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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
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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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Ministers and others who make Statements or answer Questions are referred to only by name, not their ministerial or other title. The current list of ministerial and other responsibilities is as follows.

<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Baroness Smith of Basildon	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
Lord Collins of Highbury	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Whip
Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on Trent	Spokesperson for NI Office, Scotland Office and Wales Office, Whip
Baroness Blake of Leeds	Whip
Baroness Chapman of Darlington	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Lord Coaker	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
Lord Cryer	Whip
Baroness Gustafsson	Minister of State, Department for Business and Trade and HM Treasury
Lord Hanson of Flint	Minister of State, Home Office
Baroness Hayman of Ullock	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill	Minister of State, Department for Transport
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, Department for Business and Trade and Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, and Whip
Lord Kennedy of Southwark	Chief Whip
Lord Khan of Burnley	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Lord Leong	Whip
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, Whip
Baroness Sherlock	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
Baroness Smith of Cluny	Advocate-General for Scotland
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	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Culture Media and Sport, Spokesperson, Cabinet Office, 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

Wednesday, 27 November 2024

Breakfast Club Early Adopters

[HLWS253]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: My Honourable Friend, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Minister for Early Education (Stephen Morgan), has made the following statement:

This government believes that every child deserves access to a brilliant education, including the opportunity to have a supportive start to the school day. That is why the government made a manifesto commitment to introduce free breakfast clubs for primary school children, breaking down barriers to opportunity and setting every child up to achieve.

As a first step towards this commitment from today 27 November 2024, schools can apply to become one of up to 750 early adopter schools, providing free breakfast clubs from April 2025, as part of a test-and-learn phase. These schools will be funded to provide access to a free, universal breakfast club lasting at least 30 minutes that includes food. New breakfast clubs, once rolled out nationally, will be available to every state-funded school with primary aged children.

Breakfast clubs help make sure children are ready to start the school day. They support children's attendance and attainment. Breakfast clubs offer much more than just food; they can serve as a welcoming space for children, providing valuable opportunities for them to play, learn, and socialise at the beginning of the school day. Breakfast clubs also give families more choices in childcare and support with the cost of living. We want every school, every child, and every family to benefit, which is why the Chancellor tripled the investment in breakfast clubs in the Autumn 2024 budget to over £30 million in the 2025-26 financial year.

Full details on the early adopter scheme, including how schools can apply to take part, will be available on gov.uk

Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders

[HLWS251]

Lord Hanson of Flint: My hon Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls (Jess Phillips) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

My hon Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Victims and Violence Against Women and Girls (Alex Davies-Jones) and I, are today pleased to announce the launch of a pilot for the new Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (DAPN) and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs). DAPNs and DAPOs will be launching in Greater Manchester Police, three London

boroughs with the Metropolitan Police Service - Croydon, Bromley and Sutton - and the British Transport Police. A further two sites, North Wales Police and Cleveland Police, will be onboarded in early 2025.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 legislated for the new DAPN and DAPO with the aim to bring together the strongest elements of the existing protective order regime into a single, comprehensive, flexible order.

The rollout of these new protections is a key part of the Government's Safer Streets mission and the unprecedented aim to halve violence against women and girls (VAWG) in a decade. Domestic abuse is the most prevalent form of VAWG, with 2.2 million people estimated to have experienced domestic abuse in the year ending June 2024 [1]. Taking action to tackle domestic abuse and improve the justice system response to this abhorrent abuse is therefore central to achieving this Government's ambition. The previous government failed to roll out these new protections.

The new DAPN and DAPO will provide protection from all forms of domestic abuse, including controlling or coercive behaviour and will give the police and courts powers to impose tougher restrictions on perpetrators of domestic abuse, including mandatory notification requirements, attendance to a behaviour change programme and electronic monitoring. Breach of any requirement imposed by the DAPO will be a criminal offence punishable by up to 5 years' imprisonment, a fine, or both. The DAPO will also be the first cross-jurisdictional order available in the family, civil and criminal courts meaning police, victims and third parties can apply.

In accordance with Section 50 of the Domestic Abuse Act (2021), I am publishing a police statutory guidance on DAPNs and DAPOs and the consultation response. A public consultation was undertaken for eight weeks in February 2024 on the draft statutory guidance and this updated statutory guidance reflects the feedback from this consultation. The guidance aims to provide police forces with information to support the effective use of DAPNs and DAPOs. These will be published on GOV.UK today.

We would like to thank all the partners who have worked so hard to reach this point. This is an important step in strengthening the police and criminal justice response to domestic abuse and keeping victims safe.

[1] Crime Survey for England and Wales, respondents aged over 16 in England and Wales

Epigenetics

[HLWS254]

Baroness Merron: Today I am announcing the launch of a new research collaboration between the Government, UK Biobank and Oxford Nanopore Technologies. The new generation of nanopore-based molecular sensing technology created by this leading UK headquartered, life science company will be used to conduct detailed genetic sequencing of 50,000 samples in the UK Biobank, the UK's primary biomedical database. This represents a

significant expansion of Oxford Nanopore's collaboration with UK Biobank which started with a 5,000-genome pilot.

This new collaboration will create the world's first comprehensive dataset of epigenetic modifications in the human genome and demonstrate the UK's continued leadership in the field of genetics. Further exploration of epigenetics – the emerging study of how DNA and its expression is affected by modifications that do not change the underlying DNA sequence – could unlock a deeper understanding of the causes of diseases such as cancer and neurological conditions. This could pave the way for new diagnostic and targeted treatments, improving patient care and giving hope to the millions of people who live with conditions like these.

