

the May local elections and the recent General Election. We anticipate publication of their initial findings on voter ID in September, with their full election report expected later in the year. We are keen to see their findings and recommendations.

Asked by Baroness Smith of Llanfaes

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Khan of Burnley on 23 July (HL Deb col 486), when the review of voter ID will be completed; and when they expect to publish their proposals. [HL541]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Electoral Commission is the independent electoral regulator and will be reporting on the administration of the May local elections and the recent General Election. We anticipate publication of their initial findings on voter ID in September and their full election report later in the year.

The Elections Act 2022 included a requirement for the Secretary of State to publish an evaluation of the implementation and impact of the Voter ID policy on the next local and next two UK Parliamentary General Elections. Work has already begun on the evaluation of the July 2024 election, and we will publish in due course.

Both of these reports will inform the wider work officials are doing to thoroughly review voter ID.

Electoral Commission

Asked by Lord Rennard

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to reverse recent changes to the oversight of the Electoral Commission so as to guarantee its independence. [HL440]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: An independent regulator for elections is a cornerstone of a healthy functioning democracy. The Electoral Commission plays an important part in the UK's democratic system, promoting public confidence in the democratic process and ensuring its integrity.

The Government is committed to strengthening our democracy and upholding the integrity of elections and will continue to review what interventions are necessary as part of this commitment.

Electoral Systems

Asked by Lord Rennard

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to revise the franchise for elections, including local and mayoral or police and crime elections, based on permanent residency. [HL528]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Government has no plans to revise the franchise for any elections based on permanent residency.

Electronic Travel Authorisations: EU Countries

Asked by Lord Foster of Bath

To ask His Majesty's Government when the electronic travel authorisation requirement will be introduced for (1) EU, EEA and Swiss citizens, and (2) citizens of the rest of the world. [HL502]

Asked by Lord Foster of Bath

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Statement by Lord Hanson of Flint on 29 July (HLWS29), what discussions they have had with the EU and the government of France about the rollout of the electronic travel authorisation requirement for EU citizens; and what steps they are taking to prepare the public for upcoming changes to travel rules between the UK and the Schengen Area. [HL503]

Asked by Lord Foster of Bath

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with Eurostar and the operators of Eurotunnel and the Port of Dover about the timing of the expected introduction of the EU's entry/exit system and the rollout of the UK's electronic travel authorisation for EU citizens. [HL504]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office has engaged regularly with the European Union, the Government of France, Eurostar, Eurotunnel and the Port of Dover about the introduction of both the European Union (EU) Entry/Exit System (EES) and the UK's Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA).

We currently expect the EU to implement EES in November. Further details will be announced shortly about the remainder of the ETA roll out, including when the scheme will apply to EU nationals. We are working with ports and carriers on coordinated communications to the travelling public.

Employment

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the 'Plan to Make Work Pay' referenced in the King's Speech brief is now a Government policy commitment and, if so, whether this will include strengthened equality impact assessments for public sector bodies. [HL421]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The Government is committed to delivering the Plan to Make Work Pay in full. Ministers are identifying the most appropriate delivery mechanisms for the commitments in the Plan, including an Employment Rights Bill that will be introduced to Parliament within 100 days of taking office. Work is already underway to identify and deliver measures through non-legislative and secondary legislative routes. We are already delivering on our commitments, including changing the remit of the Low

Pay Commission to reflect living standards for the first time.

Employment: Wales

Asked by Baroness Smith of Llanfaes

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Hermer on 23 July (HL Deb col 374) in relation to the devolution of employment support funding to Wales, what is the amount of that funding, and what services will be in scope. [HL318]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The UK Government is resetting its relationship with the Devolved Governments to strengthen the UK through greater respect and collaboration.

We look forward to working closely with the Welsh Government to agree how we devolve employment support and ensure this complements existing provision and planned reforms to Jobcentre Plus services.

Energy Performance Certificates

Asked by Lord Truscott

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to standardise Energy Performance Certificate assessments. [HL396]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) are intended to provide prospective buyers and tenants with a guide to the energy costs of different properties, which is simple to understand and allows comparison between properties.

A standardised methodology is used in the assessments of EPCs. The current methodology can be found [here](#). The software used to calculate EPC ratings in existing properties is the Reduced Data Standard Assessment Procedure (RdSAP).

Not all buildings are used in the same way, so the energy rating uses 'standard occupancy' assumptions which may be different from the way the building is used. We acknowledge that occupant behaviour is an important factor in determining the energy use of buildings. Encouraging occupants to use buildings more efficiently will be important in achieving the net zero target.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

The current methodology [HL396 - Method for calculating the energy performance of buildings_ notice of approval - GOV.UK.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-07-26/HL396>

Energy: Taxation

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the likely impact of their proposed

increase in the windfall tax on the UK's energy security. [HL469]

Lord Livermore: A key outcome of the government's clean energy mission will be greater energy security and independence. The government recognises that oil and gas production in the North Sea will continue to play a role in our energy mix for decades to come. The government will achieve a phased and responsible transition by taking a proportionate approach that ensures the oil and gas sector continues to play a role whilst contributing more towards our clean energy transition.

Erasmus+ Programme

Asked by The Earl of Clancarty

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will negotiate for the UK to rejoin Erasmus+. [HL212]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The department is working to reset the relationship with its European friends to strengthen ties and tackle barriers to trade. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs has said that the department must do more to champion ties between the UK and the EU's people and culture, for example, holidays, family ties, school and student exchanges, the arts and sport.

This is not about renegotiating or relitigating Brexit, but about looking forward and building a strong and constructive relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union.

Ethiopia: Human Rights

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of Ethiopia's adequacy of draft transitional justice policy in safeguarding human rights; and how they are supporting their counterparts in Ethiopia to ensure that justice and accountability for the Tigray War are prioritised as a pathway to the peaceful co-existence of communities. [HL477]

Lord Collins of Highbury: We welcome the approval of the national transitional justice policy by the Ethiopian Government's Council of Ministers. The nationally owned policy and recently published roadmap are encouraging steps towards accountability and justice. The test of the policy will be will in the implementation. The UK has continually called for a credible, inclusive, and survivor-centred approach to transitional justice and for all human rights violations and atrocities in Ethiopia to be investigated and perpetrators to be held to account. Through our Human Rights and Peacebuilding Programme, we support survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in northern Ethiopia to lead the recovery from conflict and advance women's leadership and inclusion in regional and national dialogue, accountability and peacebuilding processes.

Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Sharpe of Epsom on 23 May (HL4639), when the findings of the feasibility study on the possibility of developing prevalence estimates for female genital mutilation and forced marriage will be published. [HL529]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Government has committed to halving violence against women and girls over the next decade. Combatting so-called 'honour'-based abuse (HBA) is very much a part of this work. The Home Office commissioned the University of Birmingham in 2023 to conduct a feasibility study on the possibility of developing prevalence estimates for female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

We are currently considering the findings of the feasibility study and we will confirm our next steps shortly.

Flood Control: Somerset Levels

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the flood defences on the Somerset Levels. [HL432]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Somerset Levels and Moors is a man-made managed drainage system created over many centuries. The area has always been prone to flooding due to its low-lying nature, much of the land sitting below the highest tide levels, and having riverbanks raised above ground level.

Following one of the wettest winters on record, flood risk assets in the Somerset Levels and Moors have, once again, been significantly tested. The Environment Agency (EA) routinely inspects its flood risk assets and undertakes additional post-incident inspections. It reports that 91% of those assets, in this area of interest, are at or above their specified condition.

As with most winters, there are repairs required after high river levels and the associated overflow. The EA is delivering a programme of repairs to reinstate these damaged flood risk assets, bringing them back to target condition.

Food: Contamination

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what measures they are implementing to (1) assess, and (2) mitigate the risk of, any lead contamination in the UK food chain. [HL320]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Lead is a naturally occurring contaminant that is present in soil, water and the atmosphere including as a result of past human

activities and can be present in food. Whilst there is no safe level of lead, maximum levels for certain foods including cereals and meat are in place which are set based on the 'as low as reasonably achievable' (ALARA) principle.

Food business operators are responsible for ensuring that they comply with the established maximum levels. Lead is included in the national monitoring plan for products of animal origin and where noncompliance is found this will be followed up by the relevant local authority for enforcement purposes.

The Food Standards Agency has previously worked with farming groups and industry on best practice advice for farmers on preventing lead poisoning of livestock which includes practical suggestions to reduce animals' intake of soil that may contain lead which is particularly important in those areas of the country with naturally high levels of lead in the soil.

Lead exposure from food is under constant review to ensure that advice and other measures in place remain protective for all consumers.

Under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, each local authority has a duty to inspect its area to identify and require remediation of contaminated land. A risk-based approach is used to define contaminated land, with regulators required to intervene in cases where the contamination is deemed to present an unacceptable risk to human health and the environment.

Additionally, the Water and Abandoned Metal Mines (WAMM) Programme set up in 2011 between Defra, the Environment Agency and the Coal Authority, investigates and tackles the legacy of historic water pollution from abandoned metal mines in England and to develop schemes to clean up rivers polluted by abandoned metal mines.

The WAMM programme shows Defra is taking metal mine pollution seriously and our legal target under the 2021 Environment Act: to halve the length of rivers polluted by target metals from abandoned metal mines by 2038, against a baseline of around 1,500km (approximately 930 miles), is proportionate to the documented evidence of the problem of which we are aware.

Food: Labelling

*Asked by **Baroness McIntosh of Pickering***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to ensure that food labelling provisions do not necessitate that exporters keep two different stocks of products, namely (1) those labelled "Not for EU" for sale in the UK, and (2) all other stock. [HL301]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: This Government is committed to implementing the Windsor Framework in good faith, including commitments on the use of 'Not for EU' labels, as well as taking all steps necessary to protect the UK internal market.

We are committed to working closely with industry on the rollout of 'Not for EU' labelling requirements for goods for sale in NI moving through the Northern Ireland Retail Movement Scheme. We will carefully consider the views of business on this issue, including those in response to the public consultation undertaken by the previous Government on extending that requirement GB-wide.

Food: Sugar

*Asked by **Baroness Boycott***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of voluntary sugar reduction programmes. [HL384]

Baroness Merron: The effectiveness of the United Kingdom's voluntary sugar reduction programme has been assessed. Four reports have been published to date, which are available on the GOV.UK website, reviewing the progress made by businesses in delivering the 20% reduction target set.

The most recent report, detailing progress between 2015 and 2020, showed that reductions had been delivered in all food categories included in the programme. The greatest reductions in sales weighted average sugar levels per 100 grams were made in breakfast cereals, with a 14.9% reduction in sugar, and yogurts and fromage frais, with a 13.5% reduction. Overall, a reduction of only 3.5% in sales weighted average sugar levels per 100 grams has been delivered by the programme. This is lower than the reductions made in individual categories because of substantial increases in sales in products with high sugar levels such as chocolate confectionery. Reductions were also seen in the calorie levels per single serving of some products. Mixed progress was seen across different companies and brands, and the out of home sector generally delivered less than retailers and manufacturers.

Juices and milk-based drinks are included in the voluntary programme, as they are excluded from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy, and were required to deliver 5% and 20% reductions, respectively, in sugar levels per 100 millilitres. The most recent progress data shows that between 2017 and 2020, retailers and manufacturers had not met the 5% target reductions in juices, while out of home blended juices had delivered reductions of approximately 9%. The 20% reduction target has been achieved in three out of six categories for retailer and manufacturer milk-based drinks, with some reduction in calories. In the out of home sector, there has been a 10% sugar reduction in hot and cold drinks, but this category has also seen a 14% increase in calories. Out of home milkshakes have also seen an approximate 12% increase in both sugar and calories.

Football: Finance

Asked by Lord Bassam of Brighton

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their policy on ensuring financial redistribution between the leagues and clubs in English football. [HL481]

Asked by Lord Bassam of Brighton

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the adequacy of current structures to protect the long-term financial sustainability of football clubs in England. [HL482]

Baroness Twycross: Despite the global success of English football, the game has fundamental governance problems that have led to excessive and reckless risk-taking at too many clubs. Ineffective regulation poses very real dangers to our national game, threatening the stability of the football pyramid, impacting fans across the country. The King's Speech set out our plans to address this with legislation to establish an independent football regulator.

We will introduce this legislation as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Foreign Companies: Russia

Asked by Lord Rooker

To ask His Majesty's Government why Russian state-owned companies are being allowed access to UK courts to pursue litigation concerning penalties imposed by Russian courts. [HL233]

Asked by Lord Rooker

To ask His Majesty's Government on what basis UK courts have had jurisdiction to hear cases started in Russian Courts between Russian companies and individuals since the start of the war in Ukraine. [HL236]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: The question of whether courts in England and Wales have jurisdiction to hear claims brought by parties from other countries are determined by the courts in accordance with common law principles and international conventions.

In English and Welsh law, the determination of the appropriate forum (where no international convention applies) to hear a dispute is the one in which the case may most suitably be tried in the interests of all the parties and the ends of justice. Matters which a court will take into account in deciding this would include whether there are any factors connecting the dispute to a particular jurisdiction.

It is open to the opposing party to challenge a claim on the basis that it should have been brought in another jurisdiction.

Foreign Investment in UK: Exemptions

Asked by Baroness Stowell of Beeston

To ask His Majesty's Government when they plan to make regulations under Schedule 7 to the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 to provide limited exemptions for permissible investment funds associated with foreign powers, and other associated regulations. [HL369]

Baroness Twycross: The previous government launched a technical consultation on The Enterprise Act 2002 (Mergers Involving Newspaper Enterprises and Foreign Powers) Regulations 2024, which ran from 9 May to 9 July. We will respond to the consultation in due course.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Cultural Heritage

Asked by Lord Udney-Lister

To ask His Majesty's Government how they plan to manage the colonial aspects of the art and heritage of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and each of its arms' length bodies. [HL471]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The Government has taken no decisions on the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) estate since coming into office less than a month ago, on 5 July.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Public Appointments

Asked by Baroness Helic

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to reappoint (1) the Prime Minister's Special Representative for the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative, and (2) the Foreign Secretary's Special Representative for the Western Balkans. [HL218]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: There are more countries in the world today engaged in conflict than at any time since World War II. Preventing conflict and empowering women and girls is critical to the delivery of the government's missions. We are working to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence, including as vice chair of the International Alliance on PSVI and by supporting thousands of survivors around the world. We also continue to support Western Balkan states to build stable, inclusive and prosperous societies, tackle serious organised crime and overcome ethno-nationalism and conflict.

The new government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office envoys have not yet been announced.

Fractures: Health Services

Asked by **Baroness Altmann**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they remain committed to ensuring universal coverage of the eligible population for Fracture Liaison Services by 2030. [HL287]

Baroness Merron: The Government is committed to expanding access to Fracture Liaison Services. The Department is working closely with NHS England to develop rollout plans to ensure better quality and access to these important preventative services, to fill the current gaps in coverage.

Asked by **Baroness Altmann**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will maintain existing transformation fund commitments to support the rollout of Fracture Liaison Services. [HL288]

Baroness Merron: More than 500,000 fragility fractures occur every year, and up to 40% of fracture patients will suffer another fracture.

This Government and NHS England support the clinical case for services which help to prevent fragility fractures and support the patients who sustain them. That is why this Government is committed to the expansion of Fracture Liaison Services and is working closely with NHS England to develop rollout plans to end the postcode lottery.

Furs: Trade

Asked by **Baroness Redfern**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to publish the results of the consultation on the fur market in Great Britain, which closed on 28 June 2021. [HL227]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Ministers are reviewing policies, which will be announced in due course, including the consultation on the Fur Market in Great Britain. Defra is continuing to build the evidence base on the fur sector. This includes commissioning our expert Animal Welfare Committee on what constitutes responsible sourcing of fur. The report that they produce will support our understanding of the fur industry and help inform our next steps.

We have some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world and this Labour Government will introduce the most ambitious programme for animal welfare in a generation.

Further Education and Schools: Labour Turnover

Asked by **Baroness Wolf of Dulwich**

To ask His Majesty's Government what was the level of staff turnover for (1) teaching, and (2) non-teaching,

staff in (a) 2021–22, and (b) 2022–23, for (i) state-funded primary schools, (ii) state-funded secondary schools, including academies, (iii) sixth-form colleges, and (iv) further education colleges. [HL472]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: Information on the numbers and rates of qualified teachers entering and leaving state-funded schools in England is published in the 'School Workforce in England' statistical publication, available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

In state-funded schools in England, between November 2022 and November 2023, the latest two years of data available, the rate of qualified teachers entering service was 9.1% in nursery and primary schools and 10.0% in secondary schools. This is published as 2023/24 entrants here alongside figures for the previous year, and is attached in the table titled 'HL472_Qualified entrants to teaching_2022-23 and 2023-24'. The data is also available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/518037fe-b4d2-4fd6-baa3-08dcafcfd634>.

The equivalent rate of qualified teachers leaving state-funded schools between November 2022 and November 2023, the latest two years of data available, was 9.5% in nursery and primary schools and 9.5% in secondary schools. This is published as 2022/23 leavers here alongside figures for the previous year, and is attached in the table titled 'HL472_Qualified leavers from teaching_2021-22 and 2022-23'. The data is also available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/27af8b92-fa97-4081-baa4-08dcafcfd634>.

Turnover figures for non-teaching staff in schools are not centrally calculated and would incur disproportionate cost to compile.

Staff turnover figures for both teaching and non-teaching staff in sixth-form colleges and further education colleges are not centrally collected.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Qualified entrants to teaching 2022/23, 2023/24 [HL472_Qualified entrants to teaching_2022-23 and 2023-24.xlsx]

Qualified leavers from teaching 2021/22, 2022/23 [HL472_Qualified leavers from teaching_2021-22 and 2022-23.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-07-29/HL472>

Gambling

Asked by **The Lord Bishop of St Albans**

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the latest statistics released by the Gambling Commission, suggesting that gambling harms may be eight times higher than previously thought. [HL532]

Baroness Twycross: The Gambling Commission's formal [guidance](#) is clear about the inaccuracies of comparing the findings of the recent statistics released in the Gambling Survey for Great Britain with previous surveys. However, we recognise the impact harmful gambling can have on individuals and their families and, as stated in the Government's manifesto, we are committed to strengthening the protections for those at risk. The Gambling Commission's new survey helps to show the wider picture of gambling experiences across Great Britain. The Government will consider these findings alongside the evidence from a wide range of sources to inform decisions on how best to fulfil its manifesto commitment.

Gambling: Licensing

*Asked by **The Lord Bishop of St Albans***

To ask His Majesty's Government how much revenue the Treasury received from gambling operator application fees, operator annual licence fees, and personal licence fees in (1) 2019, (2) 2020, (3) 2021, (4) 2022, and (5) 2023. [[HL359](#)]

*Asked by **The Lord Bishop of St Albans***

To ask His Majesty's Government how much revenue the Treasury received from fines and other compliance and enforcement costs from gambling operators in (1) 2019, (2) 2020, (3) 2021, (4) 2022, and (5) 2023. [[HL360](#)]

Baroness Twycross: HM Treasury receives no revenue from gambling operator application fees, operator annual licence fees, and personal licence fees. Licence fees are set by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, and are collected and utilised by the Gambling Commission to cover the costs of regulation.

The Gambling Commission may impose financial penalties on gambling operators if a licence condition has been breached. The Treasury receives income from financial penalties imposed by the Gambling Commission on operators. The total amount received in each of the last five financial years is detailed below:

2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
£2.0m	£13.2m	£21.7m	£20.9m	£7.1m

(Note: Due to reporting cycles, financial year is preferred to calendar year, with each period covering 1st April - 31st March).

In some circumstances, the Gambling Commission may agree a regulatory settlement in lieu of a financial penalty, which may include a financial element. Regulatory settlements are paid by an operator for socially responsible purposes and are not paid to the Exchequer. The Gambling Commission approves the destination of the financial element against set criteria. The destinations for regulatory settlements are published on the Gambling Commission's website.

Gambling: Video Games

*Asked by **Lord Foster of Bath***

To ask His Majesty's Government, following further breaches of the Advertising Standards Authority codes on publicising the availability of loot boxes by members of the DCMS technical working group on loot boxes, what steps they will take to ensure that the codes and their oversight are strengthened. [[HL501](#)]

Baroness Twycross: The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) and the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) are responsible for setting and enforcing the UK Advertising Codes and are independent of the government.

The ASA takes firm action to ban adverts for loot boxes that are in breach of their codes and has published comprehensive guidance for advertisers of in-game purchasing. The ASA is assessing the nature and scale of ads that fail to inform the audience of in-game purchasing, and considering further action through individual investigations or enforcement activity conducted by CAP Compliance teams.

We are committed to ensuring that purchases of loot boxes should not be available to children and young people unless and until they are enabled by a parent or guardian; and that all players should have access to and be aware of spending controls and transparent information to support safe and responsible gaming.

In July 2023, the previous Government agreed to new industry-led guidance produced by a DCMS-convened Technical Working Group (TWG) of video game developers; a 12-month implementation period ended in July 2024. The TWG is preparing a report on industry implementation of the measures, which we urge all video games companies to adopt in full. We are separately commissioning independent academic research to assess the effectiveness of the new guidance in improving player protections and will consider whether further action is required when this research is complete.

GCE A-level

*Asked by **Baroness Wolf of Dulwich***

To ask His Majesty's Government how many 17–18 year-olds, and what proportion of the year 13 cohort in England, took (1) one A Level, and (2) two or more A Levels, in (a) 1995, (b) 2010, (c) 2020, and (d) 2023. [[HL159](#)]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The information requested is published as part of the accredited official statistics release, entitled 'Participation in education, training and employment age 16 to 18'.

The following table shows the requested information, which can also be found at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/cd189ef0-7259-49ba-68b6-08dca70c1109>.