This expansion of the Epigenetics Programme is an early example of collaboration between Oxford Nanopore and HMG, building on the plans to form a strategic partnership [announced](#) on 5 November. I will provide further updates to the house on this collaboration as it develops.

Statutory Gambling Levy and Online Slots Stake Limit

[HLWS250]

Baroness Twycross: I wish to inform the House that His Majesty's Government has today published its response to the public consultation entitled 'Consultation on the structure, distribution and governance of the statutory levy on gambling operators'.

The current funding system for research, prevention and treatment of gambling-related harms reliant on voluntary donations from industry is no longer fit for purpose. While the industry's significant uplift in the level of donations in recent years is welcome, we recognise that the quantum of funding is not the only requirement for an effective and equitable system.

That is why we are taking the decision to introduce a statutory levy as a priority, in line with our manifesto commitment to reduce gambling harms. The levy will be paid by operators and collected and administered by the Gambling Commission under the strategic direction of the Government. Today's publication represents a significant change to funding and commissioning arrangements. It will deliver increased and trusted investment directed where it is needed most. This will further strengthen the evidence base to inform policy, and build an effective prevention and treatment system across the country. We want the public to be better aware of the risks of gambling, and for anyone suffering from gambling harms to access timely and effective support when and where they need it.

The Government will implement the statutory levy as follows:

The structure of the levy

The levy will be charged at a set rate for all holders of a Gambling Commission operating licence, depending on the sector. In recognition of the higher rates of problem gambling associated with products online compared to most land-based products, as well as the higher operating costs in the land-based sector, the levy will see online operators pay more towards research, prevention and treatment. The levy will be introduced via secondary legislation and ensure critical funding is flowing to priority projects and services in the next financial year.

We have had clear commitments from industry that operators will maintain their voluntary financial contributions to research, prevention and treatment under the current regime, especially to support the National Gambling Support Network, until the levy is in force. This consultation response should provide sufficient notice to licensees of our approach and ultimately delivers simplicity for all parts of the new system.

The distribution of the levy

The levy will be collected by the Gambling Commission, as above. To maximise the input of world-leading expertise and authority across our public bodies in the future system, the Gambling Commission will allocate funding to a commissioning lead for each of the research, prevention and treatment pillars:

- Research will be allocated 20% of levy funding, and will be overseen by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) to deliver a bespoke Research Programme on Gambling, and to the Gambling Commission to direct further research in line with the licensing objectives.
- Prevention will be allocated 30% of levy funding to develop a comprehensive approach to prevention and early intervention with the lead organisation as yet to be decided. However, further consideration of the evidence is needed in order to appoint a lead commissioning body in this crucial and novel area for the Government's approach to tackling gambling-related harm.
- Treatment will be allocated 50% of levy funding and be overseen by NHS England, and appropriate bodies in Scotland and Wales, to commission the full treatment pathway, from referral and triage through to aftercare.

I recognise that many of those interested in this area have been expecting the Government's final decisions on all aspects of the design of the future levy system, especially regarding prevention on which we consulted broadly. Ultimately, prevention is a crucial part of the Government's efforts to further reduce gambling-related harm and it is important we take the time to get this right.

However, the statutory instrument introducing the levy is silent on the distribution of levy funding, and our overriding priority is to meet our commitment to having the levy in place by the summer. That is why we are seeking to publish this initial response and progress the legislative process. We will continue to work at pace to

finalise our decisions on prevention soon. Our aim is to publish a further response document in the coming months and I will update the House in due course.

The governance of the levy

A Gambling Levy Programme Board will be established to be the central oversight mechanism for the Government. This will bring together key Government departments, including DCMS, HM Treasury, the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. It will also include representatives from the Scottish and Welsh Governments to ensure the levy is making an impact on the ground.

Alongside the Board, a Gambling Levy Advisory Group will be established to provide expert advice on funding priorities and emerging issues in support of commissioning bodies' efforts to deliver on the Government's objectives. We will conduct a formal review of the levy system within 5 years, where the structure and health of the levy system will be assessed and adjustments can be made to ensure we are achieving our aims.

Policy Impact

While we expect the statutory levy will have some financial impact on gambling operators, we think these are necessary and proportionate. The levy will increase the independence of spending and Government oversight regarding commissioning decisions. It will play an important part in the Government's wider aim to have a better informed and protected public when it comes to gambling-related harms. This investment will also ensure the Government and the Gambling Commission have the robust evidence needed to strike the right balance between freedom and protection as new challenges arise.

The publication today is further evidence of the Government's continued commitment to tackling gambling-related harm. We want to ensure that people across our country can access trusted and quality information, support and treatment when it comes to gambling-related harms. We believe that the introduction of the statutory levy is a crucial step in meeting these aims.

I will place a copy of the response to the consultation in the libraries of both Houses.

Stake limits for online slots

Online slots are a higher-risk gambling product, associated with large losses, long sessions, and binge play. However, unlike land-based gaming machines which offer broadly similar games, they have no statutory stake limits. The Gambling Act Review white paper, published on 27 April 2023 under the previous Government, committed to addressing the risk posed to players by these theoretically limitless online slots stakes. I wish to inform the House that His Majesty's Government intends to proceed with the introduction of stake limits for online slots through a statutory instrument.

A consultation was run from 26 July to 4 October 2023 that invited views on a stake limit for online slots games of £2, £5, £10 or £15 per spin. It also outlined options for additional protections for those aged 18 to 24 through a £2 limit, a £4 limit, or specific protections on a case-by-case basis. Ministers have considered the consultation and available evidence and the Government has decided to introduce stake limits of £5 per spin for adults aged 25 and over. We will also introduce a statutory maximum limit of £2 per spin for young adults aged 18-24 years old, whom the evidence suggests can be particularly vulnerable to harms associated with high stakes play.

These stake limits will be subject to an implementation period. This means that, following debates in Parliament, operators will have 6 weeks from the day the statutory instrument is made by the Minister to implement the £5 limit and a further 6 weeks to implement the £2 limit.

The introduction of these stake limits is proportionate and is a key step in achieving the Government's objective of reducing gambling-related harms. Importantly, these changes bring online slot games in line with existing restrictions on slot machines in casinos. These limits are also aligned with the recommendation made by the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee's Second Report of Session 2023-24, 'Gambling regulation', published in December 2023.

Veterans' Access to Social Housing

[HLWS252]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: My Honourable Friend the Minister of State for Housing and Planning (Matthew Pennycook MP) has today made the following statement:

As we set out in our manifesto and the Prime Minister reiterated in his conference speech on 24 September, this Government is committed to supporting our armed forces communities and ensuring veterans have access to the housing support they need.

To honour that commitment and facilitate access to social housing for veterans, I am today laying regulations to exempt all former members of the regular armed forces from any local connection tests for social housing applied by local councils in England.

Having a connection to an area should not be a barrier to housing for those who put their lives on the line for our country.

The regulations laid today will ensure that no veteran of the regular armed forces will need to meet a local connection test for social housing regardless of when they last served.

The Deputy Prime Minister has already written to local councils to remind them of the guidance and flexibilities to facilitate access of veterans to social housing.

Statutory guidance will be updated to reflect these changes. This includes specific guidance on improving access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces with examples of ways in which councils can ensure that Service Personnel and their families are given

appropriate priority for social housing. We know that councils use the flexibilities available to them, but we must ensure that no veteran is unfairly penalised.

In addition to these measures, the government has committed a further £3.5 million to the Reducing Veteran Homelessness Programme. This includes Op FORTITUDE, the single referral pathway for veterans at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness.

We will continue to work with the sector to deliver affordable homes to meet the needs of veterans as part of our broader commitment to deliver the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation, and in the development of our long-term housing strategy.

Veterans represent the very best of our country. The Government is committed to honouring their sacrifices and ensuring homes will be there for heroes across the UK.

Written Answers

Wednesday, 27 November 2024

African Union: Peacekeeping Operations

Asked by *Lord Boateng*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the African Union peace-keeping operations, and what assistance they provide to such operations. [[HL2689](#)]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK recognises the important role that African Union (AU) peace support operations play in delivering peace and security in Africa. The UK has voluntarily contributed £70 million to the AU mission in Somalia since 2022, in addition to providing £68.7 million through UN Assessed Contributions due to the mission's UN mandated support. The UK has also long provided technical advice on peacekeeping to the AU and helped train peacekeepers for the AU Mission in Somalia through the British Peace Support Team (Africa).

Agriculture: Inheritance Tax

Asked by *Lord Rogan*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they conducted an impact analysis before capping Agricultural Property Relief on inheritance tax at £1 million for Northern Ireland farmers; and if so, whether they will publish the results. [[HL2516](#)]

Lord Livermore: The Government published information about the reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief at GOV.UK.

It is expected that up to around 2,000 estates will be affected by the changes to Agricultural Property Relief (APR) and Business Property Relief (BPR). Up to around 520 of these are expected to relate to claims for APR (including those that also claim for BPR), and this number falls to around 430 when claims that include AIM shares are excluded. Almost three-quarters of estates claiming agricultural property relief (or those claiming agricultural property relief and business property relief together) each year are expected to be unaffected by these reforms.

In accordance with standard practice, a tax information and impact note will be published alongside the draft legislation before the relevant Finance Bill.

Antimicrobials: Drug Resistance

Asked by *Lord Reid of Cardowan*

To ask His Majesty's Government how they are enhancing surveillance systems for tracking antimicrobial resistance in the UK; and what measures they are taking to share this data with healthcare providers and the public. [[HL2624](#)]

Baroness Merron: The UK Health Security Agency publishes monthly data tables and quarterly and annual epidemiological commentaries on Gram-negative bacteraemia, Meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, Meticillin-Sensitive *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Clostridium difficile* (C. diff) infections in England using mandatory surveillance systems.

Data on infections and antimicrobial resistance are also published in the English Surveillance Programme for Antimicrobial Utilisation and Resistance (ESPAUR) annual report. The latest ESPAUR annual report for 2023 to 2024 was published on 14 November 2024.

A Four Nations Human Surveillance Group also meets regularly, and work is ongoing to interpret surveillance data consistently across the four nations.