<i>End of calendar year</i>	<i>Number of 17 year olds participating in education with A/AS levels as highest qualification aim</i>	<i>Proportion of 17 year old population participating in education with A/AS levels as highest qualification aim</i>
1995	238,500	43.8%
2010	283,300	42.8%
2020	277,400	44.2%
2022	300,100	45.5%
2023	Published in September 2024 (provisional)	

The figures provided are estimates relating to a snapshot of activities at the end of the calendar year. They are based on academic age 17, defined as 'age at the start of the academic year', which is age as at 31 August, and show the highest qualification aim. This data cannot be disaggregated in order to provide the number of A Levels taken. Data for 2023 will be available in September 2024. 2022 data has been included, as this is the latest published period available.

Gender and Sex: Research

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask His Majesty's Government, with regard to the review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender, commissioned by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many responses have been received to (1) Strand 1, and (2) Strand 2, of the call for evidence; whether the date to submit the final report remains 31 August; and what is the planned timing for the Department to publish that final report. [HL420]

Lord Vallance of Balham: This is an independent review which is ongoing, and as such responses have not been directed to the Department.

As per the Terms of Reference, final reporting will be submitted by the end of August 2024. Upon receipt, the government will consider the report.

Gender Based Violence: Internet

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the publication of the Kapersky State of Stalkerware Report 2023 on 20 March, which stated that 42 per cent of British citizens believe that cyberstalking of a romantic partner is acceptable, what steps they plan to take to increase awareness of online violence against women. [HL272]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The scale of violence against women and girls in our country, including that which takes place online, is intolerable and this government will treat it as the national emergency that it is.

Stalking is an insidious crime, and the law is clear that what is illegal offline is also illegal online. Placing spyware on phones, hacking into accounts and accessing online accounts that perpetrators used to have authorised access to, are all crimes and should be reported to the police.

We will overhaul every aspect of society's response to these devastating crimes, including tackling violent and misogynistic content online. This includes tackling the root causes of these crimes, by supporting our education system to teach children about healthy relationships and consent.

As part of our mission, we will be building on the Online Safety Act to tackle violent and misogynistic cultures online which can drive this kind of appalling crime. We will also strengthen the use of Stalking Protection Orders and will give women the right to know the identity of online stalkers.

Gender Dysphoria: Children

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask His Majesty's Government what specific plans they have to introduce legislation on the prescription of puberty blockers for children with gender dysphoria issues, and whether they plan to address the issue of such drugs being brought into England from Northern Ireland using prescriptions by private providers, and from other jurisdictions. [HL422]

Baroness Merron: The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care is inclined to renew the emergency banning order on puberty blockers with a view to converting it to a permanent ban, subject to appropriate consultation.

Human medicines and healthcare are transferred matters in respect of Northern Ireland. We are engaging with the Northern Ireland Executive, including on whether the ban should apply across the United Kingdom. We are committed to providing young people with holistic care, in line with the recommendations of the Cass Review.

Gender Recognition Certificates: Young People

Asked by Lord Lucas

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to their plans to lower the voting age to 16, whether they also intend to lower the legal age for (1) applying, or (2) qualifying, for a Gender Recognition Certificate to 16. [HL352]

Baroness Twycross: The Government has no plans to lower the minimum age of application for a Gender Recognition Certificate.

General Election 2024: Absent Voting

Asked by Lord Rennard

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number and proportion of UK overseas electors with postal votes who were able to return their ballots by polling day in this year's general election. [HL441]

Asked by Lord Rennard

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of postal ballots for this year's general election that had not been delivered to voters by July 3rd, and how many returned postal ballots were received on or after 5 July. [HL442]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: This Government recognises problems facing overseas voters at elections. The Electoral Commission will publish a report on the administration of the General Election held on 4 July later this year, which will cover postal voting at the poll, and the Government will give careful consideration to any findings or recommendations made in the report in relation to the current arrangements for postal voting.

General Election 2024: British Nationals Abroad

Asked by Lord Grocott

To ask His Majesty's Government how many overseas voters took part in the 2024 general election and what proportion they represented of all of those who were eligible to vote. [HL419]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: This Government recognises problems facing overseas voters at elections. The Electoral Commission will publish a report on the administration of the General Election held on 4 July later this year, which will cover postal voting at the poll, and the Government will give careful consideration to any findings or recommendations made in the report in relation to the current arrangements for postal voting.

General Election 2024: Older People and Young People

Asked by Lord Rennard

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the proportion of (1) 18–25 year-olds and (2) those over the age of 65, who were both eligible and registered to vote on the date of this year's general election. [HL437]

Asked by Lord Rennard

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to ensure that more young people receiving the official notification of their National Insurance Number are included on the electoral register, either by automatic

inclusion on the register at the same time, or by changing the form of wording on the notification to encourage greater enrolment. [HL439]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: This Government believes that more can and should be done to improve voter registration and is currently exploring the best ways of achieving this. We were clear in our manifesto that we will encourage participation in our democracy and improve voter registration.

The Electoral Commission and the Office for National Statistics review and publish statistics on electoral registration and participation in elections. The Government will examine and reflect on this data when it is available following the 2024 general election.

General Practitioners: Attendance

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to enable people with work and family responsibilities to communicate flexibly with their NHS GP practice, and to make and attend appointments at mutually convenient times. [HL249]

Baroness Merron: We recognise that it can be challenging to balance accessing care with other responsibilities. That's why we have committed to modernising the general practice (GP) booking system, making it easier for patients to communicate with their practice, and why we will ensure that anyone who wants a face-to-face appointment can receive one.

Integrated care boards must ensure that out-of-hours appointments are available to patients to help them access care at convenient times, for example on weekends, evenings or bank holidays.

We will make sure the future of GPs is sustainable by training thousands more GPs across the country to take the pressure off those currently working within the system, ensure increased capacity across the National Health Service, and secure a future pipeline of GPs.

General Practitioners: Digital Technology

Asked by Lord Kamall

To ask His Majesty's Government what plan they have to ensure that all GP surgeries and primary care centres offer an online booking option for appointments, and what progress has been made to date. [HL348]

Baroness Merron: As of April 2024, 97% of general practices in England have cloud-based telephony systems in place. The Government has pledged to deliver a modern appointment booking system to end the 8:00am scramble, and ensure that there is an online booking option for all that wish to use it.

Government Departments: Grants

Asked by **Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether public money grants to bodies such as ParkRun are conditional on them adhering to the Public Sector Equality Duty; and whether particular funds to promote women's activity rates then collect monitoring data by biological sex. [HL130]

Lord Livermore: The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) is a statutory duty set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, which applies to public authorities and other bodies who exercise public functions.

The monitoring and reporting criteria for funding programmes is determined by the awarding body based on an overall assessment of the fund objectives. If the funded organisation is a public authority or a body that exercises a public function, then that organisation will be legally obliged to comply with the PSED as a result of section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

Parkrun does not provide participation data by sex or gender to Sport England.

Government Departments: Remote Working

Asked by **Lord Udney-Lister**

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the most recent headquarters occupancy data for each Government department across each week in the last month for which figures are available. [HL548]

Baroness Twycross: The latest headquarters occupancy data for each Government department is available publicly on gov.uk, and is set out below. The publication of this data was suspended in line with pre-election guidance for the duration of the Pre-Election Period.

<i>Departmental HQ</i>	<i>Building</i>	<i>w/c 6th May</i>	<i>w/c 13th May</i>	<i>w/c 20th May</i>
Cabinet Office	70 Whitehall	85%	93%	90%
Department for Business and Trade	Old Admiralty Building	76%	84%	78%
Department for Culture, Media and Sport	100 Parliament Street	61%	63%	66%
Department for Education	Sanctuary Buildings	69%	78%	80%
Department for Energy Security and Net Zero	3-8 Whitehall Place/55 Whitehall	82%	100%	100%
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	2 Marsham Street	58%	82%	81%
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	2 Marsham Street	71%	78%	73%

<i>Departmental HQ</i>	<i>Building</i>	<i>w/c 6th May</i>	<i>w/c 13th May</i>	<i>w/c 20th May</i>
Department for Science, Innovation and Technology	1 Victoria Street	no data	no data	no data
Department for Transport	Great Minster House	85%	89%	82%
Department for Work and Pensions	Caxton House	58%	69%	66%
Department of Health and Social Care	39 Victoria Street	68%	67%	72%
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office	King Charles Street	67%	74%	71%
HM Revenue and Customs	100 Parliament Street	53%	66%	60%
HM Treasury	1 Horse Guards	63%	66%	63%
Home Office	2 Marsham Street	78%	88%	86%
Ministry of Defence	MOD Main Building	81%	91%	87%
Ministry of Justice	102 Petty France	66%	85%	78%
Northern Ireland Office	1 HG/Erskine House	66%	71%	69%
Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland	Dover House	53%	81%	71%
Office of the Secretary of State for Wales	Gwydyr House	53%	56%	66%

1) DSIT were unable to provide data ahead of transfer into their new HQ 22-26WH.

Government Departments: Reorganisation

Asked by **Lord Kempself**

To ask His Majesty's Government what was the total cost of machinery-of-government changes, including renaming and rebranding of departments, during the recent change of Government, broken down by department. [HL264]

Baroness Twycross: I refer Lord Kempself to the statement made by the Rt Hon Baroness Smith of Basildon about Machinery of Government changes on 24 July 2024, HLWS18.

No additional funding is allocated to departments to implement machinery of government changes.

Guided Weapons

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to develop the UK's global leadership on hypersonic missiles and other hypersonic technologies; and what progress they have made in the development of a domestically manufactured hypersonic missile. [HL509]

Lord Coaker: The UK is demonstrating its leadership in the global hypersonic arena by active participation in the AUKUS Pillar 2 Advanced Capability Partnership. Since inception in 2022, the UK has been championing accelerated capability development with AUKUS allies, whilst also developing the long-term future of the UK's hypersonic industrial base.

Additionally, MOD continues to work with existing allies and international partners to investigate a range of advanced future capabilities.

Building on previous research and development, the MOD has established a Programme Team - Team Hypersonics (UK) - to cohere Ministry of Defence, industry and academia around the development of a sovereign hypersonic capability.

Team Hypersonics (UK) has established the Hypersonic Technologies and Capability Development Framework (HTCDF). This bespoke £1 billion Commercial Agile Route to Market is the mechanism to facilitate a spiralled approach to technology development through to a sovereign capability. 90 suppliers including defence primes, small & medium enterprises (SME) and academic institutions are now signed up.

With these enablers in place, the testing of critical sovereign-designed and manufactured missile sub-system technologies continues, including a novel hypersonic propulsion system. Several invitations to tender have already been released to spirally develop a range of technologies. These and future ITTs will allow the development of technical demonstrators and onwards into a capability.

Gulf States: Motor Sports

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask His Majesty's Government what guidance is given to UK ambassadors and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office officials attending Formula One races linked to human rights abuses in the Gulf region. [HL538]

Lord Collins of Highbury: All FCDO Staff are expected to maintain the highest standards of propriety and regularity at all times in line with the Civil Service Code and Diplomatic Service Code. The motorsport industry generates over £10 billion each year in the UK and provides significant employment opportunities. UK Ambassadors have regularly attended Formula One events as part of their official duties. However, we put the

protection of human rights around the world at the heart of what we do and work with our allies to encourage all states to uphold their international human rights obligations.

Gulf Strategy Fund

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask His Majesty's Government, what assessment they have made of allegations that the Gulf Strategy Fund (GSF) finances institutions implicated in torture; what additional oversight mechanisms will be put in place to monitor the human rights considerations of GSF operations; how the funding for the GSF is justified; and when the summary of projects funded by the GSF will be made transparent to the public. [HL537]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Gulf Strategy Fund (GSF) helps deliver HMG objectives across the Gulf Cooperation Council States. All cooperation through the FCDO International Programme, including the GSF, is subject to rigorous risk assessments to ensure all work meets our human rights obligations and our values. The Annual Summary of projects funded by the GSF in 2023/24 will be published later this year.

Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre

Asked by Lord German

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to respond to the report on an unannounced inspection of Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, published on 9 July. [HL418]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office takes the health, welfare and safety of people in our care very seriously and it is vital that detention and removals are carried out with dignity and respect.

We are concerned by some of the findings in His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons' (HMIP's) report and recognise that standards need to improve across immigration detention facilities. We are committed to taking robust steps informed by these inspection findings.

A detailed service improvement plan setting out the Government's response to the report has been published on HMIP's website and implementation of those actions, and overall conditions at Harmondsworth, will be monitored closely to ensure that standards improve.

Further details can be found here: [Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre – HM Inspectorate of Prisons \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/harmondsworth-immigration-removal-centre-hm-inspectorate-of-prisons/).

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Harmondsworth Report [Harmondsworth-IRC-web-2024-2.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-07-29/HL418>

Health Services: Disclosure of Information

Asked by **Lord Shipley**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many cases of whistleblowing there have been in the past five years across all the health and care services that are within the remit of the Department of Health and Social Care; and how many of these cases were within the NHS and how many were within the private sector. [HL391]

Baroness Merron: The following table shows the total number of Freedom to Speak Up cases reported to the National Guardian's Office (NGO), and the number and proportion raised by workers in independent organisations and National Health Service trusts, each year from 2019 to 2024:

Year	Total cases	Number and proportion of cases from independent organisations	Number and proportion of cases from NHS trusts
2019/20	16,199	61 (0.4%)	16,032 (99.0%)
2020/21	20,388	304 (1.5%)	18,687 (91.7%)
2021/22	20,362	521 (2.6%)	18,982 (93.2%)
2022/23	25,209	955 (3.8%)	23,219 (92.1%)
2023/24	32,167	1,951 (6.1%)	29,204 (90.8%)

Notes:

- i) organisations categorised as independent include private hospitals, ambulances, and hospices; and
- ii) cases from NHS organisations do not make up all of the remaining cases as the total cases will also include cases from other organisation types supported by Freedom to Speak Up guardians, for example, non-providers, such as regulators and Arm's Length Bodies, defence military services, and charities.

Speaking up cases brought to Freedom to Speak Up Guardians may include whistleblowing, however they may also be issues for improvement or wider matters which would not meet a formal definition of whistleblowing. Whistleblowing is when someone who works for an employer raises a concern by making a disclosure in the public interest via provisions in the *Employment Rights Act 1996*, as amended by the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998*. Speaking up is about encouraging a positive culture where people feel they can speak up about anything that gets in the way of providing good care, that their voices will be heard, and their suggestions acted upon.

The above data is collected anonymously from individual organisations and provided voluntarily to the NGO by Guardians, and as such may represent an incomplete picture. Guardians are one of many routes to speaking up internally within an organisation. Employees may also speak up to regulators, some of which may be captured as whistleblowing.

Asked by **Lord Shipley**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many NHS whistleblowers were heeded and were satisfied with the response of their employers. [HL392]

Baroness Merron: The following table shows the data reported to the National Guardian's Office (NGO) on the total number of workers that provided feedback about their experience of speaking up to Freedom to Speak Up Guardians, and the proportion of those workers who said they would speak up again, each year from 2019 to 2024:

Year	Number of workers who provided feedback on their experience of speaking up	Proportion of cases where workers provided feedback	Number of workers that provided feedback and said they would speak up again
2019/20	4,770	29.4%	4,065 (85.2%)
2020/21	6,491	31.8%	5,473 (84.3%)
2021/22	6,005	29.5%	5,112 (85.1%)
2022/23	7,204	28.6%	5,995 (83.2%)
2023/24	8,441	26.2%	6,734 (79.8%)

Note: feedback received may be about cases that were raised in a previous financial year

Speaking up cases brought to Freedom to Speak Up Guardians may include whistleblowing, however they may also be issues for improvement or wider matters which would not meet a formal definition of whistleblowing. Whistleblowing is when someone who works for an employer raises a concern by making a disclosure in the public interest via provisions in the *Employment Rights Act 1996*, as amended by the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998*. Speaking up is about encouraging a positive culture where people feel they can speak up about anything that gets in the way of providing good care, that their voices will be heard, and their suggestions acted upon.

The above data is collected anonymously from individual organisations and provided voluntarily to the NGO by Guardians, and as such could represent an incomplete picture. Guardians are one of many routes to speaking up internally within an organisation. Employees may also speak up to regulators, some of which may be captured as whistleblowing.

Health Services: Standards

Asked by **Baroness Coussins**

To ask His Majesty's Government how they will elicit views on the NHS Constitution consultation from people whose first language is not English, especially those who are high users of NHS services. [HL125]

Baroness Merron: A review of the NHS Constitution was announced in October 2023. The standard consultation closed in June 2024, with the easy-read consultation on the NHS Constitution closing in July

2024. The Department acknowledges the limits of both publishing a consultation in online-only formats and solely in English.

The Department published an easy-read version, with the simplified language making the information more accessible for a broader audience, supporting those whose first language is not English to access and respond to the consultation.

The Department is committed to engagement with the public in the future and continuously improving our approach for future consultations and strategies. If any further review of the NHS Constitution takes place, ensuring communication through an accessible format for people, including those for whom English may not be their first language, will be considered.

Health: Children

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what actions they are taking to deliver Labour's Child Health Action Plan, and in particular what actions they will take to improve access to childhood immunisation. [HL445]

Baroness Merron: The Government is committed to raising the healthiest generation of children in our history. This will include giving children a healthy, happy start to life, and protecting them from the growth of infectious diseases.

To achieve this, the Department works with NHS England and the UK Health Security Agency to make accurate and up to date information on the benefits of vaccines and their eligibility, available to parents, carers, and patients. We are also learning lessons from the COVID-19 vaccine programme about the power of real-time, specific data to improve uptake, as well as looking at system changes for delivery, to make getting vaccinated easier for all. The Department, alongside partners, is also exploring how to enable vaccinations for babies and children as part of health visits.

Health: International Cooperation

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have for the upcoming replenishments of major global health multilaterals, including Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. [HL313]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK is working with the international community to coordinate efforts and ensure sustainable resources for all upcoming global health replenishments. This includes Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Effective coordination across Global Health Initiatives will be needed to deliver for the global health challenges ahead.

Heating: Electricity

Asked by *Lord Birt*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to encourage the use by domestic consumers of electricity over gas to power home heating. [HL250]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: Heat pumps will play a pivotal role in the decarbonisation of heat in homes, and the Government is committed to supporting their adoption.

Support is available to help households to upgrade to a heat pump, through schemes like the Boiler Upgrade Scheme which provides grants of £7,500 towards the cost of installation. Current schemes, like the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and the Home Upgrade Grant, also remain in place to provide financial support for installations in low-income households and social housing.

Our Warm Homes Plan will set out further Government support for investment in insulation and low-carbon heating, with the goal of upgrading five million homes over this Parliament. We will announce more details in due course.

Higher Education: Wales

Asked by *Baroness Randerson*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the recent decline in the proportion of young people from Wales applying to go to university and what steps they will take to support the Welsh Government, in order to reduce educational inequalities. [HL221]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: Education is a devolved matter. The Welsh Government is responsible for reducing inequalities in Wales.

Holiday Accommodation

Asked by *Lord Truscott*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans, if any, they have to regulate the ultra-short letting platform market. [HL242]

Baroness Twycross: Short-term lets are an important part of what the UK offers visitors in terms of accommodation and the government recognises that they bring a range of benefits to the visitor economy.

The government wants people living in our major tourism destinations, especially in coastal and rural villages and towns, to benefit from a thriving tourism industry without losing the spirit of their community when the holiday season ends.

Parliament legislated for a registration scheme for short-term lets in the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023. This government is exploring the introduction of such a scheme.

Asked by Lord Truscott

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of ultra-short lets on the availability of long-term rentals and homes. [HL243]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: We recognise that whilst short-term lets and second homes can benefit the tourist economy, we need to protect local communities, including ensuring the availability of housing to rent or buy. We are currently considering how best to achieve these aims.

Homelessness

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take in response to statistics from the OECD Affordable Housing Database regarding the level of homelessness in the United Kingdom compared with other countries in the developed world. [HL312]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Homelessness levels are far too high. We must address this and deliver long term solutions. The Government will look at these issues carefully and will develop a new cross-government strategy, working with mayors and councils across the country to get us on back on track to ending homelessness once and for all. Critical to tackling homelessness is building more affordable homes. We will deliver the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation and deliver 1.5 million new homes over the next five years.

Hong Kong: Judges

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their policy with regard to British judges serving in Hong Kong courts. [HL378]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: Retired UK judges that choose to serve on Hong Kong courts do so in a personal capacity, which is their right as private citizens. The UK judiciary is independent from the UK Government.

Honours

Asked by Lord Blunkett

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the geographic locations, where known, of the main addresses for all living recipients of Companions of Honour. [HL117]

Asked by Lord Blunkett

To ask His Majesty's Government how many honours, by each award level, were received in each region or nation of the UK in the Birthday Honours 2024; and what percentage of the population of each such region or nation that number represents. [HL118]

Asked by Lord Blunkett

To ask His Majesty's Government how many honours above OBE level were awarded to people who were (1) living in, or (2) working or providing service to, the South Yorkshire area at the time of their nomination for an honour in the Birthday Honours 2024 list. [HL119]

Asked by Lord Blunkett

To ask His Majesty's Government how many residents received an award above the level of MBE in the combined Mayoral authority of South Yorkshire. [HL120]

Asked by Lord Blunkett

To ask His Majesty's Government how many of the recipients of honours in the Birthday Honours 2024 list have already received recognition in previous honours lists. [HL121]

Baroness Twycross: There are currently 63 living recipients of the Companion of Honour. Information is only held on 41 living recipients. Honours data is routinely destroyed by the Cabinet Office in accordance with our data retention policy for honours and not all the nominations were processed by the Cabinet Office, therefore we do not hold all of the information requested.

Data is collected using the region that the recipient gave as their correspondence address when the honour was originally awarded; this is usually their home address and does not necessarily reflect their area of origin. This data was gathered at the time that the awards were made and therefore the data for each recipient may not be current.

<i>UK Nation or Region</i>	<i>Number of Companion of living Honour recipients</i>
East	3
East Midlands	1
London	17
North East	0
Northern Ireland	1
North West	0
Scotland	3
South East	10
South West	1
Wales	0
West Midlands	3
Yorkshire & Humberside	1
Abroad	2
No information held	22

Statistical information held in relation to the regional breakdown of recipients at all levels for the King's Birthday Honours List 2024 can be found below.