Asked by *Lord Reid of Cardowan*

To ask His Majesty's Government in what ways they are collaborating with international partners to tackle antimicrobial resistance globally, and what role the UK is playing to shape global policies to address this issue. [[HL2625](#)]

Baroness Merron: The United Kingdom champions global action on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and played a lead role in the shaping and adoption of the political declaration on AMR at the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly. The declaration secured commitments on establishing an independent science panel and improved global access to antibiotics. Global governance will be crucial to implementing the commitments, and the UK is committed to working with multilateral fora, such as the G7 and G20, to push for continued momentum on delivering the High-Level Meeting's commitments and driving ambitious policies that improve access to effective antimicrobials.

In addition, the £210 million Fleming Fund is the largest single investment in global AMR surveillance. This programme partners with governments from Low- and Middle-Income Countries, UN agencies, and key academic institutions from around the world to strengthen surveillance systems and use data to tackle AMR's deadly impact in countries across Africa and Asia. The £145 million Global AMR Innovation Fund funds innovative products, like therapeutics, preventatives, and diagnostics, to prevent and mitigate AMR, working closely with Product Development Partnerships such as the Global Antibiotic Research and Development Partnership, and the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention attended the fourth Global High-Level Ministerial Conference on AMR in Jeddah, between 15 and 16 November. Together with other global leaders, the UK adopted the Jeddah Commitments, a framework for global action to combat AMR through a One Health approach.

Asked by *Lord Reid of Cardowan*

To ask His Majesty's Government what specific funding has been allocated in 2024–25 for research and

development of new antibiotics and alternative therapies to combat antimicrobial resistance; and how this compares to funding allocated over the previous five years. [HL2679]

Baroness Merron: To date, in 2024/25, the Department, through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), has allocated over £1.2 million for research and development of new antibiotics and alternative therapies. Further research in this area may still be funded this financial year. This compares to a total of £19.5 million of funding allocated to this area of research over the previous five-year period.

The NIHR has also recently announced a further £11 million of funding over five years, for antimicrobial resistance (AMR) research, through a new NIHR Health Protection Research Unit (HPRU), focused on healthcare associated infections and AMR research. The new HPRU will launch in April 2025.

Arms-Length Bodies: Monitoring

Asked by Lord Bailey of Paddington

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to evaluate arm's-length bodies; whether quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations will be subject to such evaluations; and if so, against what criteria they will be evaluated. [HL2604]

Baroness Twycross: Independent public body reviews are one of our most effective levers to drive improvement and ensure public bodies deliver value for the taxpayer. The Cabinet Office guidance on the undertaking and requirements for reviews of public bodies is published on gov.uk, and was last updated in April 2024.

Aviation: Fuels

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to implement financial mechanisms to support sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) production in the UK in view of the forthcoming SAF mandate. [HL2513]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: As announced in the King's Speech, the Government will be laying legislation to introduce a revenue certainty mechanism that will support SAF production in the UK. We expect the legislation for a revenue certainty mechanism to be in place by the end of 2026.

We also announced in the Budget that we will extend the Advanced Fuels Fund for a year to support the development of SAF plants in the UK.

Blood Cancer

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take to ensure blood cancer patients are given greater choice in decisions about their treatment and care within the 10-year NHS plan. [HL2718]

Baroness Merron: As part of the Government's five long-term missions, we have launched a 10-Year Health Plan to reform the National Health Service and make it fit for the future. To help shape this Plan, the government is currently inviting the public, including blood cancer patients, to share their views, experiences and ideas at the Change NHS online portal.

Following publication of the 10-Year Health Plan, we will develop a new national cancer plan, which will include further details on how we will improve outcomes for cancer patients, including those with blood cancer. We are in discussions about what form that plan should take, its relationship to the 10-Year Health Plan and the Government's wider Health Mission and will provide updates on this in due course.

Blood Cancer: Medical Treatments

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to (1) support the capacity of Systemic Anti-Cancer Therapy services, and (2) adopt new treatments for blood cancer patients. [HL2627]

Baroness Merron: The Department continues to support the National Health Service in England to increase cancer treatment capacity. NHS England had previously established a task-and-finish group to gather, collate, and compile available information to establish Systemic Anti-Cancer Therapy delivery capacity, and to generate recommendations for the short, medium, and longer term to alleviate any identified pressures on service delivery.

The adoption of new treatments into NHS England is generally the result of National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance and commissioner decisions. Implementation of any NICE approvals will be supported by a service readiness assessment and the development of additional capacity where necessary.

However, NHS England's Cancer Drugs Fund supports rapid access for NHS patients to the most promising new cancer medicines through managed access agreements, while further real-world evidence is collected where there is too much uncertainty for the NICE to be able to recommend routine funding.

Additionally, the Department is committed to implementing the recommendations of Lord O'Shaughnessy's review into commercial clinical trials, making sure that the United Kingdom leads the world in clinical trials, and that innovative, lifesaving treatments are accessible to NHS patients, including those with blood cancer.

Blood Transfusion Services

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of any regional variation in access to infusion services; and whether they have any plans to publish the latest data on this variation. [HL2628]

Baroness Merron: The Department and NHS England do not collect information on infusion services as such. However, the rise in the number of infused medicines approved for use in the National Health Service in England continues, as new and innovative medicines come to market.

The increase in demand for existing infused medicines such as chemotherapy and immunotherapies continues, as diagnosis and survival rates for patients improve. I understand from NHS England that over 70% of the secondary care medicines budget is spent on infused medicines.

In recognition of this, NHS England has created the Infusions and Special Medicines programme to oversee capital development, to improve capacity, and to develop the skilled workforce needed to compound these medicines.

BlueLight Commercial: Cost Effectiveness

Asked by Lord Wasserman

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hanson of Flint on 6 November (HL1962), how much of the financial benefits delivered by BlueLight Commercial since its foundation are attributable to procurement of (1) goods such as police uniforms and equipment and (2) services such as consultancy and professional advice. [HL2531]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Further to the answer I gave on 6 November (HL1962), of the £287 million of estimated financial benefits BlueLight Commercial have worked to deliver within policing in England and Wales since 2020/21, an estimated £168 million are attributable to goods and £93m are attributable to services.

BlueLight Commercial: Costs

Asked by Lord Wasserman

To ask His Majesty's Government how much has been spent on setting up and maintaining BlueLight Commercial since its foundation. [HL2532]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Between 2020/21 and 2024/25 BlueLight Commercial has been funded by the Home Office to provide commercial expertise and assistance to policing to identify and make efficiency savings. The Home Office has provided up to £26.4m in funding to BlueLight Commercial during that time.

Burkina Faso: Violence

Asked by Lord Boateng

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by Human Rights Watch that more than 220 civilians, including at least 56 children, were killed in Burkina Faso by the military in February; and what representations they have made to the military government of Burkina Faso regarding this report. [HL2570]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK is aware of reports of massacres of civilians by Burkinabe military forces in late February in the villages of Nondin and Soro in Burkina Faso's Yatenga province. On 29 April, the UK and USA issued a joint statement condemning the alleged violence against civilians and the subsequent media suspensions by the Burkinabe authorities. We have called on the Burkina Faso authorities to thoroughly investigate reports of these massacres and hold those responsible to account.

Buses: Carbon Emissions

Asked by Baroness Pidgeon

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to carry out a further round of zero emission bus funding. [HL2508]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The Zero Emission Bus budget for this financial year has already been allocated against ZEBRA 2 projects. The Department's spending envelope for Financial Year 2025/2026 was announced at the Budget. Allocations for individual funding lines will be agreed as part of the regular departmental business planning process and will be set out in due course.

Buses: Electric Vehicles

Asked by Baroness Pidgeon

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to address grid capacity in order to support the electrification of bus depots and garages; and if so, what is their timescale for doing so. [HL2507]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The Government works closely with local areas and bus operators to ensure issues and concerns with bus electrification are fully understood, and best practice is shared.

More widely, the Government is committed to expanding the electricity network to support the Clean Energy Superpower mission and is working closely with Ofgem and industry to mobilise the required investment at the scale and pace required. Price controls set by Ofgem ensure network companies are investing in infrastructure build, as well as smart management of network assets, to ensure the network has sufficient capacity.

Under the current distribution (low voltage) price control covering 2023-2028, Ofgem has allowed £22.2bn for upfront network investment, including £3.1bn for network upgrades which will help the grid to be ready for changing infrastructure needs.

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero has also announced that the newly formed National Energy System Operator has been asked to produce the first strategic spatial plan for energy, and it is also looking at reforming the connection process. Both those actions will help bus operators.

Buses: Sales

Asked by *Baroness Pidgeon*

To ask His Majesty's Government, following their consultation Ending the sale of new, non-zero emission buses, coaches and minibuses, which ran from 26 March to 21 May 2022, what is the end sale date for diesel buses. [HL2509]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: In spring 2022, the Department consulted on setting an end of sales date for new non-zero emission buses. At the same time calls for evidence on the decarbonisation of coaches and minibuses were conducted. The Government is considering options and will provide an update in due course.

China: Overseas Investment

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the role of Chinese military-linked companies linked to escalated military activities in the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea; and whether they plan to restrict UK investments in such companies and, if so, what criteria would be used to designate them. [HL2490]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: Maintaining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait is a matter of global concern. We consider the Taiwan issue one to be settled peacefully by the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait through constructive dialogue, without the threat or use of force or coercion. The UK also opposes any actions which increase the risk of miscalculation in the South China Sea.

We keep potential sanctions under close review, but it would not be appropriate to speculate about future sanctions as to do so could reduce their impact.

Christianity: Oppression

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Winchester*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to implement the 22 recommendations set out in the Bishop of Truro's independent review of Foreign and Commonwealth Office support for persecuted Christians, published in July 2019; and what is their timescale for doing so. [HL2533]

Lord Collins of Highbury: This Government is committed to championing human rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all abroad. An independent review of the FCDO's implementation of the Truro recommendations in 2022 was largely positive. This has concluded, and we are focused on the present while also looking to the future. We stand up for FoRB bilaterally through our diplomatic network, and multilaterally including through the UN and the Article 18 Alliance. For example, in October we engaged with the Special Rapporteur for FoRB during the UN General Assembly's Third Committee and raised

FoRB during November's Universal Periodic Reviews on Nicaragua and Qatar.

Conflict Resolution: Civil Society

Asked by *Lord Boateng*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the role of civil society organisations in conflict resolution and peacekeeping; and what steps they are taking to support this in (1) Sudan, (2) Israel and Palestine, and (3) Burkina Faso. [HL2542]

Lord Collins of Highbury: UK technical and diplomatic support has been instrumental in the establishment of the anti-war, pro-democracy Taqaddum coalition, led by former Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok. I have recently met Hamdok and the UK will continue to support civil society groups seeking to alleviate suffering, protect civilians and end the conflict in Sudan.