Percentages are rounded to 1 decimal point. Data for CBE and higher levels has been aggregated and is also included below. Data reflects the correspondence address provided by recipients. Transparency data containing the location of recipients is published on gov.uk.

Data is collected using county and aggregated into regional figures. Information on the number of nominations by mayoral region in South Yorkshire is not captured, as we are unable to break down the data in that way.

This data relates only to the main Prime Minister's List and does not include data from the Defence List or the

Overseas and International List, which are not administered by the Cabinet Office.

Transparency data for the list by county, the level of award received and the service for which each recipient has been recognised for, as well as information on recipients recognised in previous honours lists is publicly available on gov.uk.

Honours are awarded on merit basis. A key aim of the honours system is to ensure that it is more representative of the country as a whole and we will continue to encourage more nominations from every corner of the UK, including South Yorkshire, in future honours lists.

Region	BEM	BEM%	MBE	MBE%	OBE	OBE%	CBE & Higher	CBE & higher%	Total	% of the total NY22 list living in each region	% of UK population
East	25	8.30%	27	6.40%	25	11.20%	18	14.00%	95	8.80%	9.30%
East Midlands	9	3.00%	16	3.80%	6	2.70%	3	2.30%	34	3.20%	
											7.20%
London	24	8.00%	72	16.90%	62	27.80%	45	34.90%	203	18.80%	13.40%
North East	5	1.70%	9	2.10%	11	4.90%	0	0.00%	25	2.30%	4.00%
North West	28	9.30%	49	11.50%	21	9.40%	3	2.30%	101	9.40%	11.00%
Northern Ireland	46	15.30%	38	8.90%	10	4.50%	4	3.10%	98	9.10%	2.80%
Scotland	43	14.30%	41	9.60%	14	6.30%	11	8.50%	109	10.10%	8.20%
South East	39	13.00%	56	13.20%	28	12.60%	18	14.00%	141	13.10%	13.70%
South West	23	7.70%	38	8.90%	9	4.00%	10	7.80%	80	7.40%	8.40%
Wales	14	4.70%	24	5.60%	10	4.50%	8	6.20%	56	5.20%	4.70%
West Midlands	22	7.30%	34	8.00%	15	6.70%	2	1.60%	73	6.80%	8.90%
Yorkshire & Humberside	22	7.30%	21	4.90%	12	5.40%	6	4.70%	61	5.70%	
Living abroad	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	0.80%	1	0.10%	-
Total	300	100%	425	100%	223	100%	129	100%	1077	100%	-

Horizon IT System: Prosecutions

Asked by **Lord Sikka**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Offord of Garvel on 13 May (HL Deb col 456), what were the titles of the cases prosecuted by the Department of Work and Pensions against postmasters in England and Wales, and in each case what was (1) the date of proceedings, (2) the location of the court, and (3) the outcome. [HL364]

Asked by **Lord Sikka**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to publish a list of the cases of sub-postmaster

prosecutions which have been initiated by the Department of Work and Pensions between 1999 and 2018 and subsequently passed to the Crown Prosecution Service; and the outcome of each of those cases. [HL365]

Baroness Sherlock: The Department is aware of 61 Post Office members of staff who were prosecuted by DWP between 2001 and 2006. Each of the cases involved welfare-related fraud offences. In most cases this involved encashment of stolen benefit payment order books. There is no evidence that any of the cases prosecuted by DWP relied on the Horizon system. They followed lengthy, complex investigations, relying on multiple sources of evidence.

Until 2012, DWP prosecuted its own cases. The cases were handled by DWP Solicitors who would instruct Counsel to represent DWP at Court. In March 2012, the prosecutorial function of the DWP was assigned to the Crown Prosecution Service.

In the early 2000's the Department moved to paying benefits automatically into people's bank accounts which significantly reduced the opportunity for benefit fraud, including potential offences by Post Office staff.

To assist, please find attached a table setting out the information the Department holds for each of the 61 cases. The information includes the date of conviction, the location of the court, and the sentence (outcome) for each of the 61 cases.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Table [Annex 1-table.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-07-25/HL364>

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Department of Work and Pensions has transcripts of court judgments and accompanying documents for all cases related to the prosecution of sub-postmasters that they have initiated. [HL366]

Baroness Sherlock: Transcripts of court judgments are available upon application to HMCTS. DWP does not hold transcripts of court judgments. The DWP case files referred to in the question have been destroyed in line with data protection legislative requirements.

Horticulture

Asked by Baroness Fookes

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to develop a National Strategy for Horticulture in England. [HL254]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: We appreciate the vital work of the horticulture industry with its potential for growth and recognise that a long-term vision would recognise the specific needs and huge diversity of the sector.

As part of our mission-driven government, and in partnership with the sector, we are considering a number of ways to achieve our ambitious, measurable and long-term goals for the sector.

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce a strategy for (1) the edible, and (2) the environmental, horticultural sectors in England. [HL327]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Farming and food production are at the heart of the Government's agenda and an important part of our mission-driven government approach.

In partnership with the sector, we are considering a number of ways to achieve our ambitious, measurable and long-term goals for the sector. This includes building on our long-standing R&D investment in crop breeding. In July 2024, Defra awarded a further £15 million over the next five years to fund five crop Genetic Improvement Networks. This includes £9 million for horticulture (soft fruit; vegetables; and pulse crops).

Horticulture: Finance

Asked by Baroness Fookes

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to provide longer-term core funding to some research and development institutions for advances in edible and ornamental horticulture. [HL255]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Farming and food production are at the heart of the Government's agenda and an important part of our mission-driven government approach.

Building on our long-standing R&D investment in crop breeding, in July 2024, Defra awarded a further £15 million over the next five years to fund five crop Genetic Improvement Networks (GINs). This includes £9 million for horticulture (soft fruit; vegetables; and pulse crops).

The GINs will be delivered by consortia comprised of research institutes and universities; to deliver collaborative R&D to deliver breeding benefits for key UK crops.

For the first time, the GINs will incorporate research into underutilised and novel crops, helping to diversify the resources available to breeders and farmers. It will also harness the latest innovations in crop breeding, including the opportunities offered by the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act, to help farmers and breeders produce stronger, more sustainable and resilient crops for the future.

House of Lords: Reform

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to include the rights of Church of England Bishops to sit in the House of Lords in their public consultation on the reform of the Lords. [HL361]

Baroness Twycross: Measures to modernise the constitution were announced in the King's Speech, including legislation to remove the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords. This will be the first step in wider reform to the second chamber, as set out in the manifesto.

Housing: Bricks

Asked by Lord Randall of Uxbridge

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to mandating the use of swift bricks in new-build houses. [HL179]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: We will consider what further action may be appropriate to promote swift bricks and achieve positive outcomes for our swift population.

Housing: Construction

Asked by Lord Watson of Wyre Forest

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to include single-storey dwellings such as bungalows in the new housing targets for both urban and rural areas. [HL278]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that Local Authorities should assess the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community, and reflect this in Local Plan policies. Each Local Plan is subject to a public examination in front of an independent inspector, who plays an important role in examining plans to ensure they are consistent with national policy, supported by evidence and take the views of local people into account. The overall housing targets set by central government do not specify the proportion or type of dwelling that should be provided.

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government, in the light of announced changes to nutrient neutrality regulations, what long-term plans they are considering implementing to support simultaneously both housing development and environmental sustainability. [HL371]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The government is yet to announce any changes to the regulations requiring nutrient neutrality. Whilst we are committed to finding a solution that unlocks the building of homes affected by nutrient neutrality, this will be without weakening environmental protections and we will only act in legislation where we can confirm to Parliament that the steps we are taking will deliver positive environmental outcomes.

We will work with nature conservation organisations, other stakeholders, and the development sector to determine the best way forward and will provide further updates in due course.

Housing: Renewable Energy

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to recommend the installation of (1) solar panels, and (2) small wind turbines on all new houses. [HL175]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Future standards next year will set our new homes and buildings on a path that moves away from relying on volatile fossil fuels and ensures they are fit for a net zero future. This will support our ambition that the 1.5 million homes we will build over the course of this parliament will be high quality, well designed and sustainable. That is why the Deputy Prime Minister and I are clear that rooftop solar and other renewable technology should play an important role, where appropriate, as part of the future standards for homes and buildings.

Housing: Water

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to recommend the installation of facilities to capture storm water for domestic use in all new houses. [HL176]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Environment Improvement Plan 2023 recognised that water efficiency could be supported through Building Regulations, planning and voluntary schemes. The Government will review this position in the coming months and recognises that new work might need to consider technical challenges of water capture and avoidance of cross-contamination between rainwater and potable water supplies.

Humanities: Higher Education

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the reduction in the number of university places for humanities subjects, and what steps they will take to halt this decline. [HL201]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government recognises the value that the humanities play both economically and culturally. However, universities are autonomous institutions and are therefore responsible for deciding which courses to offer.

There has been a slight decrease (1,170 or -0.3%) in the number of students studying arts and humanities courses between 2019/20 and 2021/22. For the 2024/25 financial year, the Office for Students (OfS) has maintained funding for world-leading small and specialist providers at £58 million. This funding was increased by £5 million in the 2022/23 financial year, and earlier, by £10 million in the 2021/22 financial year. Details of providers' allocations for the 2024/25 academic year will be announced by the OfS in the summer.

Identity Cards

Asked by Lord Campbell-Savours

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to establish an inquiry into the possible

introduction of ID cards over a 10-year timeframe. [HL173]

Lord Hanson of Flint: No. ID cards are not part of the Government's plans and no such inquiry is planned.

Immigration: Monitoring

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to (1) monitor, and (2) evaluate, the long-term impacts of immigration on (a) innovation, (b) productivity, and (c) public finances. [HL150]

Lord Hanson of Flint: This Government has an ongoing programme of work to monitor and evaluate the impact of migration, including the impact of the package of net migration reforms implemented in Spring 2024. Statistics, research and analysis published by the Home Office on migration can be found here: [Migration analysis at the Home Office - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/migration-analysis). Economic and fiscal forecasts are made by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility.

With a joined-up approach across government to reform the points-based immigration system, we will ensure that migration to address skills shortages triggers a plan to upskill workers and improve working conditions in the UK.

Immigration: Poverty

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the joint report by the APPGs on Poverty and on Migration, The Effects of the UK Immigration, Asylum and Refugee Policy on Poverty, published on 30 April. [HL141]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Government is determined to restore order to the immigration system so that it operates swiftly, firmly, and fairly.

We remain committed to engaging with local authorities and key stakeholders as we continue to identify a range of options to help those integrating into our communities.

The new Home Secretary will decide on the future of current Home Office policies and announcements will be made to Parliament in due course.

Import Controls

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to implement the enhanced physical checks set out in the Border Target Operating Model and if so, when they plan to do so. [HL448]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The BTOM sets out a risk-based, proportionate regime of controls which assesses the inherent biosecurity or public health risk

presented by an import, together with the prevalence of relevant pests and diseases and our confidence in the exporting country's production standards and health controls.

This assessment allows us to set controls at the most appropriate level and focus on the areas of highest risk to the UK. The goods posing the highest biosecurity risk are being prioritised as we build up to full check rates and high levels of compliance.

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the extent to which the new border control facilities which were introduced to implement the regime that came into effect in April are being used. [HL468]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Government's concern has been to ensure that the infrastructure required to facilitate trade are in place, while respecting the discretion of port operators and other stakeholders to make decisions on a commercial basis about the use of their infrastructure and facilities.

We recognise that ports are in the best position to determine how to utilise facilities which meet the standards required for checks to be undertaken. Where any port has more capacity for checks than required under the Border Target Operating Model (BTOM), they are free to put their facilities to alternative use, provided they retain sufficient capacity to conduct the volume of checks required under the BTOM.

One of the reasons for not introducing the checks on EU imports in July 2023 was so that we could introduce a simplified, risk-based and data-driven regime of checks on goods that applies equally to EU and 'rest of the world' goods. Facilities for checks and controls can therefore be used flexibly for any imported goods, regardless of origin.

The BTOM sets out a risk-based, proportionate regime of controls which assesses the inherent biosecurity or public health risk presented by an import, together with the prevalence of relevant pests and diseases and our confidence in the exporting country's production standards and health controls.

This assessment allows us to set controls at the most appropriate level and focus on the areas of highest risk to the UK. The goods posing the highest biosecurity risk are being prioritised as we build up to full check rates and high levels of compliance.

Imports: Germany

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the recent increase in German exports to the UK on (1) businesses, and (2) consumers. [HL543]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: Total UK imports from Germany amounted to £89 billion in the 12 months

to March 2024, a 6% increase in current prices (compared to the previous 12 months). The largest increase was for machinery and transport equipment up £5bn (13%), in particular cars up £4bn (22%) and aircraft up £1bn (153%).

This Government is committed to resetting our relationship with our European partners. The Secretary of State for Business and Trade has already met his German counterpart, Vice Chancellor Habeck, and discussed how we can grow trade further with Germany to support sustainable growth for our businesses, workers and consumers.

Influenza and Whooping Cough: Vaccination

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the national coverage rates of (1) influenza, and (2) pertussis, vaccination among pregnant women, and what steps they are taking to improve coverage rates for all maternal immunisations, ahead of delivering a new vaccination programme for the respiratory syncytial virus. [HL444]

Baroness Merron: The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) routinely monitors and reviews the vaccination coverage of all the routine immunisation programmes in England. Flu vaccine uptake for pregnant women for the 2023/24 flu season was 31.2%. Pertussis vaccine uptake for pregnant women for 2024, from January to April, was 59.1%.

To improve coverage rates for all maternal immunisations, the UKHSA provides public facing information, including information leaflets in multiple languages and accessible formats. The UKHSA also provides training slides and information resources for healthcare professionals.

Ahead of delivering a new vaccination programme for the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), the UKHSA hosted two RSV webinars for healthcare professionals: the older person RSV vaccine programme; and the maternal RSV programme. Resources are also available for the RSV programme on the Health Publications Website.

Insects: Conservation

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the decline in insect populations in England in the past decade; what assessment they have made of the impact of this decline on predator populations; what causes for this decline they have identified; and how they plan to arrest and reverse this decline. [HL204]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: We publish several indicators of invertebrate abundance every year. Generally, the population trends of our native insect species show a mixed picture which varies between species and habitats. For example, the indicator for the

overall abundance of butterflies in England has shown little or no change between 1976 and 2022 and while the index for farmland species has remained stable the abundance of woodland butterflies has declined steeply since 1990.

Insect decline is driven by various factors including habitat loss and fragmentation, climate change, introduction of new species and diseases, light pollution, pesticides and other aspects of agricultural intensification. It is difficult to attribute specific drivers to individual declines in insect species. However, land use change and habitat loss are likely to be the main contributors to insect decline within the UK.

Insects underpin food webs in both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems so, alongside other factors such as habitat loss, changes in insect populations are likely to be contributing to declines in insectivorous species including bats, birds and amphibians.

This Government has set out its intention to deliver for nature, taking action to meet our Environment Act targets, and working in partnership with civil society, communities and business to restore and protect our natural world. For example, the Government will change existing policies to prevent the use of deadly neonicotinoid pesticides that threaten bees.

To inform delivery of the targets, Natural England's 'Threatened Species Recovery Actions' project has already identified the targeted actions needed to for the conservation and recovery of 240 insect species. Assessment of a further 300 insect species is underway. Natural England's Species Recovery Programme is key to delivering many of these recovery actions. Example projects include creating flight corridors and increasing food plants for the pearl bordered fritillary butterfly, woodland enhancement for the grizzled skipper butterfly and the reintroduction of one of our rarest grasshoppers, the large marsh grasshopper.

Additionally, we will change existing policies to prevent the use of those neonicotinoid pesticides that threaten our vital pollinators.

Interest Rates

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) any affordability constraints faced by buyers due to high interest rates, and (2) any potential impact on the homebuilding industry. [HL241]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The affordability challenges facing prospective first-time buyers mean that too many people are now locked out of homeownership.

The sharp increase in interest rates after the September 2022 Budget created significant challenges for the housing market. In 2023 there were 235,000 first-time buyers, compared to 334,000 in 2021, a fall of nearly 30%.

In addition to increasing the supply of homes of all tenures, the Government has committed to introducing a

permanent, comprehensive mortgage guarantee scheme and to giving first-time buyers the first chance to buy homes.

Internal Drainage Boards: Finance

Asked by Lord Porter of Spalding

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to address concerns about the way in which internal drainage boards are funded; and if so, whether they have a timetable for implementing changes. [HL436]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Defra has committed to work with the internal drainage board (IDB) sector and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to review IDBs' current funding and costs. This will include examination of whether any changes are needed to their funding model.

Once the review is complete, Defra and MHCLG will consider the findings and decide on next steps, if any are required.

Investment Trusts

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask His Majesty's Government what analysis they have carried out of the impact of inaccurate reporting required by the Financial Conduct Authority of listed investment company management expenses and the impact this has had on investors, renewable energy projects, infrastructure, real estate and UK financial markets. [HL291]

Lord Livermore: The investment company sector plays a key role in the UK's economy, representing over 30% of the FTSE 250, and investing in illiquid assets – including infrastructure projects and renewables – to support the Government's growth agenda.

The Government will carefully consider all options regarding cost disclosure to retail investors.

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government following Canada's decision to proscribe the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, whether they also plan to proscribe it; and if so, when. [HL404]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Government will keep the list of proscribed organisations under close review, as we seek to protect the UK from the threats that we face. However, we will not routinely comment on whether an organisation is or is not being considered for proscription.

The Government is clear that Iran's malign activity, including the activities of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), are unacceptable and will not be tolerated in the UK. The UK already maintains sanctions on over 400 Iranian individuals and entities covering human rights abuses and nuclear proliferation, including

sanctioning the IRGC in its entirety. The Government will continue to consider what further steps may be taken to deter Iran's malign activity.

Israel: Palestinians

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Gloucester

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take in response to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice issued on 19 July regarding (1) Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territories, and (2) its discriminatory laws and policies against Palestinians. [HL295]

Lord Collins of Highbury: We have received the Advisory Opinion issued by the International Court of Justice on Friday 19 July and are considering it carefully before responding. The UK respects the independence of the International Court of Justice. The government is absolutely clear on the fundamental importance of the international rule of law.

Jimmy Lai

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the health of British citizen Jimmy Lai, imprisoned in Hong Kong, and whether they have sought his release on grounds of compassion. [HL376]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: Diplomats from our Consulate-General in Hong Kong are observing Mr Lai's trial. We are pressing for consular access, which the Hong Kong Prison Authorities have refused on grounds they do not recognise dual nationality.

Land Use

Asked by Baroness Young of Old Scone

To ask His Majesty's Government when they intend to publish a land use framework for England, what land uses this will cover, and whether it will be subject to formal consultation. [HL398]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The way we use and manage our land is already changing in response to pressures like climate change. It is time that government works openly with stakeholders and experts to understand and support the changes needed to keep nature and food production in England resilient.

The Government will do this by taking a collaborative approach to publishing a Land Use Framework for England. The Framework will consider issues such as food security and how we can expand nature-rich habitats such as wetlands, peat bogs and forests.

Spatial planning will play an important role in the delivery of the Government's growth and clean energy missions, and the land use framework will work hand in hand with the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan. The

Government will also explore the opportunities for spatial planning to support the delivery of other types of infrastructure.

Languages: Teachers

Asked by Baroness Coussins

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their response to the calculation, published by the National Education Union, on 9 November 2023, that there is a shortfall of almost 4000 qualified teachers of modern foreign languages, based on the Department for Education's School Workforce Census of subject specialist teachers with a post A-level qualification in their English Baccalaureate subject. [HL215]

Asked by Baroness Coussins

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to increase the bursary for trainee modern foreign language teachers from £25,000 to £28,000, in line with the bursaries available for science, technology and mathematics subjects. [HL216]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: High quality teaching is the factor that makes the biggest difference to a child's education and there are now 468,693 full-time equivalent teachers in state-funded schools in England. Nevertheless, the department knows that there is further to go to get more teachers into certain subjects, including modern foreign languages. This is why the department will recruit 6,500 new expert teachers and focus its support on subjects where it is needed most. The department will support areas that face recruitment challenges and tackle retention issues.

The department already has in place a range of measures specifically for modern foreign languages. This includes bursaries of £25,000 and scholarships of £27,000 for French, Spanish and German. The total initial teacher training (ITT) financial incentives package for the 2024/25 recruitment cycle is worth up to £196 million, which is a £15 million increase on the last cycle.

The department reviews bursaries each year before deciding the offer for trainees starting ITT the following academic year. In doing this, the department takes account of several factors including historic recruitment, forecast economic conditions, and teacher supply need in each subject. The department will continue to review the way bursaries are allocated to ensure it is supporting teacher sufficiency and spending money where it is needed most.

As well as working to recruit the best languages graduates domestically, the department is supporting recruitment of skilled graduates from overseas. The department's ITT bursaries and scholarships are available to all non-UK trainees in languages. This means that for the 2024/25 academic year, international language trainees are eligible for bursaries worth £25,000 and scholarships worth £27,000. An international relocation payment is also available for non-UK teachers of

languages starting in the 2024/25 academic year and is worth up to £10,000.

The department is also committed to tackling retention and has made available a range of resources to help address teacher workload and wellbeing and support schools to introduce flexible working practices. The department's 'Improve workload and wellbeing for school staff' service, developed alongside school leaders, includes a workload reduction toolkit to support schools to identify opportunities to cut excessive workload. It also includes the education staff wellbeing charter, which sets out commitments from the government, Ofsted, schools, and colleges to protect and promote the wellbeing of staff so that teachers not only remain in the profession, but thrive in it.

Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Driving Licences

Asked by Earl Attlee

To ask His Majesty's Government how many drivers hold (1) a Category C licence and (2) a Category C+E licence; and of each of these groups, how many hold a valid Driver Certificate of Professional Competence. [HL405]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: As at 20 July 2024, the number of driving licence holders with (1) Category C and (2) Category C+E driving entitlement is shown below:

- 1) Category C – 349,767.
- 2) Category C+E – 626,573.