The death and destruction in Gaza are intolerable. The UK is pushing for an immediate ceasefire. The fighting must stop, the hostages must be released and much more aid must enter Gaza. A deal is on the table and we are urging both sides to show flexibility. The civil society organisations we work with are valuable partners of the government and we welcome the opportunity to continue to work with them closely.

Civil society organisations in Burkina Faso also play an important role in conflict resolution and peacekeeping, despite facing significant challenges. We are supporting efforts by civil society organisations to facilitate land conflict resolution, promote gender and social inclusion, and support survivors of gender-based violence.

Driving: Disqualification

Asked by *Lord Berkeley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their expected timescale for drivers with 12 or more points on their licence to be brought to court to be disqualified from driving, or to be disqualified in their absence. [HL2383]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Section 127 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 requires that court proceedings must commence within six months from the time when the offence was committed.

Endorsement and disqualification are always at the court's discretion and it remains open to the court not to disqualify or to disqualify for a shorter period than that specified, if it considers there are special circumstances.

Family Practitioner Services: Employers' Contributions

Asked by *Lord Scriven*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, if any, of the impact of the national

insurance rise for employers on service levels for (1) community pharmacies, (2) NHS dentists, (3) care homes, (4) social care, and (5) GP services. [HL2289]

Baroness Merron: We have taken necessary decisions to fix the foundations in the public finances at Autumn Budget. This enabled the Spending Review settlement of a £22.6 billion increase in resource spending for the Department from 2023/24 outturn to 2025/26. The employer national insurance rise will be implemented in April 2025, with the Department setting out further details on allocation of funding for next year in due course.

Female Genital Mutilation: Prosecutions

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to increase prosecution rates against those who have committed offences relating to female genital mutilation. [HL2563]

Lord Hermer: This Government has committed to halve violence against women and girls in the next decade and addressing female genital mutilation (FGM) is critical to achieving this.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) takes prosecuting FGM seriously. It secured the first conviction of conspiring to commit FGM in England and Wales this September and is taking steps to actively increase prosecutions.

Each CPS area has access to a dedicated FGM lead based within the Complex Casework Unit who have expertise in the prosecution of FGM cases. They share best practice to improve the CPS' response to FGM cases to help increase prosecution rates.

The CPS will provide early investigative advice to the police in all FGM cases, and through the CPS and Police Joint Protocol on FGM, investigators are encouraged to refer every case to the CPS at the earliest stage. The protocol ensures a robust and appropriate criminal justice response and aims to achieve improved and consistent performance in the identification, investigation and prosecution of FGM.

Additionally, the CPS has revised the prosecution guidance for FGM to address common areas of challenge, including the need for expert evidence. The guidance helps prosecutors to navigate the complexities of FGM cases and online training is also available to all prosecutors. The guidance is available here: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/female-genital-mutilation>.

Flood Control: Louth and Horncastle

Asked by Baroness Eaton

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Environment Agency will publish the findings of its investigation into the faults of the Horncastle Flood Alleviation Scheme. [HL2394]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: I can confirm that the Environment Agency has published its reports of their investigation into the fault at the Horncastle flood storage reservoir. The reports were published on the Horncastle Town Council website in February and a public meeting held in April for the community to raise questions. The reports conclude that the flooding was caused by heavy rainfall downstream of the reservoir and to the east of Horncastle in excess of the flood storage reservoir scheme design. It was not caused by the delayed closure of the reservoir sluice gate.

The reports can be found [Flooding – Horncastle Town Council](#). The report from February and the notes of the April meeting are attached to this answer.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

April Meeting Notes [Notes-from-Public-Flood-Meeting.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-11-11/HL2394>

Folic Acid: Flour

Asked by Lord Hampton

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of impact on health inequalities of fortifying only non-wholemeal wheat flour with folic acid, including the impact on groups that are less likely to consume such flour; what estimate they have made of the number of birth defects that will be prevented by the introduction of folic acid fortification; and what consideration they have given to increasing fortification to a level similar to that deployed in the United States and Canada. [HL2620]

Baroness Merron: The Government laid legislation in England on 14 November 2024 to introduce the mandatory fortification of non-wholemeal wheat flour with folic acid. Similar legislation in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland will be laid shortly. An impact assessment has been published to accompany this legislation. Fortifying non-wholemeal wheat flour with folic acid will help prevent approximately 200, or 20%, of Neural Tube Defects in the United Kingdom, such as spina bifida, in pregnancies.

We know that approximately 50% of pregnancies in the UK are unplanned, and folic acid intakes for women are lower than recommended, particularly amongst younger women and some lower socio-economic groups. The new regulations will help provide women with a higher baseline intake of folic acid, better protecting their babies in all scenarios. Importantly, fortification is intended to supplement, not replace, current advice on folic acid supplementation.

Non-wholemeal wheat flour is an established vehicle for mandatory fortification in the UK as it is already fortified with calcium, iron, niacin, and thiamine. By not requiring wider fortification of products, burdens and costs on businesses are minimised. Consumers are able to

obtain folate, the non-synthetic form of folic acid, from other food sources, and some products are already voluntarily fortified with folic acid, such as breakfast cereals and spreads. Limiting folic acid fortification to non-wholemeal wheat flour enables individuals to choose not to consume fortified flour, if that is their choice.