The number of these drivers who hold a valid Driver Certificate of Professional Competence is shown below:

- 1) Category C – 208,368 drivers.
- 2) Category C+E – 480,988 drivers.

Leasehold

Asked by Lord Truscott

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the passage of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024, when they plan to deliver online calculators for lease extensions. [HL395]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Government will provide homeowners with greater rights, powers and protections over their homes. We are committed to implementing the provisions of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024. The Government is also committed to further reform the leasehold system, enacting the remaining Law Commission recommendations relating to leasehold enfranchisement and the Right to Manage.

We will enforce measures to prescribe the rates to be used in enfranchisement valuation calculations, which determine the cost leaseholders must pay to extend a lease or acquire a freehold. This will allow leaseholders to

understand how much it will cost to extend their lease or purchase their freehold upfront.

Legal Systems: Islam

Asked by Lord Swire

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure and enforce oversight and governance of (1) sharia courts, and (2) Muslim arbitration tribunals. [HL394]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: The Government has no plans to regulate religious dispute resolution processes (such as sharia courts) where all parties consent to those processes. This is consistent with Britain's long history of freedom of worship and religious tolerance, and the legal rights and remedies of the parties involved remain in place.

Decisions of such bodies are only enforceable if there is a valid arbitration agreement by which all parties have consented to the process, as provided under the terms of the Arbitration Act 1996 for any arbitration panel.

Legislation

Asked by Lord Norton of Louth

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that Acts of Parliament are subject to post-legislative review by sponsoring government departments three to five years after enactment. [HL520]

Baroness Twycross: It continues to be Government policy that all bills that have reached Royal Assent are eligible for post-legislative scrutiny three to five years after enactment. It can be agreed between the department and the relevant Commons select committee that a review is not required. Post-legislative scrutiny memoranda have been published on GOV.UK where Acts have undergone the process.

Asked by Lord Udny-Lister

To ask His Majesty's Government, with reference to the King's Speech background brief, whether they intend to implement in this Parliament all the policies from the Labour Party Manifesto which are not mentioned in the Government's legislative agenda for the first Session. [HL546]

Baroness Twycross: This Government is committed to implementing its manifesto commitments to deliver real change over the course of the Parliament. The King's Speech takes place at the start of each session and sets out the policies which require legislation in the parliamentary session ahead.

LGBT+ People: Equality

Asked by Lord Strathcarron

To ask His Majesty's Government which abbreviation they prefer to use when referring collectively to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. [HL467]

Baroness Twycross: The Government uses the term LGBT+. This reflects the breadth and diversity of the community as well as the preferences of most LGBT+ people. This term also resonates with language used by international partners and institutions. Whilst this is the Government's standard terminology, there may be occasions where it is appropriate to utilise variations that reflect a different focus.

Lithuania: Convention on Cluster Munitions

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to Lithuania regarding that country's proposed withdrawal from the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and what steps they will take to promote and secure the future of the Convention. [HL408]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK regrets Lithuania's decision to withdraw from the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). As a committed State Party to the CCM, the UK has frequently raised concerns with Lithuania regarding withdrawal, including with Lithuanian ministers and alongside NATO Allies. Lithuania's decision is another reminder of the damaging effects of Russia's aggression, and its impact on its neighbours. The UK strongly supports the progress made since the CCM entered into force and its role in protecting civilians from harm. We continue to encourage countries to join the CCM and discourage states not party to the Convention from using cluster munitions.

Local Government Finance

Asked by Baroness Redfern

To ask His Majesty's Government, what consideration they have given to replacing the annual finance settlement for local authorities in England with a multi-year settlement. [HL224]

Asked by Baroness Redfern

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the ring-fencing of grants to local authorities to allow for greater financial flexibility for local authorities. [HL225]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Government is committed to supporting local government and recognises the challenges it faces. To give councils the stability and

certainty they need to plan for the long-term, and flexibility to spend their funding where it's needed most, we will provide multi-year funding settlements and end wasteful competitive bidding. We will share further detail on our plans in due course.

Local Government: Land

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what measures they are considering implementing for local councils to help them to (1) develop and (2) maintain, their five-year land-supply strategies in light of the recent fast-track consultation on planning rules. [HL544]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Government has proposed a number of changes to national planning policy, including policy on five-year housing land supply, as part of the [consultation](#) on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework launched on 30 July 2024. Responses to the consultation will be accepted until 24 September 2024.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Proposed reform to the NPPF [HL544 - Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system - GOV.UK.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-07-30/HL544>

Mayors and Police and Crime Commissioners: Electoral Systems

Asked by *Lord Rennard*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans, if any, they have to revert to a preferential voting system for mayoral and police and crime commissioner elections. [HL526]

Asked by *Lord Rennard*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the consequences of the replacement of the supplementary vote system by first-past-the-post in the most recent mayoral and police and crime commissioner elections; and what is their estimate of the cost differential between those two systems. [HL527]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The government published details of its legislative programme alongside the King's Speech. We are committed to strengthening our democracy and upholding the integrity of elections, and our first step will be to ensure every legitimate voter is able to exercise their right to vote. We will consider the Electoral Commission report on the 2024 General Election when it is published in due course.

Mental Health Services: Speech and Language Disorders

Asked by *Lord Bradley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the accessibility of mental health services to (1) children and young people, and (2) older adults, who have speech, language and communication needs. [HL294]

Baroness Merron: As set out in the NHS Priorities and Operational Planning Guidance for 2024/25, NHS England is continuing to expand access to mental health services. This includes increasing the number of children and young people accessing comprehensive mental health support, as well as the number of adults and older adults completing a course of treatment for anxiety and depression via NHS Talking Therapies, some of whom having speech, language, and communication needs. Support may include provision of speech and language therapy as part of a local offer, however decisions about service provision are down to local determination by integrated care boards, to meet locally identified need.

As set out in the Equality Act 2010, all organisations, including those in health and social care, must take steps to remove the barriers individuals face because of disability. The National Health Service must make it as easy for disabled people to use health services as it is for people who are not disabled. NHS organisations and publicly funded social care providers must also comply with the Accessible Information Standard, to meet the communication needs of patients and carers with a disability, impairment, or sensory loss.

Migrant Workers

Asked by *Lord Allen of Kensington*

To ask His Majesty's Government what role the Migration Advisory Committee and the proposed body "Skills England" will play in facilitating the recruitment of overseas workers to train workers and job seekers in the UK in occupations with skills shortages. [HL191]

Asked by *Lord Allen of Kensington*

To ask His Majesty's Government what action they intend to take to increase the pipeline of skilled workers in the domestic workforce in occupations in the immigration salary list for the Skilled Worker visa. [HL192]

Lord Hanson of Flint: On 22 July, the Government announced plans to create Skills England and to develop a more joined up approach which looks at training of the domestic labour market alongside international recruitment. Further detail about how the Migration Advisory Committee will interact with Skills England, and training in the labour market will be set out in due course.

Military Bases: Greater London

Asked by *Lord Patten*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, if any, of future use for the disused military barracks and drill hall at 76D Rochester Row, London SW1. [HL353]

Lord Coaker: Rochester Row was identified for disposal under plans to achieve a more efficient, modern and capability focussed Defence estate. Army Reserve Estate Optimisation are engaging with the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association (RFCA) to discuss the future plans for the site.

Where sites are disposed of on the Volunteer Estate, receipts are reinvested to enable betterment at other Reserve locations across the country, supporting Homeland Resilience, National Defence and Mobilisation.

Ministers: Codes of Practice

Asked by *Lord Birt*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they propose to issue a code of behaviour requiring Ministers and their advisers to be respectful in their dealings with civil servants, including banning the use of foul language in the workplace. [HL114]

Baroness Twycross: The Prime Minister is committed to restoring confidence in government and ensuring ministers are held to the highest standards. Under his leadership, this Government will ensure the highest standards of integrity and honesty. When meeting with his new Cabinet for the first time, the Prime Minister was clear about the standards he expects of them and their ministerial teams.

He will issue a Ministerial Code in due course which will set out the standards of behaviour expected of ministers. As public office holders, ministers are also bound by the Nolan Principles. One such principle that applies is leadership, under which ministers are required to "treat others with respect".

Ministers' special advisers are contractually required to abide by the standards set out in the Code of Conduct for Special Advisers, which includes the requirement to "establish mutual relationships of confidence and trust" with civil servants.

Ministers: Pay

Asked by *Lord Balfe*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to introduce legislation to end the anomaly whereby many Ministers, particularly in the Lords, are unpaid; and which Ministers are currently unpaid. [HL111]

Baroness Twycross: The number of salaries available to the Government to pay ministers is set by the Ministerial and Other Salaries Act (MOSA) 1975. The limit on salaries, which applies across both Houses, is 109.

The Government has no current plans to introduce new legislation in this area.

As of 22 July, the unpaid ministers currently serving in the Government are as follows:

- Ministers of State: Ellie Reeves MP (n.b. she is paid by the Labour Party), Lord Timpson, Lord Hanson, Lord Hunt.
- Parliamentary Secretaries: Hamish Falconer MP, Mary Creagh MP, Baroness Sherlock.
- Lords' Whips: Lord Leong, Baroness Twycross, Baroness Blake.

Ministers: Training

Asked by *Viscount Waverley*

To ask His Majesty's Government which (1) Secretaries of State, and (2) ministers, had not undertaken anti-money laundering and sanctions courses by 21 July 2024; and whether the Prime Minister has undertaken such courses. [HL281]

Baroness Twycross: Following appointment to ministerial office, all ministers receive induction briefings from their departments to support them in their ministerial duties.

Mistreatment of Detainees at Brook House Immigration Removal Centre Inquiry

Asked by *Lord German*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to review and respond to the recommendations of the Brook House Inquiry report, published on 19 September 2023. [HL416]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The abuse that took place at Brook House Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) in 2017 was unacceptable and this government is committed to ensuring that it will never happen again.

The previous government published its response to the Brook House Inquiry on 19 March 2024 and can be found here: [Government response to the Brook House Inquiry report - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/brook-house-inquiry-report).

A cross governmental working group continues to meet monthly to monitor progress against accepted recommendations and drive forward implementation.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Government Response [E03077278+-
+Resp+Brook+House+Inquiry+report_Accessible.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-07-29/HL416>

Mortgages: Interest Rates

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support first-time buyers in taking advantage of new lower mortgage rates; and what additional incentives they are considering to stimulate home ownership. [HL370]

Lord Livermore: The average 2-year fixed rate mortgage rose from 2 per cent to 6.2 percent between Q1 2022 and Q1 2024, adding £300 to typical monthly payments.

This government will deliver economic stability with tough spending rules so we can grow our economy and keep taxes, inflation and mortgages as low as possible.

This Government will also help to turn the dream of owning a home into a reality by fixing the planning system and building 1.5 million more homes, as well as helping buyers who are struggling to save with Freedom to Buy.

Motor Vehicles: Theft

Asked by *Lord Birt*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will consult with motor vehicle manufacturers about introducing measures to eliminate the cloning of owners' remote locking devices by car thieves. [HL116]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Government works closely with the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for vehicle crime and the police-led National Vehicle Crime Working Group, which focuses on tackling vehicle crime. The working group which brings together representatives of the Government, policing, and vehicle manufacturers to address vulnerabilities in vehicles.

The Government keeps all legislation under review. We will be introducing a Crime and Policing Bill and will consider what measures are needed to support efforts to tackle and prevent vehicle crime.

Music: Finance

Asked by *The Earl of Clancarty*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address concerns about the level of government funding for classical music, including the funding of institutions such as the English National Opera and the Welsh National Opera. [HL210]

Baroness Twycross: We are committed to ensuring that creativity and culture can be enjoyed by everyone, not just by the privileged few. This applies equally to classical music and opera as it does to any other musical genre.

In addition to their earned income and philanthropic support, the ENO and WNO are funded by arms' lengths bodies including Arts Council England and the Welsh Arts Council, whose decisions are made independently of government.

The Government is aware of the significant financial challenges facing many arts organisations and the new Secretary of State for Culture will be working closely with the cultural sector at large to support them to thrive.

The Creating Growth plan for the Creative Industries which was published in March sets out a number of early priorities for the new Government in relation to the arts and culture - and includes commitments to review Arts Council England, attract more funding from different sources for arts organisations, and ensure every child gets a good creative education.

Myanmar: Development Aid

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government how much they donated in Official Development Assistance to Myanmar in (1) 2017, (2) 2018, (3) 2019, (4) 2020, (5) 2021, (6) 2022, and (7) 2023. [HL94]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK provided more than £42 million in Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) in Myanmar in the financial year 2023/24.

Breakdown of ODA figures as reported in FCDO Annual Accounts and Reports (available on gov.uk):

- In financial year 2022/23: we provided £61.9 million.
- In financial year 2021/22: we provided £49.5 million.
- In financial year 2020/21: we provided £91.9 million.
- In financial year 2019/20: we provided £102 million.
- In financial year 2018/19: we provided £87 million.
- In financial year 2017/18: we provided £110 million.

Nagorno-Karabakh

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Southwark*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Azerbaijan regarding the release of prisoners of war and civilians detained by Azerbaijan when taking control of Nagorno-Karabakh. [HL465]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK has been consistent in calling for the release of all remaining prisoners of war, and the return of the remains of the deceased, from the conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We were encouraged by the release of 34 prisoners of war in December 2023. The Foreign Secretary met both Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers at the European Political Community summit in Blenheim on 18 July and urged them to seize the opportunity to secure an historic peace treaty.

NHS Foundation Trusts: Standards

Asked by Lord Shipley

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of the scrutiny of NHS Foundation Trusts in cases where the chair of the board of directors is the same person as the chair of the council of governors. [HL456]

Baroness Merron: By law, the chair of a foundation trust is also the chair of the council of governors. This requirement is set out in paragraph 12 of Schedule 7 to the National Health Service Act 2006.

The rationale is to ensure that the chair, who oversees the foundation trust's board, which is itself comprised of executives and non-executives and is responsible for the trust's operation and plan development, serves as the link between this board and the council of governors, who are elected by the foundation trust's members and represent the local population.

The Department has not carried out an assessment of the effectiveness of scrutiny into the dual-chair role.

NHS: Disclosure of Information

Asked by Lord Shipley

To ask His Majesty's Government what payments they have made to whistleblowers in the NHS in each of the last five years (1) as part of non-disclosure agreements reached through out-of-court settlements, and (2) as the result of a decision by an employment tribunal. [HL457]

Baroness Merron: The Department does not hold the information requested. National Health Service organisations are independent employers and have their own policies and procedures in resolving workplace disputes, which should be aligned to current employment law and good human resources practice. Whistleblowers cannot waive their rights to make a protected disclosure, regardless of whether they sign an out-of-court settlement agreement. The Government is committed to ensuring we genuinely protect whistleblowers and create a culture of honesty and openness, which will include a review of current enforcement measures, to give a clear message that any misuse of confidentiality clauses will not be tolerated in the NHS.

NHS: ICT

Asked by Lord Kamall

To ask His Majesty's Government what lessons the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS have learned from the recent global IT outage, and what plans they have to issue guidance to ensure that hospitals, primary care centres and care homes have local computer or analogue back-ups to avoid appointments and operations being cancelled in the event of a recurrence. [HL349]

Baroness Merron: While this was an IT outage, not a cyber security incident, the National Health Service has robust cyber security measures in place, and is increasing cyber resilience across health and social care.

Health and care organisations are required to have business continuity plans in place, which we will continue to strengthen, to minimise disruption in the event of an IT outage or cyber incident. As outlined in The King's Speech, the Government's new Cyber Security and Resilience Bill will strengthen our defences and ensure that essential digital services are protected by expanding the remit of the existing regulation, putting regulators on a stronger footing, and increasing reporting requirements, to build a better picture in Government of cyber threats.

NHS: Reviews

Asked by Lord Strathcarron

To ask His Majesty's Government how many responses they have received to the Department for Health and Social Care's consultation, NHS Constitution: 10 year review, and when they plan to publish their response to the consultation and a summary of responses. [HL466]

Baroness Merron: There were 5,255 responses to the standard version of the NHS Constitution consultation, and 79 responses to the easy read version. Officials are currently analysing the responses, and the Government will provide an update on next steps at the earliest opportunity.

NHS: Staff

Asked by Lord Rooker

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the current arrangements for NHS staff to express opinions about practices and treatments about which they have concerns. [HL92]

Baroness Merron: The Government wants National Health Service staff to have the confidence to speak out and come forward if they have concerns. There are currently over 1,200 local Freedom to Speak Up Guardians across healthcare in England who provide a route for workers to express any concerns about the practices and treatments in their organisation. Over 133,000 cases have been reported to Guardians since the policy was established in 2016, and in 2023/24 79.8% of staff who received support from their Guardian and gave feedback said they would speak up again.

Despite this, the 2023 NHS staff survey results showed that only 50% felt that if they spoke up about something that concerned them, their organisation would address their concern. There is therefore a lot more to do before speaking up can be described as business as usual in the NHS.

Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures: Licensing

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Markham on 5 April (HL3640), when they intend to publish feedback to the licensing of non-surgical cosmetic procedures consultation, which ran from 2 September to 28 October 2023. [HL534]

Baroness Merron: The Government is currently considering the work done to date on introducing regulatory oversight of the non-surgical cosmetics sector in England, and will set out its views at the earliest opportunity.

Obesity

Asked by *Baroness Boycott*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to introduce an obesity strategy. [HL383]

Baroness Merron: Supporting people in staying healthier for longer is at the heart of the Government's health mission. We face a childhood obesity crisis, and the Government will take action to tackle it head on, easing the strain on the National Health Service and creating the healthiest generation of children ever.

As set out in the King's Speech, we will bring forward the necessary secondary legislation to ban junk food advertising to children, and stop the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks to under 16-year-olds. The Government recognises that prevention will always be better than a cure. Further action on obesity under the Government's health mission will be set out in due course.

Office for Budget Responsibility

Asked by *Lord Jackson of Peterborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take to safeguard Parliamentary sovereignty and Ministerial accountability following the passage of the Budget Responsibility Bill, given that it will provide expanded powers to the Office of Budget Responsibility. [HL134]

Lord Livermore: The Budget Responsibility Bill will support transparency and accountability, by ensuring that significant fiscal announcements are always subject to independent scrutiny.

Parliament will remain sovereign: the legislation which sets out the legal framework will be taken through the House of Commons for approval, as will the Charter for Budget Responsibility which will set out the technical details. The Bill makes no changes to existing parliamentary scrutiny of Government tax and spending decisions.

Ofsted: Inspections

Asked by *Lord Kempson*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to abolish the current system of Ofsted inspection grades and, if so, when. [HL261]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government recognises that effective accountability has the potential to make a real contribution to breaking down barriers and helping to support improvement for the benefit of children, students and learners across the country. That is why the department is committed to reforming Ofsted and improving the inspection system. This will include moving away from the single headline grade to a richer system through a report card. The department will work in partnership with schools and the wider sector to ensure that its reforms maximise the potential to improve the life chances for every child and young person. The department is carefully considering the timing of any changes that it makes.

Overseas Students

Asked by *Baroness Lawlor*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many migrants who have arrived in the UK in the past three years for which figures are available are (1) overseas students who are taking (a) undergraduate degrees, (b) post-graduate degrees, and (c) other courses, and (2) the families or dependents of overseas students; what proportion of legal migrants each of those categories represents; and what arrangements are in place for monitoring their departure. [HL62]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Sponsored study visas by visa routes, applicant type, and course level

	Year ending March 2022	Year ending March 2023	Year ending March 2024	Total (last 3 years)
Student visas (of which):	451,467	611,685	544,231	1,607,383
Main applicants (of which):	379,542	463,365	432,750	1,275,657
Bachelors level	100,996	107,819	106,545	315,360
Below bachelors level	19,102	22,711	22,193	64,006
Doctoral level	10,434	10,085	10,347	30,866
Masters level	233,857	313,670	283,595	831,122
Other and unknown2	15,153	9,080	10,070	34,303
Dependants	71,925	148,320	111,481	331,726
Child student visas	13,248	13,158	14,174	40,580

Total - sponsored study visas	464,715	624,843	558,405	1,647,963
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There were 3,646,179 visas granted on routes that typically enable migrants to come to the UK ‘long-term’¹ between Q2 2021 and Q1 2024, with sponsored study (both for main applicants and dependants) representing 45% of these.

Footnotes:

1) To distinguish ‘migrants’ from people coming to the UK short-term, the data excludes visitor, transit, short-term study, and temporary worker visas (except Youth Mobility Scheme). The figure includes visas that typically enable a migrant to come to the UK for a year or more. However, some may be for less than a year. Not everyone issued a visa will arrive or stay in the UK for the entire period allowed by their visa. This total will also exclude those who do not require a visa to come to the UK (for example those with Settled Status under the EU Settlement Scheme).

2) ‘Other and unknown’ refers to pre-sessional English language courses and visas with courses unable to be identified.

Departures from the UK are recorded for most journeys. However, there are instances in which a departure may not be recorded, for example those who travel via the Common Travel Area. Those who do remain in the UK after their permission has expired will be considered as overstayers and will be liable for detention and enforced removal.

Pakistan: Development Aid

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Pakistani Minorities, Exploitation Of Bonded Brick Kiln Labourers In Pakistan: The Unseen Modern-Day Slavery, published on 29 May; whether they intend to act on the report's recommendations, especially in regard to the use of UK development aid in combatting the exploitation of Pakistan's minorities, particularly women and children; and whether they will draw the report and its recommendations to the attention of the government of Pakistan. [HL109]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK is committed to eradicating all forms of modern slavery, forced labour and human trafficking anywhere in the world. We regularly raise the rights of minorities with the Government of Pakistan. In Pakistan, our Aawaz II Accountability, Inclusion and Reducing Modern Slavery Programme and Asia Regional Child Labour Programme are working with partners, including the Government of Pakistan and civil society, to reduce child and bonded labour. Meanwhile, our Girls and Out of School Action for Learning programme is improving education outcomes for marginalised children from the most vulnerable sections

of society. We will continue to use our funding to support Pakistan's long-term development, focusing on improving governance and human rights, macroeconomic stability and trade, and climate resilience.

Palace of Westminster: Sanitation

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker whether he intends to reinstate the word "Peers" on the door to the gentlemen's toilets adjacent to the Prince's Chamber, and if not, why. [HL355]

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: The Senior Deputy Speaker has asked me, as Chair of the Services Committee, to respond on his behalf. There are no plans to reinstate the word "Peers" on the door to the gentlemen's toilets adjacent to the Prince's Chamber as the use of the toilets is not limited to members of the House.

Peers

Asked by Lord Campbell-Savours

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker, further to his Written Answer on 29 July (HL122), how many Labour members of the House who will not reach the age of 80 by 1 June 2029 were members at the start of the previous session of Parliament; and of those, how many attended more than (1) 30, and (2) 50, per cent of sitting days in the last session of Parliament. [HL489]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: There are 80 Labour members who will not reach the age of 80 by 1 June 2029 and who were members at the start of the 2023-24 session. Of these, 57 attended 30% or more sitting days of the last session and 49 attended 50% or more sitting days of the last session. These figures reflect the membership of the House as of 24 July 2024.

Asked by Lord Campbell-Savours

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker, further to his Written Answer on 29 July (HL122), how many Conservative members of the House who will not reach the age of 80 by 1 June 2029 were members at the start of the previous session of Parliament; and of those, how many attended more than (1) 30, and (2) 50, per cent of sitting days in the last session of Parliament. [HL490]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: There are 182 Conservative members who will not reach the age of 80 by 1 June 2029 and who were members at the start of the 2023-24 session. Of these, 138 attended 30% or more sitting days of the last session and 104 attended 50% or more sitting days of the last session. These figures reflect the membership of the House as of 24 July 2024.

Asked by Lord Campbell-Savours

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker, further to his Written Answer on 29 July (HL122), how many Liberal Democrat members of the House who will not reach the

age of 80 by 1 June 2029 were members at the start of the previous session of Parliament; and of those, how many attended more than (1) 30, and (2) 50, per cent of sitting days in the last session of Parliament. [HL491]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: There are 43 Liberal Democrat members who will not reach the age of 80 by 1 June 2029 and who were members at the start of the 2023-24 session. Of these, 40 attended 30% or more sitting days of the last session and 32 attended 50% or more sitting days of the last session. These figures reflect the membership of the House as of 24 July 2024.

Asked by Lord Campbell-Savours

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker, further to his Written Answer on 29 July (HL122), how many Crossbench members of the House who will not reach the age of 80 by 1 June 2029 were members at the start of the previous session of Parliament; and of those, how many attended more than (1) 30, and (2) 50, per cent of sitting days in the last session of Parliament. [HL492]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: There are 99 Crossbench members who will not reach the age of 80 by 1 June 2029 and who were members at the start of the 2023-24 session. Of these, 53 attended 30% or more sitting days of the last session and 36 attended 50% or more sitting days of the last session. These figures reflect the membership of the House as of 24 July 2024.

Asked by Lord Campbell-Savours

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker, further to his Written Answer on 29 July (HL122), how many non-affiliated members of the House who will not reach the age of 80 by 1 June 2029 were members at the start of the previous session of Parliament; and of those, how many attended more than (1) 30, and (2) 50, per cent of sitting days in the last session of Parliament. [HL493]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: There are 32 non-affiliated members who will not reach the age of 80 by 1 June 2029 and who were members at the start of the 2023-24 session. Of these, 17 attended 30% or more sitting days of the last session and 12 attended 50% or more sitting days of the last session. These figures reflect the membership of the House as of 24 July 2024.

Pension Funds

Asked by The Earl of Effingham

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the proportion of UK pension funds invested in UK companies, and what steps they are taking to increase such investment. [HL495]

Lord Livermore: The Government has noted the trend observed in external analysis and commentary of relative decreased investment from pension funds in UK companies.

That is why the Chancellor has announced a landmark pensions review as a part of the Government's mission to

boost economic growth and investment in the UK. Under plans unveiled by the new Chancellor, billions of pounds of investment could be unlocked in the UK economy from defined contribution schemes alone. Defined contribution schemes will be managing around £800 billion in assets by the end of the decade and the Review will explore ways to increase their investment into UK productive assets. The Review will also look at how to unlock the investment potential of the £360 billion within the Local Government Pension Scheme, which manages the savings of those working to deliver our vital local services, as well as how to tackle the £2 billion that is being spent on fees.

Pest Control: Aluminium Phosphide

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the human, animal welfare, and environmental impacts of the use of aluminium phosphide in pest control, and whether they plan to further restrict its use. [HL406]

Baroness Sherlock: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is the body responsible for the regulation of biocidal products, such as aluminium phosphide. Aluminium phosphide is approved under the GB Biocidal Products Regulation (assimilated Regulation (EU) No 528/2012) for use in pest control products against rodents and other vertebrates.

These products are restricted to professional users holding specific accredited qualifications in the use of such products. These products are permitted only for a very limited number of uses and with strict control measures in place.

Approval was granted following a detailed scientific assessment of the potential risks from the use of this chemical, which showed that there are no unacceptable risks to people, animals or the wider environment when products are used correctly in accordance with the restrictions and control measures placed on the products.

Biocides are subject to periodic reviews to ensure risk assessments remain up to date. Aluminium phosphide is currently undergoing this process, and if the review identifies that any changes are required, suitable regulatory action will be taken by HSE to implement these.

Pesticides: Regulation

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to impose restrictions on the sale of herbicides, insecticides, nematicides, fungicides or other pesticides to domestic users. [HL487]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Government is currently reviewing its pesticide policies.

A pesticide may only be placed on the market in GB if the product has been authorised by our expert regulator,

the Health and Safety Executive, following a thorough scientific risk assessment that concludes all safety standards are met. Pesticides that pose unacceptable risks are not authorised.

Pharmacy

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to extend the services that could be provided by community pharmacies as part of Pharmacy First. [HL314]

Baroness Merron: Pharmacies play a vital role in our healthcare system. We are committed to embedding Pharmacy First and building on it, expanding the role of pharmacies and to better utilising the skills of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. That includes making prescribing part of the services delivered by community pharmacists.

Physician Associates

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to continue funding (1) physician associates, and (2) physician associate apprenticeships, through the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme; and what plans, if any, they have to fund additional GPs through that scheme. [HL163]

Baroness Merron: The Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) provides funding for a number of additional roles, including Physician Associates, to help create bespoke, multi-disciplinary teams. The government currently intends to continue funding physician associate and physician associate apprenticeships through the scheme.

The government recently announced changes to the ARRS which allows primary care networks to recruit general practitioners (GP) through the scheme for 2024/25. This is an emergency measure for 2024/25 whilst the government works with the profession to identify a longer-term solution.

The ARRS is subject to annual review as part of the consultation on the GP contract with professional and patient representatives. NHS England works closely with the Department to implement any changes identified as part of this process.

Planning Permission: Public Consultation

Asked by Lord Young of Cookham

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to proceed with the policy of street votes authorised by Chapter 4 of Part 3 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023. [HL375]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Government is still reviewing its policy inheritance from the last

government, including in relation to street votes, we have announced on the 8 and 30 July the first steps we are taking to fix the planning system and unlock new housing. The Government will set out its plans for further planning reform in due course.

Poaching: Prosecutions

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bellamy on 21 March (HL3214) what assessment has been made of the drop in prosecutions for poaching in England, from 107 in 2019 to 34 in 2023. [HL533]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Government recognises the problems and distress which poaching can cause for local communities. Tackling it is one of the UK's national wildlife crime priorities.

The number of prosecutions for poaching in England can vary year from year due to a number of factors. For example, the levels of hare coursing, an abhorrent form of poaching, can be affected by the suitability of local ground conditions during a hare coursing 'season'. If it is too wet, there is an increased risk that the vehicles used to facilitate coursing might get stuck in fields where hares are found so the activity is less likely to be carried out. If it is too dry, the dogs used by coursers are at an increased risk of injury. The numbers of prosecutions in a local area will also depend on effective enforcement. The level of resourcing assigned to tackle poaching may vary year from year depending on decisions taken by local police forces.

The difference in prosecutions between 2019 and 2023 might also have been affected by a key change in legislation. The 2019 figure provided by the Ministry of Justice in its answer of 21 March (HL3214) is from a time prior to the enactment of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. This legislation increased police powers and sentences for a number of hare coursing offences. It is reasonable to suspect it had a deterrent effect on potential offenders and offences that may have led to prosecution. In combination with this new legislation, improved police tactics, intelligence and information sharing as well as the use of community protection notices and criminal behaviour orders may also have had an impact on recent poaching prosecution numbers. Finally, it must be noted that the 2023 figure of 34 used in the Lord Bishop's question is not consistent with the other years as it only includes prosecutions for the months from January to June rather than, as with the years being compared with it, the full calendar year.

Political Parties: Equality

Asked by Baroness Smith of Llanfaes

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to commence section 106 of the Equality Act 2010 relating to political party candidate information and if so, when. [HL188]

Baroness Twycross: The Government believes that every party standing for elections to the House of Commons, the Scottish Parliament and the Senedd has a duty to demonstrate progress towards better representation. Commencement of section 106 is one way of achieving that and we will set out our plans for this area in due course.

Poverty: Children

Asked by Lord Bradley

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that the Child Poverty Strategy will address the barriers which prevent children in poverty from accessing speech and language support. [HL293]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The number of children in poverty has gone up by 700,000 since 2010, with over four million children now growing up in a low-income family. This not only harms children's lives now, but it also damages their future prospects, and holds back our economic potential as a country.

My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister therefore announced, on 17 July 2024, the appointment of my right hon. Friends, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and the Secretary of State for Education, as the joint leads of a new ministerial taskforce to begin work on a Child Poverty Strategy. The government is committed to delivering an ambitious strategy to reduce child poverty, to tackle the root causes, and give every child the best start at life.

Tackling child poverty is at the heart of breaking down barriers to opportunity and improving the life chances for every child. For too many children, living in poverty robs them of the opportunity to learn and to prosper. Too many children, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds, leave primary school with unresolved speech, language and communication needs that have a lasting impact on their life chances.

To help tackle this now, the department will provide targeted support for teachers in early years settings and primary schools to support children with the development of speech, language and communication skills. More broadly, the department will work with teachers and curriculum experts to identify how oracy can be woven into lessons across the curriculum to support all children to succeed. Through this, the department aims to support teachers across the country to realise the benefits of using oracy to teach, by adding it to their repertoire and enabling more children and young people to flourish in life and work.

Early language skills are vital to enable children to thrive in the early years and later in life, including for all aspects of later attainment in school. To support early language skills, the department is investing over £20 million in the Nuffield Early Language Intervention programme (NELI). NELI is an evidence-based programme targeting reception aged children needing extra support with their speech and language development

and is proven to help them make four months of additional progress, which rises to seven months for those eligible for free school meals. In July 2024, the department announced that funded support for the 11,100 schools registered for the NELI programme, which is equivalent to two thirds of all English state primaries, would continue for the 2024/25 academic year.

Press Conferences: Sign Language

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to recommit to the provision of in situ British Sign Language interpretation of major press conferences and briefings as set out in the Disability Action Plan in February. [HL273]

Baroness Sherlock: Commitments made in the Disability Action Plan will be reviewed and considered as part of the Government's approach to improving the lives of Deaf and disabled people.

Press Recognition Panel

Asked by Lord Black of Brentwood

To ask His Majesty's Government whether any payments have been made from the Exchequer to the Press Recognition Panel during the calendar year 2024; whether any future payments are scheduled; and if so, whether they will publish any success criteria attached to them. [HL330]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) provides funding for the Press Recognition Panel (PRP) annually. MoJ made a payment to the PRP of £430k for the 2024/25 financial year in April 2024. Whilst the Lord Chancellor is the conduit for the PRP with HM Treasury, they have no responsibility under the Royal Charter that created the PRP, for setting the PRP's success criteria. Instead, the Royal Charter sets out that the PRP Board must have regard to the need to ensure the PRP achieves value for money. The PRP report against this criteria, and other deliverables, in its annual report and accounts which are publicly available.

Asked by Lord Black of Brentwood

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessments they have made of the value for money of taxpayer funding made in 2022 and 2023 to the Press Recognition Panel; whether they will publish any such assessments; and if none were made, why not. [HL331]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: Value for money lies at the heart of all Government decisions, and the Royal Charter sets out that the Press Recognition Panel (PRP) Board must have regard to the need to ensure it achieves value for money. The PRP has an objective of 'Ensuring our systems and processes are effective and provide value for money' and reports on this annually in its annual report and accounts, which are published on its website.

Prime Minister: Furniture

Asked by Lord Udney-Lister

To ask His Majesty's Government what changes have been made to the Downing Street podium since the general election, and whether a new podium has been or will be procured. [HL547]

Baroness Twycross: There have been no changes to the Downing Street lectern since the general election.

Prisoners' Release

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government how many prisoners, listed by prison and category of prisoner, have been released early as part of their measures to address prison overcrowding. [HL262]

Lord Timpson: We are constantly monitoring the use of End of Custody Supervised Licence (ECSL) and its impact.

ECSL was implemented in October 2023. Since its operation, the number of ECSL releases between 17 October 2023 and 30 June 2024 was 10,083. Further information on ECSL data is intended for future publication in due course.

Prisoners: Suicide

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what records they keep on the number of (1) suicides, and (2) attempted suicides, in prisons in England and Wales; whether, and if so where, those records are published; and how they utilise those records to track health and well-being outcomes in each prison where such records are kept. [HL161]

Lord Timpson: The data on self-inflicted deaths and self-harm across the prison estates is recorded in our published Safety in Custody Statistics. The number and rates of deaths and self-harm across the estate is published quarterly in the Safety in Custody Summary Tables, the latest version of which can be found at: [Safety-in-custody-summary-q1-2024_final_table.xlsx](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody-summary-q1-2024_final_table.xlsx) (live.com).

HMPPS does not produce official statistics on suicides or attempted suicides, because it is not always known whether a person engaging in self-harming behaviour intends or intended to die by suicide. We therefore collect data on self-inflicted deaths (a term that we use to refer to any death of a person who has apparently taken his or her own life irrespective of intent) and on incidents of self-harm.

This national data informs the development of the prison safety programme, and governors use local data to understand their populations and their safety risks and to inform their safety strategies. Each prison holds a regular safety meeting that includes discussion of the local self-

harm data and learning from any self-inflicted deaths that have occurred there.

Individuals assessed as at risk of suicide and self-harm are given individualised support through our case management process. This approach places a strong emphasis on having effective care plans in place to record, address and mitigate risks.

Private Education: Fees and Charges

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will exempt the children of UK armed forces personnel and diplomats who receive sponsorship for private education from their plan to impose VAT on independent school fees. [HL299]

Lord Livermore: The Government is committed to breaking down barriers to opportunity, ensuring every child has access to high-quality education, which is why we have made the tough decision to end tax breaks for private schools. This will raise revenue for essential public services, including investing in the education system.

The Government has set out the details of this policy in the technical note Applying VAT to Private School Fees and Removing the Business Rates Charitable Rates Relief for Private Schools which can be found at the below link. A technical consultation on the technical note and draft VAT legislation will be open until 15 September 2024.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-on-private-school-fees-removing-the-charitable-rates-relief-for-private-schools>

Asked by Lord Black of Brentwood

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the compatibility of their proposal to levy VAT on fees at independent schools with Article 2 of the First Protocol of the European Convention on Human Rights; whether they have taken independent legal advice on this matter; and, if so, whether they plan publish such advice. [HL412]

Lord Livermore: The Government is confident that the measure to introduce VAT on private school fees is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.

Private Education: VAT

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will publish an impact assessment, including an equality impact assessment, of their plans to remove the VAT exemption on independent school fees. [HL260]

Lord Livermore: As set out by the Government in a Written Ministerial Statement on 29 July, the Government will introduce 20% VAT on education and boarding services provided for a charge by private schools across the UK from 1 January 2025. 20% VAT will also apply to

pre-payments of fees for terms starting on or after 1 January 2025 made on or after 29 July 2024. These changes will not impact pupils with the most acute special educational needs, where their needs can only be met in private schools.

The Government will confirm the introduction of these tax changes at the Budget on 30 October. A Tax Information and Impact Note will be published alongside the Finance Bill.

Procurement Act 2023

Asked by Baroness Neville-Rolfe

To ask His Majesty's Government when they anticipate the Procurement Act 2023 will fully come into effect; and what steps they are taking to encourage buying from small and medium-sized British businesses by government departments, local authorities and the NHS. [HL514]

Baroness Twycross: The Procurement Act 2023 is currently expected to come into effect on 28 October 2024.

The Procurement Act 2023 introduces a range of reforms to make it easier for SMEs to access public sector supply-chains, and we will be ensuring that the powers in the Act are utilised to support the new government's priorities.

Public Bodies: Lobbying

Asked by Lord Black of Brentwood

To ask His Majesty's Government what restrictions they place on taxpayer-funded bodies in terms of their lobbying of parliamentarians and Government in relation to public policy affecting them, and in particular whether any such restrictions have been placed on the Press Recognition Panel. [HL329]

Baroness Twycross: The Department for Culture, Media and Sport does not have policy responsibility for the Press Recognition Panel to ensure that there is no Government interference in its independent work. There is a long-standing principle that public bodies must be politically impartial, and must ensure the proper use of public money at all times. As a public body, the Press Recognition Panel is bound by the Cabinet Office rules for all such bodies.

Public Duty Costs Allowance

Asked by Lord Rennard

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to undertake a review of the Public Duty Costs Allowance. [HL146]

Baroness Twycross: The Public Duty Costs Allowance (PDCA) has a limit of £115,000 per year. The limit is reviewed annually and at the start of each Parliament; the

government is currently in the process of reviewing the limit and will publish the outcome in due course.

There are no current plans to review the PDCA more widely.

Asked by Lord Rennard

To ask His Majesty's Government whether visits to the Republican Convention by former Prime Ministers could qualify for expenditure under the Public Duty Costs Allowance; and what further information they can provide on claims made under the scheme. [HL147]

Baroness Twycross: The Public Duty Cost Allowance (PDCA) is not paid to support private duties, nor is it used for security purposes.

Further details about the PDCA are on gov.uk at the following web link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-duty-cost-allowance>.

Annual payments are published in the Cabinet Office Annual Report and Accounts. The most recent report is available on gov.uk at the following web link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cabinet-office-annual-report-and-accounts-2022-23>.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

CO Annual Report and Accounts 22-23, p.186 [Cabinet Office Annual Report and Accounts 2022-2023.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-07-18/HL147>

Asked by Lord Rennard

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Neville-Rolfe on 23 October 2023 (HL10740), how the National Audit Office, in assessing the use of the Public Costs Duty Allowance (PCDA) for audit purposes, distinguishes between the costs of paying staff, travel, and accommodation expenses, incurred (1) as a result of political and commercial projects, including political activity overseas, and (2) costs which arise wholly and exclusively as a result of being an ex-Prime Minister, excluding commercial or political activities; and what consideration they have given to publishing a summary of PCDA claims showing different categories of expenditure on a regular basis. [HL181]

Baroness Twycross: The National Audit Office is independent of the government.

Former Prime Ministers submit invoices to the Cabinet Office setting out their claims. This information is used by the Cabinet Office for auditing and assurance purposes and is made available to NAO.

Most of the claims are used to cover the salaries of the staff that work in the offices of the former Prime Ministers. These staff are not civil servants, and it would therefore not be appropriate for the Cabinet Office to publish any further detail.

Public Expenditure

Asked by **Baroness Neville-Rolfe**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the publication of the Chancellor statement on public spending inheritance on gov.uk on 29 July, what edited changes were made in the "update to redacted content" on 29 July; whether a ministerial speech was originally posted on gov.uk with party political content and, if so, why; whether the Permanent Secretary was consulted on the original upload or the subsequent changes; and what steps are being taken to ensure ongoing compliance of HM Treasury's departmental communications with both the Civil Service Code and the Government Communication Service's Propriety & Ethics Guidance for Government Communicators. [HL519]

Lord Livermore: Due to an administrative error, an unredacted version of the Chancellor's speech was uploaded to GOV.UK. This was swiftly amended as soon as the error was flagged and an updated, redacted version was uploaded having been reviewed by senior managers.

Per best practice, this was tagged as "information has been added, updated or removed" and is visible on GOV.UK as "update to redacted content."

Public Expenditure: Wales

Asked by **Baroness Smith of Llanfaes**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent on 26 July (HL190), what specific plans they have to deliver better access to economic resources for Wales. [HL460]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The Government recognises that the Welsh Fiscal Framework is out of date and is committed to working in partnership with the Welsh Government to ensure that it delivers value for money. We will also restore decision-making over the allocation of structural funds to the representatives of Wales. The Secretary of State for Wales will work closely with HM Treasury and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in taking these commitments forward.

Public Order Act 2023

Asked by **Baroness Eaton**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they are taking steps to ensure that the freedom to pray silently will be upheld when section 9 of the Public Order Act 2023 comes into effect. [HL415]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Section 9 of the Public Order Act 2023 does not make any reference to silent prayer.

Section 9 makes it a criminal offence for a person who is within a Safe Access Zone to do any act with the intent of, or reckless as to whether it has the effect of, influencing any person's decision to access, provide or facilitate the provision of abortion services, obstructing or impeding any person accessing, providing, or facilitating the provision of abortion services, or causing harassment, alarm or distress to any person in connection with a decision to access, provide, or facilitate the provision of abortion services.

Public Service: Conduct

Asked by **Baroness Neville-Rolfe**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the answer by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 25 July (HC Deb col 797), what consideration they give to past breaches on security and probity in government in subsequent government security vetting; whether, when re-appointing Damian McBride as a government special adviser, they reviewed his autobiography to assess whether there was any evidence within it of him breaching a relevant code of conduct; and what account they took of any such evidence when deciding to re-appoint him. [HL518]

Baroness Twycross: All special advisers are subject to the same checks as other civil servants in terms of security vetting, and are contractually obliged to meet the standards set out in both the Code of Conduct for Special Advisers, and the Civil Service Code's values of Honesty and Integrity.