Many countries have folic acid fortification policies, but each country fortifies different products, has different approaches, populations, and diets. Both Canada and the United States fortify at levels below the UK. There is a clear consensus from scientific committees that the proposed levels of fortification are appropriate, and provide a balanced approach to fortification.

Fujitsu: Horizon IT System

Asked by Lord Beamish

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had, if any, with Fujitsu regarding a tender for the contract to replace the Post Office Horizon system. [HL2538]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: Post Office have a contract with Fujitsu until March 2025 for the Horizon IT system, and are in negotiations with Fujitsu regarding an extension to that contract. Officials at the Department have met with Fujitsu to discuss the importance of a contract extension, which would allow continuity of service in post office branches while Post Office develops a replacement to the Horizon system.

Government People Group and Office for Equality and Opportunity: Gender

Asked by Baroness Stedman-Scott

To ask His Majesty's Government what different gender identities are recognised by the Office for Equality and Opportunity, and the Government People Group. [HL2435]

Baroness Twycross: As was the case under the previous administration, there is no list of gender identities recognised by the Government People Group or Office for Equality and Opportunity.

Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office: Diplomatic Relations

Asked by Lord Shinkwin

To ask His Majesty's Government why the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in London continues to enjoy diplomatic privileges and immunities. [HL2518]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office Act 1996 provides the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office with certain privileges and immunities in line with the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations for the purposes of furthering

economic and trade interests. There are no current plans to replace this legislation.

Hong Kong: Foreign Relations

Asked by Lord Shinkwin

To ask His Majesty's Government what was discussed during the recent meeting between the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Indo-Pacific) and Hong Kong's Convenor of the Executive Council and whether the meeting included discussions on human rights violations in Hong Kong. [HL2520]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: Minister West met with Regina Ip on 31 October in an official capacity. Human rights were raised as part of the discussion.

The UK will continue to speak often and candidly with Hong Kong authorities across both areas of contention as well as areas for cooperation. Engagement with representatives of Hong Kong and China is pragmatic and necessary to support UK interests.

Asked by Lord Shinkwin

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the next steps following the recent meeting between the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Indo-Pacific) and Hong Kong's Convenor of the Executive Council. [HL2521]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: Following the meeting, Minister West visited Hong Kong for a two-day programme of engagements. Minister West met with stakeholders across the Hong Kong Government to discuss areas of co-operation and challenge on areas of contention.

Hong Kong: Migrants

Asked by Lord Shinkwin

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of cross-border transnational repression faced by migrants from Hong Kong and whether the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in London has facilitated it; and, if so, what steps they are taking to tackle it. [HL2519]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The first duty of any government is to keep the country safe and protect its citizens. The UK does not tolerate attempts by any state to threaten or intimidate UK residents. We continually assess potential risks and take the protection of individuals' rights, freedoms, and safety very seriously. This involves taking a proactive approach to countering the most acute forms of state-directed threats to individuals.

We will continue to implement measures in the National Security Act 2023, which make the UK a harder target for those states which seek to conduct hostile acts.

Home Office officials work closely with operational partners, the FCDO and other government departments to ensure that UK residents are safe and secure. Where individuals have concerns for their safety, they are advised to contact their local police in the first instance.

Horizon IT System: Compensation

Asked by Lord Beamish

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with Fujitsu regarding payment of compensation by the company because of their involvement in the Post Office Horizon scandal. [HL2493]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The Government welcomes the fact that Fujitsu has acknowledged their moral obligation to make a contribution to the cost of redress. At the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry the UK head of Fujitsu stated that he is willing and ready to engage with Government on the size of the contribution. Once the statutory Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry has reviewed all the evidence and the Chair, Sir Wyn Williams, has delivered his report, the Department will consider his findings and take appropriate action.

Housing: Energy

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to assist homeowners in retrofitting their homes to become more energy efficient. [HL2526]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: As the first step towards the Warm Homes Plan, the Government has committed an initial £3.4 billion over the next 3 years towards heat decarbonisation and household energy efficiency, with £1bn of this allocated to next year. Additional funding will be considered in Phase 2 of the Spending Review, as the Warm Homes Plan is further developed.

In addition to the £3.4 billion of direct capital spend, the Government is ensuring continued further investment of up to £1.4bn through the supplier obligation schemes in 2025/26: the Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) and Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS) which we are now reforming to improve delivery and ensure consumers save more on their energy bills.

Immigration

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hanson of Flint on 12 November (HL2103), whether they will now answer the question put; namely, what estimate they have made of the number of people potentially or actually affected by the decision to amend Appendix EU to the Immigration Rules to include the provision that where a person has been granted limited leave to enter or remain the Secretary of State may extend that limited leave

regardless of whether the person has made a valid application for such an extension. [HL2501]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office publishes statistics on the EU Settlement Scheme in the [Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release>). The number of people estimated to hold pre-settled status (five years' limited leave to enter or remain) under the scheme as of 30 June 2024 is 1,810,040. The data is available in EUSS_RA_01 Table 3 of the [Immigration system statistics, EUSS summary tables](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables#eu-settlement-scheme) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables#eu-settlement-scheme>).

Since September 2023, we have been extending the pre-settled status of those approaching its expiry date if they have not yet obtained settled status (indefinite leave to enter or remain). All pre-settled status holders who meet those criteria are potentially affected by the extension provision.