Pupils: Gender

Asked by **Lord Pearson of Rannoch**

To ask His Majesty's Government when they plan to respond to the consultation on the draft guidance for schools and colleges on gender-questioning children, published in December 2023. [HL433]

Asked by **Lord Pearson of Rannoch**

To ask His Majesty's Government what guidance they have issued on whether teachers should be required to use preferred gender pronouns for pupils whose legal sex remains the same as their biological sex. [HL434]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: Children's wellbeing must be at the heart of the Gender Questioning guidance for schools.

It is vitally important that teachers have clear guidance, which is why the department is looking carefully at the consultation responses before setting out next steps to take the Gender Questioning guidance forward. The department will also consider this in light of the evidence published in the Cass Review. This will include consideration of the appropriate guidance to give on the use of pronouns in school settings.

Railways: Engineering

Asked by **Baroness Scott of Needham Market**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase the supply of high-voltage engineers in the rail industry. [HL390]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: The Department works closely with the National Skills Academy for Rail to attract more talent into the rail industry. As part of this, the website “Routes into Rail” highlights career opportunities within the sector. The Department intends to develop a longer-term strategy for the rail workforce exploring productivity, efficiencies, skills, and diversity.

Rape: Prosecutions

Asked by **Lord Sandhurst**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to ensure that there are sufficient counsel available to prosecute rape offences. [HL451]

Lord Hermer: Good quality prosecutorial advocacy underpins our ability to deliver timely justice. The criminal justice system needs a resilient supply of advocates – both prosecution and defence – and the Crown Prosecution Service (“CPS”) recognises that this is currently proving challenging, particularly in rape cases. Addressing this shortfall is a priority for the CPS.

The CPS Advocate Panel is a time-limited quality-assured list of external junior advocates – self-employed barristers and solicitor agents – who undertake criminal prosecution advocacy for the CPS.

There are currently around 770 advocates on the CPS’ specialist Advocate Panel for Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (the “RASSO Panel”). Whilst there has been a decline in numbers over the past five years, there has been a notable increase of just under 100 RASSO Panel advocates during the last 12 months.

Notwithstanding this increase, with RASSO caseloads at record levels, further action is needed to drive up numbers to provide sufficient counsel. The CPS has taken steps to do so, which have included revising the entry requirements for the RASSO Panel, moving away from a written application for experienced advocates but still requiring them to have completed CPS-accredited RASSO training (or commit to do so within 3 months). A further change to support the progression of advocates into RASSO work and improving the pipeline will be announced later this month.

The CPS is also working with the Bar to improve the provision of RASSO training, to support wellbeing, and to promote the fact that – notwithstanding the challenges – RASSO work can be hugely fulfilling and support career progression.

Rats: Poisons

Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on non-target species of the use of difenacoum, bromadiolone, brodifacoum, flocoumafen and difethialone as rodenticides. [HL407]

Baroness Sherlock: The active substances difenacoum, bromadiolone, brodifacoum, flocoumafen and difethialone, collectively referred to as Second Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides (SGARs), are approved under the GB Biocidal Products Regulation (GB BPR) (assimilated Regulation (EU) No 528/2012) for use in pest control products against rodents.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is the body responsible for the regulation of biocidal products, such as rodenticides, and undertakes rigorous scientific evaluation of biocidal products and active substances before allowing them to be placed on the market.

Risk assessments carried out by regulators, including HSE, have shown that SGARs present a higher risk to non-target species than would normally be acceptable. However, it is recognised that alternative methods of rodent control may have limitations or may not always be suitable to tackle rodent infestations. Under GB BPR products with unacceptable levels of risk may still be authorised if it can be shown that the negative impact on society of not allowing their use would outweigh the risks of using them, as is the case with SGARs.

An industry led stewardship scheme is in place in the UK for professional use of SGARs, with the key aim being to reduce the exposure of non-target wildlife to SGARs. Stewardship is overseen by a Government Oversight Group (GOG) led by HSE with representatives of other government stakeholders. The GOG receives annual reports on the residues of SGARs that are detected in barn owls (the sentinel species for rodenticide stewardship). The GOG keeps the rodenticide stewardship scheme under review, and one of the areas under consideration is extending the monitoring of SGAR residues to other species.

Refugee Convention

Asked by **Lord Empey**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they are discussing with other countries amendments to the 1951 Refugee Convention to take into account the changed world circumstances. [HL498]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Government is not discussing amendments to the Refugee Convention with other countries.

Refugees: Afghanistan

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to assist women in Afghanistan who are at risk because of their activities promoting or supporting women's rights, democracy or human rights to come to the UK as refugees. [HL411]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) currently provide routes for eligible people in Afghanistan to come to the United Kingdom.

The ACRS was designed to support those who have assisted UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for UK values, as well as vulnerable people. We have welcomed individuals under all three referral pathways on the ACRS, providing a route for resettlement to the UK for at-risk women and girls in Afghanistan and the region.

Flights are continuing to bring those eligible to the UK at pace.

Regeneration: Coastal Areas

Asked by *The Earl of Clancarty*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to support the regeneration of seaside towns. [HL214]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Every town and city across the country has a vital contribution to make to our economy and we are committed to transferring power out of Westminster, and into local communities. We will give local leaders – including those in coastal communities – a range of new powers and tools to kickstart their economies and transform their neighbourhoods and high streets.

Our English Devolution Bill will support coastal communities, empowering them with a strong new 'right to buy' beloved community assets, such as empty shops, pubs, and community spaces. We will also introduce a licensing system for holiday lets to protect the spirit and fabric of communities and let them reap the benefits of thriving tourism. Details will be published in due course.

Relationships and Sex Education

Asked by *Lord Lucas*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many responses they received to their consultation Review of the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education statutory guidance, which launched on 16 May and closed on 11 July; and when they intend to publish their response to the consultation and summary of responses. [HL351]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The public consultation on the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education statutory guidance was open for eight weeks and received over 14,300 responses.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education has been clear that children's wellbeing must be at the heart of this guidance for schools and as such the government will look carefully at the consultation responses and consider the relevant evidence, including through stakeholder conversations, before setting out the next steps to make sure the guidance draws from the best available evidence. This will include plans for responding to the consultation.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus: Vaccination

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the expected coverage rates of maternal respiratory syncytial virus vaccination in the first year of the programme. [HL443]

Baroness Merron: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation considered uptake when developing their advice on a maternal respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccination programme. Uptake for the RSV vaccination programme is expected to be like that of other year-round maternal respiratory immunisation programmes.

Roads: Cayman Islands

Asked by *Lord Randall of Uxbridge*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the environmental impacts of the Cayman Islands government's proposed east-west arterial road project. [HL523]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The responsibility for any environmental impact assessments for road projects is with the Cayman Islands Government, as environment is devolved to Overseas Territories (OTs) governments. Defra regularly engages with the OTs to facilitate knowledge exchange on environmental issues, where requested.

Sayed Alwadaei

Asked by *Lord Scriven*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office sent notes to the Home Office in relation to Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei in August 2022 and March 2023 and, if so, for what purpose. [HL539]

Lord Collins of Highbury: While His Majesty's government does not comment on individual cases, as part of official processes Government departments do liaise as necessary.

Schools: Attendance

Asked by *Baroness Whitaker*

To ask His Majesty's Government what consultation with Gypsy and Traveller families they undertook with regard to the use and implications of the term "mobile child" in the statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance, published on 29 February. [HL282]

Asked by *Baroness Whitaker*

To ask His Majesty's Government how they will ensure that the use of the term "mobile child" in the statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance, published on 29 February, does not adversely and unfairly affect Traveller children. [HL283]

Asked by *Baroness Whitaker*

To ask His Majesty's Government how they plan to ensure that Traveller families understand what the term "mobile child" means, as used in the statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance, published on 29 February. [HL284]

Asked by *Baroness Whitaker*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take to provide clarity and support to local authorities with regard to the implementation of obligations associated with the concept of "mobile child" as used in the statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance, published on 29 February. [HL285]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and accompanying statutory guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance' use the term 'mobile child' to describe a child of compulsory school age who has no fixed abode and whose parent is engaged in a trade or business that requires them to move from place to place. This is a new term, but covers the same children as section 444(6) of the Education Act 1996.

Parents of mobile children have longstanding protection in attendance law and guidance, including how absence is recorded in the register, but feedback from parents, schools and local authorities suggested inconsistency in how these are applied. The term 'mobile child' is intended to clarify that the provisions are for all pupils who meet the definition as set out in regulation 3 of the 2024 Pupil Registration Regulations (and the statutory guidance) and that they concern the child's mobility rather than ethnicity.

A draft of the new Regulations and guidance was subject to full public consultation in 2022 and training has been provided both to schools and local authorities to improve consistency and support implementation. The department will continue to monitor feedback on implementation during the 2024/25 academic year.

Semiconductors

Asked by *Lord Jackson of Peterborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to review and update the national semiconductor strategy published in May 2023. [HL507]

Lord Vallance of Balham: The government's number one mission is economic growth. At the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology we are accelerating innovation to unlock more growth across the UK, as well as supporting the government's other missions such as the clean energy transition. The UK's science and technology sectors, including semiconductors, are already driving that economic growth and unlocking the innovations that will help us reach net zero.

We are committed to securing areas of world leading advantage in the semiconductor technologies of the future by focusing on our strengths in research and development (R&D), design and IP, and compound semiconductors. This will facilitate technological innovation, boost growth and job creation, bolster our international position to improve supply chain resilience, and protect our national security.

We will work closely with industry and academia to ensure our work is delivering real-world benefits for UK citizens.

Asked by *Lord Jackson of Peterborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to support international collaborations to enhance (1) resilience, and (2) workforce skills, in respect of the UK supply of semiconductors. [HL508]

Lord Vallance of Balham: Given the global nature of semiconductor supply chains, international collaboration is crucial for both the UK's resilience and economic growth. The government is working closely with international partners on supply chain resilience and developing its semiconductor skills base, including by implementing partnerships covering these issues with Japan, the Republic of Korea and India. It will support UK semiconductor organisations to participate in the EU Chips Joint Undertaking and drive international collaboration on semiconductors within the OECD's 'Informal Network on Semiconductors' and the G7 'Point of Contact' group, to further collective understanding of supply chains and coordinate resilience efforts.

Sexuality

Asked by *Baroness Jenkin of Kennington*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they consider Bondage, Domination, Sadism, and Masochism to be a protected characteristic within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010. [HL428]

Baroness Twycross: The Equality Act (2010) contains nine protected characteristics, which include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or

belief, sex, and sexual orientation. Section 12 defines sexual orientation as being an orientation toward people of the same, opposite, or either sex. The Equality Act protects orientation – sexual acts such as those described are not included within that definition.

Silicosis: Composite Materials

*Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle***

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to protect workers from silicosis, in particular the risk posed by the installation of engineered stone countertops. [HL488]

Baroness Sherlock: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) continues to inspect industries associated with exposure to respirable crystalline silica (RCS) and to respond to concerns about risk management reported to HSE.

Adequate control measures for protecting workers from the risks of exposure to RCS are legally required under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH), including water suppression, equipment enclosure, extraction and personal protective equipment, such as respirator masks. COSHH also requires workers to be trained to effectively implement such controls.

HSE works proactively with key stakeholders, trade associations and other industry bodies to raise awareness of the risks of exposure to RCS and to provide information and guidance on adequate control measures. This includes developing targeted communications to ensure that those at risk of exposure to silica dust from working with stone (including engineered stone) understand and are using the controls which can prevent exposure.

Skills England

*Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick***

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address the skills gap through the establishment of Skills England; and how they will measure the effectiveness of this new body. [HL277]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: Skills England will identify current and future skills gaps and put in place plans to address those gaps, bringing together central and local government, businesses, training providers and unions to meet the skills needs of the next decade across all regions.

Skills England will:

- Develop a single picture of national and local skills needs. It will work with industry, the Migration Advisory Committee, unions and the Industrial Strategy Council to build and maintain a comprehensive assessment of current and future skills needs. This will

also inform the department's policy priorities. We are establishing Skills England in shadow form within the department, and it is already taking on its important role in identifying skills gaps and talking to the key organisations that will need to work together to fill them.

- Identify the priority areas for skills training, including the training for which the Growth and Skills Levy will be accessible. This includes engaging with stakeholders on, and maintaining a list of, levy-eligible training to ensure that the mix of government-funded training available to learners and employers aligns with skills needs.

- Ensure that the national and regional skills systems are meeting skills needs and are aligned, including using local and regional data to produce a robust evidence base.

Having a close relationship with the key organisations needed to bring coherence to the skills system will enable Skills England to identify and address challenges efficiently and effectively.

Small Modular Reactors

*Asked by **Lord Naseby***

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with Great British Nuclear to speed up the decision-making process to pick a supplier of small nuclear reactors. [HL178]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: Great British Nuclear, the Department's arm's-length body responsible for helping deliver the government's nuclear programme, is currently running a small modular reactor technology selection process for UK deployment. This is a live procurement and is on-going. The window for submitting tenders has now closed and Great British Nuclear is currently evaluating bids. We look forward to providing further information in due course.

Social Rented Housing: Construction

*Asked by **Lord Birt***

To ask His Majesty's Government what percentage of the target for building new homes over the next five years will be for social housing. [HL248]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Government has committed to delivering 1.5 million homes in this Parliament, delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housing in a generation. We will work with councils and housing associations to build capacity and ensure we build the homes people need.

We will also introduce 'golden rules' in relation to grey and Green Belt release, to ensure development benefits communities and nature, including targeting the delivery of 50 per cent affordable housing on these sites.

Social Rented Housing: Sub-letting

Asked by *Lord Porter of Spalding*

To ask His Majesty's Government, for each of the years (1) 2019, (2) 2018, (3) 2017, (4) 2016, and (5) 2015, how many council or registered provider social homes they estimate were illegally sublet (a) by region, and (b) by property type, ranging from bungalows to high rise flat; and what percentage each of the foregoing figures represented of available stock. [HL435]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Department does not hold this data.

Social Security Benefits: Children

Asked by *Baroness Lister of Burtersett*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the estimated annual cost of abolishing the two-child limit, with respect to (1) Universal Credit, and (2) Child Tax Credit. [HL300]

Baroness Sherlock: No recent estimates have been published but external estimates are available. Tackling child poverty is at the heart of this Government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity. Our new Ministerial Taskforce will oversee the development of an ambitious strategy to reduce child poverty, tackle its root causes, and give every child the best start to life.

Sodium Valproate and Surgical Mesh Implants: Compensation

Asked by *Lord Kamall*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Merron on 26 July (HL259), by which date they expect to issue a response to the Hughes Report, and whether they plan to offer compensation as the report recommends. [HL430]

Baroness Merron: The government is carefully considering the valuable work done by the Hughes Report and will respond in due course.

Solar Power and Wind Power: Land Use

Asked by *Lord Mott*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the amount of (1) Grade 1, (2) Grade 2, (3) Grade 3A, and (4) Grade 3B, land that will be used to deliver their pledge to double onshore wind and triple solar power by 2030. [HL143]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: Current planning policies guide developments away from using Best and Most Versatile agricultural land where possible. Developers will submit information on land use and classification when seeking planning consent, and this information will

be taken into account by decision makers. However, Government does not set a prescriptive approach and as such does not hold this information.

Speech and Language Therapy: Prisoners

Asked by *Lord Bradley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to improve access to speech and language therapy services in prisons. [HL292]

Baroness Merron: NHS England's Regional Health and Justice teams directly commission the primary healthcare services within prisons, and oversee the healthcare delivery based on the primary care service specifications for prisons. In line with the specifications, healthcare providers should provide healthcare which includes supporting people's mental health, as well as communication, speech, and language needs.

Healthcare services in the children and young people secure estate are commissioned locally by Regional Health and Justice commissioners using core outcome-based specifications, which are benchmarked by the Healthcare Standards for Children and Young People in Secure Settings. These include several individual standards that reference speech, language, and communication needs, as part of the overall complex needs that are common in children held in these settings.

NHS England recently held an event for regional Health and Justice neurodiversity leads and commissioners on neurodiversity specialist recruitment, to support with recruitment and training in specialist areas such as speech and language therapists. This included a presentation from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapist's prisons lead. In addition, NHS England has allocated additional funding to Health and Justice regions which has been ring-fenced for use on their adult prison custodial neurodiversity pathways.

Sports: Sponsorship

Asked by *Lord Foster of Bath*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to reduce levels of advertising and marketing of gambling, as well as the sponsorship of sporting bodies by gambling companies. [HL500]

Baroness Twycross: We are in the early stages of the new Government and are still considering the full range of gambling policy. However, the Government recognises the impact harmful gambling can have on individuals and their families and, as stated in its manifesto, the Government is committed to strengthening the protections for those at risk. We will consider the best available evidence from a wide range of sources to inform decisions on how best to fulfil its manifesto commitment to reducing gambling-related harm.

SS Richard Montgomery

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to recent reports of further degradation of the structure of the SS Richard Montgomery, what precautions are planned to make safe the explosives in the ship. [HL380]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: There is no indication that the further degradation of the structure of the SS Richard Montgomery, which is to be expected given the vessel's age and location, has increased the risk associated with the wreck.

Following expert advice, work continues to reduce the height of the wreck's three masts.

We will continue to monitor the site and undertake detailed surveys to assess the wreck's condition which will inform future management strategies.

State Retirement Pensions

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Stedman-Scott on 6 December 2021 (HL4310), what is the median state pension for (1) men, and (2) women, for 2024–25. [HL367]

Baroness Sherlock: Data for 2024–25 as requested is not currently held by the department.

Sudan: Humanitarian Aid

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to fund civil society organisations in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile which provide emergency assistance to civilians in Sudan. [HL414]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The FCDO provides a range of support to and through Sudanese civil society organisations. This includes providing funding access to CSOs through the Sudan Humanitarian Fund, technical support to advance Localisation in humanitarian action in Sudan, and capacity support to the National NGO Forum. However, we do not earmark this support to particular locations or ask for geographical breakdowns for this kind of support.

Sudan: Humanitarian Situation

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the humanitarian situation in Sudan's Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile regions. [HL413]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The limited access environment and ongoing internet and telecommunication disruptions in Sudan means that reporting on the ground

is extremely restricted, so making an accurate assessment of the humanitarian situation on Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile regions is difficult. According to UNHCR, an estimated 332,582 people have fled to Blue Nile and 445,338 to South Kordofan since 15 April 2023. The recent Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) snapshot for Sudan reveals that 755,000 people are in catastrophe levels of food insecurity (IPC 5) in 14 states including South Kordofan and Blue Nile. This is the largest number of people in IPC 4/5 in the world, greater than Gaza, South Sudan, Mali and Afghanistan combined. The UK continues to press the warring parties to concede to unimpeded humanitarian access to allow the provision of, and access to, lifesaving aid in Sudan.

Sudan: Military Intervention

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the reported discovery of Emirati passports, allegedly linked to soldiers of the Rapid Support Forces, in battlefields in Sudan. [HL531]

Lord Collins of Highbury: There has been no assessment of the reported discovery of Emirati passports in battlefields in Sudan. In our engagement with international partners, the UK continues to emphasise the importance of refraining from actions that prolong the conflict. Those who have influence with the parties must use it to bring them to the negotiating table and to seek a political resolution to the conflict in Sudan.

Sudan: Peace Negotiations

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they are supporting efforts by the United States to encourage the warring parties in Sudan to enter ceasefire talks; and if so, what progress has been made in those talks, and in finding a resolution to the conflict. [HL399]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK is supporting the US and other international partners in pressing the parties to agree to enter ceasefire talks. The Foreign Secretary publicly welcomed the planned talks co-hosted by the US, Saudi Arabia, and Switzerland on 14 August and urged the parties to participate. We continue to use all diplomatic levers, including using our position as penholder on Sudan at the UN Security Council to press the warring parties to attend talks and commit to a permanent ceasefire, safe, unrestricted humanitarian access, and protection of civilians.

Supply Chains: Forced Labour

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what measures they are taking across all departments to ensure that British supply chains are free of slave labour. [HL377]

Baroness Twycross: Public procurement is a key lever for enabling delivery of the Government's missions, both in terms of sourcing the goods and services required by the public sector but also in using procurement policy to drive up standards.

The government will be ensuring that the powers in the Procurement Act are utilised to support the new government's priorities. New measures in the Act, which are due to come into force in October 2024, strengthens the rules on disregarding bids and excluding suppliers where there is evidence of modern slavery. This will apply even in circumstances where there has not yet been a conviction or technical breach of an international treaty.

Suspended Sentences

Asked by Lord Sandhurst

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to impose a duty on the Courts to suspend custodial sentences of 12 months or less. [HL450]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: There are no plans to impose a duty on the Courts to suspend custodial sentences of 12 months or less.

We intend to launch an independent review of sentencing. While the terms of reference are not yet defined, this will look to ensure the sentencing framework is consistent and clear to the public. We will announce more details of this review in due course.

Teachers: Labour Turnover and Recruitment

Asked by Lord Hardie

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to publish a new recruitment and retention strategy to address the shortage of teachers in England; and if so, what that strategy will include. [HL257]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The department knows that high quality teaching is the factor that makes the biggest difference to a child's education, which is why this government will recruit 6,500 new expert teachers.

The department is developing its approach and putting plans in place to achieve this, which will be shared publicly in due course. The department have taken the first steps towards delivering this pledge by restarting and expanding the teacher recruitment campaign, entitled 'Every Lesson Shapes a Life'. The department is dedicated to delivering change in partnership with the sector and my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State recently addressed over 14,000 people from the workforce and has committed to working alongside the sector to re-establish teaching as an attractive profession, and one that existing teachers want to remain in, former teachers want to return to, and new graduates wish to join.

Alongside this work, the department is delivering key programmes to improve teacher recruitment and retention. It knows that financial incentives are one of the ways to

increase teacher supply and this year the initial teacher training financial incentives package is worth up to £196 million.

Fair pay is key to ensuring teaching is an attractive and respected profession, which is why this government has accepted the School Teachers' Review Body's recommendation of a 5.5% pay award for teachers and leaders in maintained schools from September 2024.

The department is providing schools with almost £1.1 billion in additional funding in the 2024/25 financial year to support schools with overall costs. This matches what the department has calculated is needed to fully fund, at the national level, the teacher pay award and the support staff pay offer in the 2024/25 financial year, over and above the overall available headroom in schools' existing budgets.

Alongside pay, the department is also continuing to support mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing teachers in the first five years of their careers who chose to work in disadvantaged schools with retention payments worth up to £3,000 after tax.

Recruiting more teachers is a key part of the department's Opportunity Mission, but this government is also committed to tackling long-standing retention challenges to ensure teachers stay and thrive in the profession, including by addressing teacher workload and wellbeing, and support schools to introduce flexible working practices. The department have also made key resources available to help teachers better manage their workload.

Teesworks

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask His Majesty's Government on what date they have asked the Tees Valley Mayor to submit his final response to the independent Tees Valley Review published on 23 January, and whether they plan to publish this response in full. [HL455]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The previous government's independent review into the Tees Valley Combined Authority's oversight of the South Tees Development Corporation and Teesworks Ltd was published 29 January 2024. The then Secretary of State wrote to the mayor in March 2024 requesting a further report in six months' time. We expect to receive this report in September 2024, and to publish this in due course.

Thames Water: Nationalisation

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Hayman of Ullock on 23 July (HL Deb col 354) that taking Thames Water into public ownership would "cost billions of pounds and take years to unpick the current ownership model", whether

they plan to publish a full analysis of those costs. [HL429]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The cost of nationalisation was calculated in a report published by the Social Market Foundation titled 'The cost of nationalising the water industry in England'. The report estimated the costs of nationalising water companies, including Thames Water, would be £90bn. This research draws on a range of existing academic studies, as well as publicly available data from Ofwat, the London Stock Exchange and the annual accounts of the water companies. The research can be viewed on the Social Market Foundation's website www.smf.co.uk.

Tigray: Humanitarian Situation

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the humanitarian situation in Tigray since the end of the mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia; and how they are monitoring the situation now that no other international or regional mechanisms are reporting on it. [HL476]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The humanitarian indicators in Tigray remain worrying, with 3.8 million of the region's estimated population of 6 million needing humanitarian assistance this year. This is why the UK has increased funding for Ethiopia this financial year (2024/25) and adapted our programming to mitigate the most severe humanitarian outcomes, with an increased focus on lifesaving nutrition, health and water and sanitation programming for the most vulnerable populations, including in Tigray. We continue to engage with established systems for monitoring humanitarian need and response plans led by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). We are also investing in improving data and evidence to enable the humanitarian community to make informed decisions on the humanitarian response.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their assessment of reports that more than 2 million people are now at risk of starvation in Tigray and what action are they taking to support the affected communities. [HL478]

Lord Collins of Highbury: We remain concerned about high levels of humanitarian need across many parts of Ethiopia, including in the north. Climate shocks, conflict, disease outbreaks and high inflation are driving humanitarian need in Ethiopia, including in Tigray. The humanitarian community is targeting 3.8 million people in Tigray with food assistance over the July-September lean season to stave off hunger. A UK co-led pledging conference in April helped increase humanitarian funding by securing \$610 million from international development partners. This includes £100 million from the UK, which will provide lifesaving support for hundreds of thousands

of Ethiopians, including over 435,000 children and mothers suffering from malnutrition, and more than 230,000 needing access to emergency healthcare. This includes UK support to the government of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme which is strengthening food security and resilience for 8 million people living in extreme poverty across Ethiopia.

Tourism: VAT

Asked by The Earl of Clancarty

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will reintroduce VAT-free shopping for tourists. [HL211]

Lord Livermore: The Chancellor makes decisions on tax policy at fiscal events. The government will set out its fiscal plans at a budget on 30th October alongside a full economic and fiscal forecast.

Trade Agreements: Gulf States and India

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to outline the key objectives for the UK in the trade agreements with the Gulf Cooperation Council and India in light of the upcoming trade negotiations. [HL545]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The first mission of this Government is to drive economic growth. As part of delivering that mission, the Government will publish a trade strategy, aligned with our industrial strategy, to support jobs and communities in every part of the UK. Free Trade Agreements have a critical role to play in delivering this.

The Government has set out its intention to deliver trade negotiations with key trading partners including the GCC and India. Our trade programme, which is driven by engagement with businesses and stakeholders, will play to the UK's strengths, boost trade, and strengthen our ties with our international partners.

Trade Agreements: USA

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government what trading relationship they have with the State of Alabama, United States; and what key areas for growth they have identified as part of that relationship. [HL511]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The United States is the UK's largest single country trading partner, and we are exploring multiple avenues to strengthen trade ties across the country.

Alabama imported £411 million of goods from the UK, and exported £312 million of goods to the UK, in 2023. Alabama's single largest category of goods imports from the UK in 2023 was aircraft, spacecraft, and parts thereof, valuing £130.5 million.

We therefore welcome the participation of a delegation from Alabama in the recent Farnborough International Airshow, encouraging the growth of commercial ties between the UK and Alabama in the aerospace sector.

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to pursue a free trade agreement with the United States; and when they estimate they will achieve such an agreement. [HL512]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The U.S. is our largest single country trade partner, with trade totalling over £300bn in 2023. Supporting UK-U.S. trade and investment is a vital part of our mission to deliver economic growth. There are huge opportunities to build on this relationship, and ensure that we are working together to address the challenges of the modern economy.

Trains: Air Conditioning

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill on 29 July (HL238), and further to the incident mentioned in that Answer, what assessment they have made of the general incidence of East Midlands Railways (EMR) operating carriages without air conditioning in recent hot weather resulting in passengers and staff having to endure high temperatures and the associated health risks; and whether they plan to take any action against EMR in response. [HL535]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: While there has been no specific assessment into the functionality of air conditioning during the recent hot weather, a sample of EMR's trains are independently inspected each month to assess overall ambience, and this includes the temperature of the carriage.

Transgender People

Asked by Baroness Jenkin of Kennington

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to make it a criminal offence to misgender an individual. [HL347]

Lord Hanson of Flint: This Government has no such plans.

Transport: Wales

Asked by Baroness Smith of Llanfaes

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill on 23 July (HL Deb col 361) in relation to an upcoming meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Transport in Wales, when is the meeting, and whether they will report the discussions that take place in the meeting. [HL393]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Transport in Wales is planned to take place in August. The meeting will include the parties agreeing how any reporting from the meeting will take place afterwards. The Secretary of State has already met with the Cabinet Secretary for Transport in Wales.

Travellers: Caravan Sites

Asked by Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville

To ask His Majesty's Government by what mechanism their proposed planning and infrastructure bill will ensure the provision of new local-authority-owned Gypsy and Traveller sites. [HL245]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Requirements relating to planning for traveller sites are set out in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, revised in 2023. This asks local planning authorities to produce their own assessment of needs for traveller sites in their area and use this evidence to set pitch targets in the Local Plan for Gypsies and Travellers and plot targets for travelling show people. In producing the Local Plan for their area, local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of deliverable sites to provide 5 years' worth of sites against local targets.

Work is underway on the Planning and Infrastructure Bill. More information on what the bill will do is provided here in published (attached) background briefing: [FINAL - 17/07/24 King's Speech 2024 background briefing final GOV.uk.docx](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/123456/FINAL_-_17_07_24_King's_Speech_2024_background_briefing_final_GOV.uk.docx) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

The Answer includes the following attached material:

King's Speech [FINAL - 17_07_24 King's Speech 2024 background briefing final GOV.uk.docx.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-07-23/HL245>

Trazodone: Sexual Dysfunction

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government how many prescriptions for trazodone have been issued in each year since 2014; how many 'Yellow Card' reports of sexual dysfunction and persistent sexual dysfunction in respect of trazodone the MHRA has received each year since 2014; and what consideration NHS England has given to adding sexual dysfunction as a side effect on the patient information leaflets for trazodone. [HL401]

Baroness Merron: The following table shows the total number of items issued for trazodone from 2014 to 2023, and from January to May 2024:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total number of items</i>
2014	1,050,069
2015	1,083,974
2016	1,112,437

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total number of items</i>
2017	1,133,363
2018	1,157,717
2019	1,168,715
2020	1,191,060
2021	1,226,973
2022	1,238,983
2023	1,281,049
2024	553,866

Source: data was provided by the NHS Business Service Authority, based on information within the Prescription Cost Analysis published statistics, using British National Formulary chemical substance trazodone hydrochloride. Note: items have been dispensed, but not necessarily prescribed, in England.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is responsible for ensuring medicines, medical devices, and blood components for transfusion meet applicable standards of safety, quality, and efficacy. The MHRA rigorously assesses the available data, including from the Yellow Card scheme, and where appropriate it seeks advice from its independent advisory committee, the Commission on Human Medicines, to inform on regulatory decisions, including the amending of product information.

The MHRA has received a total of 20 Yellow Card reports of sexual dysfunction related reactions, suspected to be associated with trazodone, between 1 January 2014 and 29 July 2024. This includes reactions grouped under the medical dictionary's (MedDRA) Higher Level Terms, which are more specific than sexual dysfunction and persistent sexual dysfunction, and include erection and ejaculation conditions and disorders, orgasmic disorders and disturbances, sexual arousal disorders, and others. The following table shows the number of spontaneous suspected Yellow Card reports of sexual dysfunction related reactions suspected to be associated with trazodone in the United Kingdom, received by the MHRA each year from 2014 to 2024:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Reports of sexual dysfunction</i>
2014	1
2015	2
2016	2
2017	1
2018	1
2019	2
2020	2
2021	1
2022	5
2023	2
2024	1

Source: data provided by the MHRA.

“Persistent sexual dysfunction” does not represent a specific medical condition, so this precise term is not a category available for a structured search of the MHRA's Adverse Drug Reaction database. The structured data field search terms are drawn from the regulatory drugs dictionary, MedDRA, or from terms adopted in clinical coding guidance such as *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition*, or the *International Classification of Diseases 11th Revision*. A search of the database would therefore rely on manual assessment of individual cases.

It is important to note that the inclusion of a particular report on the MHRA's system does not necessarily mean that the adverse reactions reported have been caused by the suspect drug. Additionally, the number of reports received should not be used as a basis for determining the incidence of a reaction, as neither the total number of reactions occurring, nor the number of patients using the drug, is known.

The product information for trazodone, which includes the patient information leaflet, reflects the data currently available, and does not include sexual dysfunction as a possible side effect but does include priapism, the prolonged erection of the penis. The Summary of Product Characteristics for healthcare professionals states that there have been reports of priapism which have required surgical intervention, or led to permanent sexual dysfunction. Patients developing priapism should stop using trazodone immediately.

UK Integrated Security Fund

Asked by Baroness Neville-Rolfe

To ask His Majesty's Government for a progress report on the Integrated Security Fund, including new projects in the Middle East. [HL516]

Baroness Twycross: The UK Integrated Security Fund has been delivering programmes to tackle the highest priority threats to UK security at home and overseas since it began on 1 April 2024. The Government will consider the Fund as part of the upcoming Spending Review.

UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report from the General Consumer Council in Northern Ireland published in July regarding trade flows between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the impact on consumers. [HL302]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The UK government continues to monitor internal trade between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. The Windsor Framework represents a massive improvement on the arrangements under the old Northern Ireland Protocol, removing unnecessary checks and paperwork, lifting the

bans on a range of plants and products, and giving the Northern Ireland Assembly greater democratic powers over new EU legislation through the Stormont Brake.

This Government is committed to implementing the Framework in good faith and taking all steps necessary to protect the UK internal market.

UK Space Agency: Finance

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the funding and resources allocated to the UK Space Agency are being effectively used to maximize the benefits of the UK's membership in the European Space Agency. [HL321]

Lord Vallance of Balham: The Government maximises the benefits of its ESA membership through active participation in ESA boards and committees; and a range of initiatives to boost competitiveness and opportunities for UK industry, including the UKSA-ESA Industrial Policy Task Force.

This has secured over €60M of additional contracts for the sector since 2022; plus the ESA Business Incubation Centre's €3.4M investment which supports small and medium enterprises; and free bid-writing workshops.

UK Trade with EU: Exports

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their assessment of potential unilateral recognition of EU standards to enable UK producers to satisfy EU requirements whilst continuing to sell the same products in the UK. [HL473]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The UK currently recognises EU requirements, including the CE marking, for a range of products. This allows businesses to place goods on our market if they meet these rules, saving them time and money. The Product Safety and Metrology Bill will enable the UK to end recognition of EU product regulations, where it is in the best interests of UK businesses and consumers.

It will also enable the UK to make the sovereign choice to recognise new or updated EU product regulations where appropriate to prevent additional costs for businesses and support economic growth.

Ukraine: Armoured Fighting Vehicles

Asked by Earl Attlee

To ask His Majesty's Government further to the remarks by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 9 February 2023 (HL Deb col 1425), whether it is their policy that the integrity of the money laundering regulations is to be prioritised over facilitating the export of armoured fighting vehicles to Ukraine under previously granted export licences. [HL480]

Lord Livermore: Notwithstanding that the comments referred to were made by the previous government, this government's policy is that the Money Laundering Regulations are a vital part of the UK's comprehensive economic crime response and should not be a barrier to legitimate customers.

While the process of granting an export licence is thorough, it does not consider the source of funds related to the movement of relevant goods. It is therefore right that firms are required to carry out their own, risk-based due diligence when providing financial services to those engaged in the defence industry, regardless of any licences those customers may hold.

UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government when they will respond to the UN Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights "List of issues in relation to the seventh periodic report of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland"; and what other related actions are planned. [HL485]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: The Government is currently preparing its response to the United Nations Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' List of Issues Report, in relation to the Seventh Periodic Report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and will provide it to the UN shortly. We have had regular contact with the secretariat to the Committee on the timetable for our response.

The Government will then prepare for the interactive dialogue with the Committee which is expected to take place in 2025.

Unit for Future Skills

Asked by Baroness Wolf of Dulwich

To ask His Majesty's Government what was the cost of the Unit for Future Skills within the Department for Education in the financial year 2022–23. [HL549]

Asked by Baroness Wolf of Dulwich

To ask His Majesty's Government in which activities the Unit for Future Skills within the Department for Education engages other than, and in addition to, producing and updating their online dashboards. [HL550]

Asked by Baroness Wolf of Dulwich

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to date to ensure that the work of the Unit for Future Skills within the Department for Education directly influences the content of skills training in publicly funded education and training provision. [HL551]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The Unit for Future Skills (UFS) has now become part of the shadow body for Skills England. The purpose of the UFS was to provide key insights and data on current and future skills needs, as well as assessments on how current provision is meeting labour demand.

As well as producing and updating its online dashboards, the UFS has focused on a broad range of other activity. For example, the UFS provided robust data and insight on local skills use and provision, allowing current and future skills mismatches to be identified at an individual and local level. The UFS has:

- Ensured that Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) are based on solid evidence of local skills mismatches and future needs and are aligned with the government's economic priorities.
- Published a Local Skills Dashboard, showing statistics on local employment and skills including at local authority level, LSIP area and mayoral combined authority (MCA). This reached over 14,000 users since its launch in August 2022, averaging 400 to 600 users per month.
- Trialled the use of AI techniques to extract insights from across the 38 LSIP reports, with 75% of the reports referencing the UFS and the department's data.

The UFS worked across government and with wider organisations to improve the foundation of data and the evidence base for decision-makers. Key achievements included:

- Publishing detailed job projections up to 2035 for the UK, nations, and sub-nationally, including areas for LSIPs, Local Enterprise Partnerships and MCAs. This information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/labour-market-and-skills-projections-2020-to-2035>.
- Partnering with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on their development of online job adverts by profession and local area. This data is available here: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/labour-demand-and-volumes-by-profession-and-local-authority-uk>. The department will continue to co-fund this work for the next two years.
- Supporting key sectors to consider future skills needs, including publishing a dashboard on Science and Technology skills supply in May 2024 and developing the evidence base underpinning the Green Jobs Delivery Group's workforce action plan.

The UFS has also delivered Phase 1 of the UK Standard Skills Classification, which is a common skills framework that will allow a better understanding of skills supply and career pathways.

The total cost recorded on the finance system for the 2022/23 financial year was £1.86 million.

The main cost within the UFS was its staff. In the 2022/23 financial year, there were about 20 staff members, the majority being analysts. The team also

commissioned external work by researchers and data experts to support the aims of the unit.

Universal Credit: Care Leavers

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Manchester

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to publish the data, routinely collected since February 2022, on care leavers claiming Universal Credit. [HL268]

Baroness Sherlock: We have no plans to publish data on care leavers claiming Universal Credit.

DWP started routinely collecting data on care leavers claiming UC in February 2022. All new claimants are now given the option of reporting their care leaver status, and work coaches can record existing claimants' care leaver status if they are told about this.

This data is being monitored for data quality and does not meet the quality assurance standards for official statistics: the data coverage is still very limited and the claimants we have data on are not representative of the UC caseload. Therefore, no figures are available for publication.

The Department will continue to carefully review the data in the usual way.

UNRWA

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government how they have responded to the Israeli Knesset's decision to designate the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East as a terrorist organisation, and whether this will impact on future UK support and funding to that agency. [HL447]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Foreign Secretary announced on 19 July that the UK will resume funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), providing £21 million. We are committed to continuing our support to UNRWA, which plays a critical role in delivering humanitarian aid in Gaza and contributing to regional stability. Some of the UK's funding will be directed at supporting the implementation of management reforms recommended by Catherine Colonna's independent review. We are deeply concerned that draft legislation is being considered by the Israeli Knesset which would designate UNRWA as a terrorist organisation and will continue to monitor developments closely.

UNRWA: Finance

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask His Majesty's Government what safeguards they have in place to ensure that restoration of funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees will not result in UK funding being used to directly or indirectly benefit Hamas. [HL289]

Lord Collins of Highbury: When the Foreign Secretary announced the resumption of funding on 19 July 2024, he said that UNRWA has taken serious action in response to the appalling allegations that UNRWA staff were involved in the 7 October attack against Israel. The government is confident that UNRWA is taking action to ensure it meets the highest standards of neutrality and is strengthening its procedures. £1 million of the £21 million of new UK funding will be earmarked to support UNRWA implement the management reforms recommended by the Colonna review. Together with other donors, we will continue to monitor UNRWA's progress on implementation of its action plan. The FCDO will also continue to conduct our own annual assessment of UK funding to UNRWA.

*Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick***

To ask His Majesty's Government what conditions they have attached to the renewal of funding and support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and whether they plan to increase funding to address the humanitarian situation in Gaza. [HL446]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) plays a critical role in Gaza and the wider region. The Foreign Secretary announced on 19 July that the UK will resume funding to UNRWA, releasing £21 million. Some of the UK's funding will be directed at supporting the implementation of UNRWA's management reforms, that will implement the recommendations made by Catherine Colonna's independent report. The reforms include delivering stronger independent oversight, better detection systems, improved screening procedures and other areas.

The UK continues to play a leadership role in trying to alleviate the suffering - on 14 July, the Foreign Secretary also announced £5.5 million new funding to UK-Med to fund their life-saving medical work in Gaza.

Vaccination

*Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the National Immunisation Programme will be included in the recently announced NHS performance review. [HL229]

Baroness Merron: The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has commissioned Professor Lord Darzi of Denham to conduct an immediate and independent investigation of the National Health Service. Professor Lord Darzi will be considering data and intelligence across a broad range of measures to assess patient access to healthcare, the quality of healthcare being provided, and the overall performance of the health system. Full Terms of Reference for the review can be found on the GOV.UK website, in an online only format.

*Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will establish an Industry-NHS vaccine working group to consider how best to accelerate the National Immunisation Programme. [HL231]

Baroness Merron: Officials are working with the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry to refresh our industry-Government vaccine working group, which includes representation from across industry, the Government, and national health partners including NHS England, and will consider potential improvements to the National Immunisation Programme.

Veterinary Services: UK Trade with EU

*Asked by **Lord Agnew of Oulton***

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the benefits of a veterinary agreement with the European Union against any adverse impact (1) with our other major trading partners, and (2) on the UK's regulatory reform potential. [HL286]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Defra in conjunction with the Department for Business and Trade will work to reset the relationship with our European friends to strengthen ties and tackle barriers to trade, while recognising that there will be no return to the single market or customs union.

We will improve the trading relationship through seeking to negotiate a veterinary / Sanitary and Phytosanitary agreement with the European Union to prevent unnecessary border checks and help tackle the cost of food. We will ensure that any agreement we negotiate with our European partners is mutually beneficial, whilst also respecting our international obligations.

*Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick***

To ask His Majesty's Government what priority they will give to pursuing a Sanitary and Phytosanitary Veterinary Agreement; and when they expect any such negotiations with the European Union to commence. [HL304]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Defra in conjunction with the Department for Business and Trade will work to reset the relationship with our European friends to strengthen ties and tackle barriers to trade, while recognising that there will be no return to the single market or customs union.

We will tackle trade barriers through seeking to negotiate a veterinary / Sanitary and Phytosanitary agreement with the European Union to prevent unnecessary border checks and help tackle the cost of food.

I will update this House in due course on the next steps.

Visas: Digital Technology

Asked by **Baroness Lister of Burtersett**

To ask His Majesty's Government when they expect to publish the equality impact assessment for the transition to eVisas, which is already underway. [HL136]

Lord Hanson of Flint: An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed on the first phase of the roll out of eVisas to EEA nationals on 9 November 2020, which built on the Policy Equality Statement (PES) for the EUSS which was produced in 2017 and published on the gov.uk website on 18 November 2020:

[Policy equality statement: EU Settlement Scheme \(accessible version\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

A separate EIA considering equalities issues in relation to the use of digital only right to work and rent checks was published on gov.uk in June 2022: [Digital only right to work and rent checks: equality impact assessment \(accessible\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

We are also in the process of reviewing our eVisas EIA, setting out further analysis of the equalities issues in relation to the proposed prioritisation plan for roll out of eVisas and ceasing to issue physical documents. We plan to publish an up-to-date version of this EIA on gov.uk in a due course.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Digital only right to work and rent checks: EIA
[20210917_BRC_BRP_EIA_word.pdf]

Policy equality statement: EU Settlement Scheme
[EUSS_PES_November_2020.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-07-18/HL136>

Asked by **Baroness Lister of Burtersett**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many people the Home Office has contacted individually about the need to create a UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) account; how many people have so far set up a UKVI account since the start of the eVisa transition process; and what proportion of the total eligible for a UKVI account this represents. [HL139]

Lord Hanson of Flint: During the testing phase of the eVisa transition, the Home Office, under the previous administration, started emailing BRP holders directly in April 2024 with instructions on how to create a UKVI account to access their eVisa. This included sending anonymised invitations based on available contact email addresses.

We are now looking to start using other communication methods, such as text messages. As contact details may get out of date, we plan a wider external communications campaign to reach key stakeholders such as employers, landlords and education establishments. This will include the development of a range of communications materials,

routine updates on GOV.UK and extensive engagement with relevant stakeholders, in addition to direct messaging to those affected. The number of people who have created UKVI accounts to access their eVisas is changing rapidly, with a large number of customers already having created their UKVI accounts successfully.

Asked by **The Lord Bishop of Southwark**

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have received about (1) the delay in introducing eVisas, and (2) the requirement that, notwithstanding this delay, those with biometric residence cards must apply for a replacement eVisa by 31 December. [HL462]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office continues to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including ILPA and the 3million, as we roll out eVisas and are grateful for their feedback.

eVisas are a key part of delivering a border and immigration system which will be 'digital by default' by 2025, a change that will enhance the customer experience, deliver excellent value, and increase the immigration system's security and efficiency.

We have been inviting people to come forward at scale since March to register for an account so that they can access their eVisa. We will continue to deliver an extensive communications campaign to explain how people can register for a UKVI account and access their eVisa.

The transition to eVisas does not impact a customer's underlying immigration status. For many, the end 2024 deadline will have no impact; most people don't need to prove their immigration status on a day-to-day basis, and many of the checks performed will be unaffected by the expiry of Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs).

BRP holders will also still be able to use the online right to work and rent services to prove their rights once their BRP expires – provided they still have valid status – although we will encourage them to register for an account and to use that to access those services.

Customers will be able to create an account quickly and easily post-2024, using their expired BRP if needed, at www.gov.uk/evisa. There are also services in place, via our contact centre, to support vulnerable users and enable status to be verified in alternative ways on an emergency basis if a customer is not able to create their account immediately.

Notwithstanding these safeguards, we are keen to ensure that all customers take action to create an account and access their eVisa before the end of the year, to ensure they have the smoothest possible experience.

Visas: Digital Technology

Asked by **Baroness Lister of Burtersett**

To ask His Majesty's Government, regarding the transition to eVisas, what steps they are taking to ensure that individuals who miss an application deadline due to

difficulties in accessing their digital status, will not lose their leave to remain or are otherwise penalised as a result. [HL137]

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask His Majesty's Government what support will be in place for the 200,000 people, as estimated by the Home Office, with old paper legacy documents to make a 'no time limit' application, taking into account the particular needs of elderly and vulnerable individuals who may struggle to provide evidence of their residence or navigate the process without legal advice. [HL138]

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they can provide an update on what provisions will be in place to support people experiencing homelessness in navigating the transition to eVisas, including whether discretion will be given to those who miss application deadlines because of difficulties stemming from the digital transition. [HL140]

Lord Hanson of Flint: As part of our move to a 'digital by default' border and immigration system, physical immigration documents are being replaced by fully digital eVisas (an online record of the person's immigration status).

We understand some customers may feel apprehensive about transitioning to and navigating a digital system. We have already put a range of measures in place to support vulnerable and digitally excluded customers, including Assisted Digital support for account creation; 'helper' and 'proxy' roles who can assist with specific tasks or manage an account for the customer; and a dedicated contact centre that can help customers to access or recover their account, update their personal details or share immigration status information on their behalf if they are unable to do so.

In addition, we have a dedicated programme of grant funding, which will enable organisations to support vulnerable people, including those experiencing homelessness, to create UKVI accounts and accessing their eVisas. We expect these grant funded organisations to be operational by Autumn. Further details about the organisations will be published on gov.uk in due course.

We are working collaboratively with a range of third-party stakeholders who offer support to people requiring assistance in creating a UKVI account and accessing their eVisa. Information on accessing this support is [available on gov.uk](#).

We will not curtail a person's permission to stay in the UK if they fail to create a UKVI account before their BRP expires. For many, the end 2024 deadline will have no impact; most people don't need to prove their immigration status on a day-to-day basis, and many of the checks performed will be unaffected by the expiry of Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs). BRP holders will still be able to use the online right to work and rent services to prove their rights once their BRP expires – provided they still have valid status – although we will

encourage them to register for a UKVI account to access those services instead. If a customer cannot create an account before their BRP expires at the end of 2024, they will still be able to create a UKVI account quickly and easily after that date, using their expired BRP if needed.

While we are encouraging people who were issued with older forms of evidence of immigration status, such as ink stamps in passports, to transition to eVisas, they will still be able to prove their rights as they do today, using their legacy documents where these are permitted. That will not change at the end of the year.

The No Time Limit (NTL) process is for people with historic (legacy) status who want to upgrade to a modern, digital product and take advantage of its benefits, as well as for those who have lost their BRP or whose BRP has expired. Currently, we give them a BRP at the end of the process, whereas in the future they will be issued an eVisa, which will streamline the process.

Requests for evidence in such cases are an opportunity for the person to show that their leave has not lapsed and are conducted in line with the existing published guidance. We apply a balance of probabilities approach and exercise discretion where appropriate. We will also continue to support customers, especially those who may be vulnerable, including via our Assisted Digital service which is available in the UK to provide individual support by phone and email to individuals who require assistance with IT-related aspects of transitioning to eVisas.

Further information about eVisas and future updates will be available at www.gov.uk/evisa.

Visas: Palestinians

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of proposals for a temporary Palestinians visa scheme. [HL267]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The government is keeping all existing pathways under review in response to events in Gaza.

Visas: Seasonal Workers

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will meet with the Seasonal Worker Interest Group to discuss structural reforms to the visa scheme to protect workers from exploitation such as the charging of recruitment fees for those on a Seasonal Worker visa (Temporary Work). [HL195]

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to protect all workers on the Seasonal Worker visa (Temporary Work) from exploitation. [HL196]

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will ensure that intergovernmental agreements on safe and ethical work migration are in place before operators are allowed to recruit from new territories under the Seasonal Worker visa (Temporary Work) scheme. [HL197]

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to reform visa fees, and tax and pension contributions for those on Seasonal Worker visas (Temporary Work) to reduce the financial burden on such workers. [HL198]

Lord Hanson of Flint: A key objective of the route is to ensure that overseas workers are protected against modern slavery and other labour abuses. The sponsor licence regime places a broad range of responsibilities on Scheme Operators to ensure that the rights of migrant workers are protected.

The Government is carefully considering the Migration Advisory Committee's review of the Seasonal Worker route and will announce a detailed response in due course. We will consider all these points in the round. Any question regarding tax and pension contributions will, however, need to be directed to the relevant Government departments.

Should the Seasonal Worker Interest Group wish to request a meeting with the Home Office Ministers, I would ask that they write to the department and any such request will be given appropriate consideration.

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the recommendation of the Migration Advisory Committee, in its Review of the Seasonal Worker Visa, published on 16 July, that the UK food industry should cover the upfront costs faced by migrant farm workers. [HL239]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Government is carefully considering the Migration Advisory Committee's review of the Seasonal Worker route and will announce a detailed response in due course.

Vocational Education: Qualifications

Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Statement by Baroness Smith of Malvern on 25 July (HLWS20), who will undertake the review of reforms of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below; and how they intend to seek the views of those currently involved in the delivery of such qualifications as part of the review. [HL397]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: In July, my Right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education announced a short review of post-16 qualification reforms at level 3

and below. This review will begin immediately. It will examine the current planned reforms and look at how the department can ensure all young people have access to high-quality technical and vocational qualifications at level 3.

This rapid review will be conducted by the department and will engage with a wide range of stakeholders and providers who currently deliver qualifications at level 3 and below to inform the review. More details on this will be communicated to the sector shortly.

Vocational Guidance: Young People

Asked by Lord Allen of Kensington

To ask His Majesty's Government what action they are taking to ensure that young people have access to careers advice. [HL194]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: This government wants young people in all parts of the country to gain workplace skills and to explore career opportunities. In 2024/25, the department is investing approximately £30 million through The Careers and Enterprise Company to support secondary schools and colleges to improve their careers programmes in line with the government's careers framework, the Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance.

92% of secondary schools and colleges are part of a local Careers Hub that connects educators to employers and apprenticeship providers to improve practice and target support to local priorities. There are over 3,200 fully trained Careers Leaders who implement, coordinate and quality assure careers programmes. Over 400 leading businesses and 4,000 business professionals from across all sectors help schools and colleges to deliver high-quality careers education.

Advice is also available to young people digitally via the National Careers Service. The website helps young people, aged 13 to 18, start discovering their careers options. It includes around 800 job profiles. Young people can access information and advice via webchat and a telephone helpline which is supported by local community-based career advisers. The National Careers Service website can be found here: <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/>.

This is supported by the Skills for Life campaign, 'It all starts with skills', which promotes a range of priority skills programmes to young people, including apprenticeships, T Levels and Higher Technical Qualifications. Bespoke support is also provided during the exam results period. Get Help with Exam Results Careers Advice will be available from 15 to 31 August.

The government wants to go further to break down barriers to opportunity and give all young people the best life chances. According to a report from the Children's Commissioner, more than 1 in 3 children report that they do not know enough about good jobs available to them as they get older and leave school.

The department will open the doors to more employers by delivering two weeks-worth of high-quality work experience. This year, the department is piloting new approaches to workplace experiences that will benefit more than 25,000 young people across the country. The three models being tested are virtual workplace experiences for schools in coastal and rural communities; breaking down barriers to high quality workplace experiences for disadvantaged young people; and targeted workplace experiences focused on roles in future growth sectors.

Young people need support to capitalise on these workplace experiences, reflect on what they have learned and set future career goals. The department will train 1,000 careers advisers so that young people can get the expert advice they need.

This government will work closely with schools, colleges, employers and careers advisers to make sure all of our young people can achieve and thrive.

Vortioxetine

Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Markham on 26 March (HL3163), in each year since 2014, how many prescriptions for vortioxetine were issued; what was the annual cost to the National Health Service of those prescriptions; how many Yellow Card reports of sexual dysfunction and persistent sexual dysfunction the MHRA received for vortioxetine; and what consideration has NHS England given to adding sexual dysfunction as a side effect on the patient information leaflets for vortioxetine. [HL110]

Baroness Merron: The following table shows the number of items issued for vortioxetine and the net ingredient cost (NIC) from 2014 to 2023, and from January to May of 2024:

Year	Items issued	Total NIC
2014	0	£0
2015	74	£2,068.11
2016	12,736	£298,577.07
2017	43,023	£987,197.31
2018	80,922	£1,877,715.10
2019	134,351	£3,127,305.68
2020	193,682	£4,553,134.74
2021	248,533	£5,720,498.19
2022	290,907	£6,859,280.34
2023	339,017	£8,188,709.76
2024	156,164	£3,787,227.18
Total	1,499,409	£35,401,713.48

Source: data provided by the NHS Business Services Authority, based on information within the Prescription Cost Analysis published statistics, using British National Formulary chemical substance vortioxetine.

Note: items have been dispensed, but not necessarily prescribed, in England.

"Persistent sexual dysfunction" does not represent a specific medical condition, so this term is not a category available for a structured search of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's (MHRA) Adverse Drug Reaction database. The structured data field search terms are drawn from the regulatory drugs dictionary, the medical dictionary (MedDRA), or from terms adopted in clinical coding guidance such as *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition*, or the *International Classification of Diseases 11th Revision*. A search of the database would therefore rely on manual assessment of individual cases.

The MHRA has received a total of 29 Yellow Card reports of sexual dysfunction related reactions, suspected to be associated with vortioxetine, between 1 January 2014 and 21 July 2024. This includes reactions grouped under MedDRA Higher Level Terms, which are more specific than sexual dysfunction and persistent sexual dysfunction. The following table shows the number of spontaneous suspected Yellow Card reports of sexual dysfunction related reactions suspected to be associated with vortioxetine in the United Kingdom, received by the MHRA each year from 2014 to 2024:

Year	Reports of sexual dysfunction
2014	0
2015	0
2016	2
2017	1
2018	1
2019	0
2020	7
2021	6
2022	3
2023	6
2024	3

Source: data provided by the MHRA.

The inclusion of a particular report on the MHRA's system does not necessarily mean that the adverse reactions reported have been caused by the suspect drug. Additionally, the number of reports received should not be used as a basis for determining the incidence of a reaction, as neither the total number of reactions occurring, nor the number of patients using the drug, is known.

Sexual dysfunction was assessed as part of the clinical studies to support the authorisation of vortioxetine. The clinical studies indicated that doses between 5 milligrams and 15 milligrams did not show a difference from placebo in relation to the risk of sexual dysfunction. However, the 20 milligram dose was associated with an increase in sexual dysfunction. This information was included in the Summary of Product Characteristics (SmPC) for healthcare professionals for all strengths of vortioxetine since authorisation in 2021. The SmPC and patient information leaflet were subsequently updated in April 2024 to list sexual dysfunction as a possible side effect for all strengths, following reports of sexual dysfunction associated with doses below 20 milligrams.

Voting Rights: Bishops

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the right of Lords Spiritual to vote in general elections. [HL354]

Baroness Twycross: While the Lords Temporal are unable to vote at general elections to the House of Commons, this legal exclusion does not apply to the Lords Spiritual. In practice, however, it has long been the tradition that the Lords Spiritual do not vote at general elections.

Voting Rights: Young People

Asked by Baroness Smith of Llanfaes

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Khan of Burnley on 23 July (HL Deb col 485), when they intend to extend the voting franchise to 16 and 17 year-olds, and what plans they have to encourage young people to participate in the electoral system. [HL542]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: This Government will lower the voting age to 16 during this Parliament. This measure will strengthen our democracy and empower young people to participate in it, and we will develop plans for outreach and engagement with the newly enfranchised to encourage them to make the most of their new rights.

Water Companies: Nationalisation

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Hayman of Ullock on 23 July (HL Deb col 364) that nationalisation of water companies "would cost billions of pounds", whether they plan to provide details of that calculation. [HL363]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The cost of nationalisation was calculated in a report published by the Social Market Foundation titled 'The cost of nationalising the water industry in England'. The report estimated the costs of nationalising water companies would be £90

billion. This research draws on a range of existing academic studies, as well as publicly available data from Ofwat, the London Stock Exchange and the annual accounts of the water companies. The research can be viewed on the Social Market Foundation's website www.smf.co.uk.

Welsh National Opera: Finance

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will hold urgent meetings with representatives of the Welsh Government, or with representatives of Welsh National Opera, to discuss the financial crisis faced by that organisation following the reduction in its funding from Arts Council England. [HL222]

Baroness Twycross: We recognise the unique and valuable role that Welsh National Opera has to play in our cultural life. The funding settlement it receives from Arts Council England puts it among the highest funded cultural organisations in the country.

Taking into account funding received to support transition to a lower grant level, Welsh National Opera are expected to have received up to £15.25 million over 3 years (2023-26) from ACE.

While DCMS is aware of recent developments regarding Welsh National Opera's programme, the department has not carried out an in-depth assessment regarding their plans. This is because Welsh National Opera is not supported directly by the department, but instead by an arm's-length body, Arts Council England, whose core funding decisions are taken independently from central government.

I will work with colleagues across government and with the Welsh Government to understand Welsh National Opera's situation.

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the reduction in Art's Council England's funding for Welsh National Opera on (1) the annual number of performances by Welsh National Opera at venues in England, (2) the overall availability of musical performances in the regions of England, and (3) the number of educational and community projects affected by Welsh National Opera no longer touring in those regions of England. [HL223]

Baroness Twycross: We recognise the unique and valuable role that Welsh National Opera has to play in our cultural life. The funding settlement it receives from Arts Council England puts it among the highest funded cultural organisations in the country.

Taking into account funding received to support transition to a lower grant level, Welsh National Opera are expected to have received up to £15.25 million over 3 years (2023-26) from ACE.

While DCMS is aware of recent developments regarding Welsh National Opera's programme, the

department has not carried out an in depth assessment regarding their plans. This is because Welsh National Opera is not supported directly by the department, but instead by an arm's-length body, Arts Council England, whose core funding decisions are taken independently from central government.

I will work with colleagues across government and with the Welsh Government to understand Welsh National Opera's situation.

Wind Power: Seas and Oceans

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to (1) assess the impact, and (2) address the challenges, of the current supply chain constraints on the UK's offshore wind targets. [HL276]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The Government has established The Mission Control for Clean Power, led by climate expert Chris Stark, which will work alongside GB Energy, a new publicly owned company, to accelerate the transition to clean power.

The Government will collaborate with the Offshore Wind Industry Council (OWIC) to address supply chain constraints within the offshore wind industry. Industry published their Industrial Growth Plan in April which sets out opportunities to grow the offshore wind supply chain.

Furthermore, the Government is preparing to launch the first phase of the British Jobs Bonus for renewables as part of Contracts for Difference Allocation Round 7.

Windsor Framework

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Northern Ireland Executive regarding public consultation in advance of the Democratic Consent Vote in respect of the Windsor Framework, due to take place in the Northern Ireland Assembly by the end of 2024. [HL303]

Baroness Twycross: The Government is committed to supporting the Northern Ireland Executive as appropriate in consulting with businesses, civil society groups, and representative organisations. There is regular contact between the Government and the Northern Ireland Executive on a range of issues and further detail will be provided in due course.

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what measures they will put in place to mitigate the administrative burden on firms sending business-to-business parcels from Great Britain to Northern Ireland following the full implementation of customs controls under the Windsor Framework from autumn. [HL356]

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to communicate the next stage of the implementation of the Windsor Framework in autumn to businesses in Northern Ireland. [HL357]

Lord Livermore: The Government is committed to delivering the Windsor Framework. It has carried out extensive engagement with businesses (including parcel carriers) to implement the changes agreed under the Windsor Framework for moving goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, and will continue to do so.

Workplace Pensions

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support workers to better understand their pension options. [HL240]

Baroness Sherlock: The Government recognises that people face important decisions about how to use their pension savings and ensures everyone has access to free, impartial pension guidance through the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS). MaPS' MoneyHelper brand provides support on all areas of UK pensions to the public regardless of age. The service offers a range of pension guidance through articles and support from pension specialists, via written enquiries, webchat and a telephone helpline.

The Department for Work and Pension's digital Midlife MOT is a review for workers in their 40s, 50s and 60s that helps them take stock of their finances, skills and health, enabling them to get access to the best possible guidance. This includes helping people to understand planning for later life, including their workplace pension and State Pension options.

MaPS also offers more targeted support as people progress towards retirement. Pension Wise, a service delivered through MoneyHelper, can help anyone over 50 understand their options for accessing their Defined Contribution pension pots. After entering retirement, ongoing guidance is available through the MoneyHelper website, webchat and telephone helpline.

Pension schemes also have a responsibility under the Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Disclosure of Information) Regulations 2013 to provide information on the options available to members when they decide to access their pensions.

Furthermore, the Government signalled its intent, through the Pension Schemes Bill announced in the King's Speech, to place duties on all trustees of occupational pension schemes to tailor the retirement products they offer in order to support people when accessing their pensions. This will ensure pots are accessed in the right way to support people in retirement and keep money invested for longer.

*Asked by **Baroness Altmann***

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that low earners in Net Pay pension schemes do not suffer lower take home pay as a result of their employer's scheme choice. [HL290]

Lord Livermore: Legislation introduced in 2023 requires HMRC to make a top-up payment to those individuals contributing to a pension scheme using a net pay arrangement, whose total taxable income is below their personal allowance.

This means that low earning pension savers should receive similar outcomes regardless of whether they are members of a relief at source pension scheme or a net pay pension scheme.

HMRC are developing the IT solution to make these payments, in line with legislation, as soon as practicable in the tax year after the pension contributions were made. The first payments will be made in tax-year 2025-26 in respect of contributions made during 2024-25.

World Heritage Committee

*Asked by **Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay***

To ask His Majesty's Government which Minister will represent the United Kingdom at the 46th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in New Delhi. [HL269]

Baroness Twycross: No Minister represented the United Kingdom at the 46th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in New Delhi, as the timing of the Committee coincided with the appointment of new Ministers and confirmation of their portfolios.

However a delegation comprising officials from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Historic England, as well as the UK's Ambassador to UNESCO,

have attended and represented the UK at the Committee, and kept Ministers updated on relevant issues.

Yazidis: Genocide

*Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they are planning to review the approaches taken to address the involvement of UK citizens and residents in the Yazidi genocide; and whether they are initiating and pursuing judicial proceedings for genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes inflicted on the Yazidi people. [HL106]

Lord Collins of Highbury: In August 2023, the UK Government announced that it acknowledges acts of genocide were committed by Daesh against the Yazidis. This sends a strong signal of the UK's commitment of support to Yazidi communities and has been welcomed by Yazidi people, including the Yazidi Prince, Kurdish Regional Government Prime Minister Barzani, and British Parliamentarians. The UK is committed to ensuring that those responsible for the commission of serious international crimes do not go unpunished. Universal jurisdiction has been adopted in the case of certain heinous crimes to accord with customary international law and to comply with the UK's international obligations as set out in various treaties. These include the Geneva Conventions and the Convention Against Torture. The UK is committed to help other countries to prosecute offences that take place on their territory or within their jurisdiction, including the investigation and prosecution of crimes to which universal jurisdiction may apply. Hence, the UK has arrangements to provide mutual legal assistance to other countries and permits the surrender of its own nationals subject to statutory safeguards.

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