National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority: Powers

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority will have powers to mandate best practice in infrastructure planning including the use of the Construction Playbook as proposed by the Institution of Civil Engineers. [HL2512]

Lord Livermore: The National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA) will combine the functions of the National Infrastructure Commission and Infrastructure and Projects Authority. NISTA will bring oversight of strategy and delivery into one organisation, driving more effective delivery of infrastructure across the country.

As announced by the government in October, NISTA will be operational by Spring 2025. NISTA's governance will be confirmed in due course.

NHS Trusts: Standards

Asked by Baroness Manzoor

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to introduce league tables for NHS trusts; and if so, (1) what the league tables will be based on, and (2) what metrics will be taken into account. [HL2502]

Baroness Merron: We are putting in place a robust package of reforms to help tackle the National Health Service crisis. There will be no more rewards for failure. This includes a comprehensive review of NHS performance across the entire country, with providers to be placed into a league table. This will be made public and regularly updated to ensure transparency for the

public, and a clear basis for addressing failure. We expect this will include a range of metrics looking at both providers and systems, and further detail will be set out at the earliest opportunity.

Out of Area Treatment: Young People

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask His Majesty's Government how many mental health patients under 18 years of age were placed in a hospital or unit more than 10 miles from their residence in (1) 2022, (2) 2023, and (3) 2024 to date. [HL2770]

Baroness Merron: This information is not held in the format requested, as data on active out of area placements is not categorised by age.

Pension Credit

Asked by Lord Booth

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the current estimated time for applications for Pension Credit to be determined following the announcement of the removal of the Winter Fuel Payment. [HL2572]

Baroness Sherlock: The Department is significantly increasing the resource on Pension Credit to ensure it processes claims as quickly as possible, with approximately 500 additional staff being deployed to support the increase in applications generated from the successful Pension Credit take-up campaign.

The Department currently works to a planned timescale of 50 working days to clear Pension Credit claims.

Average Actual Clearance Times are measured weekly. The table below shows Average Actual Clearance Times (AACT) from the end of week commencing 2nd September to the end of week commencing 21st October, in working days.

Source		02/09/24	09/09/24	16/09/24	23/09/24	30/09/24	07/10/24	14/10/24	21/10/24
Pension Credit System	Pension Credit Claims AACT	26	26	26	25	33	37	44	52

Please note.

- The data shown is unpublished management information, collected and intended for internal departmental use and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard.
- These figures will not align to previous PQ responses due to retrospective updates as the data is sourced from live systems.

Police

Asked by Lord Wasserman

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hanson of Flint on 12 November (HL2136), what plans they have to link the Single Online Home system directly to police forces' case management systems so that information does not need to be manually transferred between the two. [HL2527]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office funds the police-led Digital Public Contact programme to develop and deliver a range of policing public contact services including the Strategic Integration Hub (i-Hub) which links the Single Online Home platform to forces' record management systems and reduces the requirement for manual transfer of information.

Asked by Lord Wasserman

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hanson of Flint on 12 November (HL2136), what plans they have to upgrade

the Single Online Home system to allow it to recognise a person returning to report a subsequent incident by basic information, such as their name and address alone, rather than requiring their full personal information each time a report is made. [HL2528]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office is funding the police-led Digital Public Contact Programme to deliver pilots which enable a member of the public to have a secure log-in and saved details when reporting crimes.

Asked by Lord Wasserman

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hanson of Flint on 12 November (HL2136), what plans they have to expand the functionality of the Single Online Home system, for example by allowing the reporting of suspicious behaviour rather than just potential crimes. [HL2529]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Members of the public can report suspicious behaviour to local forces through the 'Tell us about' tab within Police.UK websites on the Single Online Home platform.

Additionally, the StreetSafe tool, also accessed via Police.uk force websites, allows the public to report where they do not feel safe for environmental or behavioural reasons. This enables forces to build an evidence base of where communities have suspicions or feel unsafe for a variety of reasons.

Asked by Lord Wasserman

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hanson of Flint on 12 November (HL1776), which is the force currently being onboarded to the Single Online Home system, and

which are the two remaining forces not using the system. [HL2530]

Lord Hanson of Flint: At 14 November 2024, Lancashire Constabulary is currently being onboarded to the Single Online Home platform. Avon and Somerset Police and West Yorkshire Police are not currently using the platform. Future onboarding plans are under consideration.

Primary Health Care: Travellers

Asked by Baroness Whitaker

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the finding set out in the joint report by the Roma Support Group and Friends, Families and Travellers Enablers of digital inclusion in primary care for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities, published in June, that 46 per cent of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people surveyed reported they had no access to digital primary care services due to a lack of confidence in using technology, language barriers and a preference for in-person services, what steps they plan to take to improve those communities' access to digital primary healthcare services. [HL2442]

Baroness Merron: We know that some patients will struggle to access digital services. We will ensure patients have multiple routes of access to primary care by guaranteeing a face-to-face general practice appointment to anyone who wants one, and by implementing a modern booking system to end the 8:00am rush. Digital tools used in primary care settings must meet required minimum standards of functionality set by NHS England, ensuring a consistent quality of service for patients, and all organisations providing National Health Services, including primary care providers, must follow the Accessible Information Standard.

We are clear that all online tools must be provided as an additional option, not as a replacement for more accessible channels like telephone or reception services. This ensures that individuals without access to digital technology, including those from disadvantaged groups, are not excluded and can choose the method of communication that works best for them. All patients should be treated equitably no matter what route they access general practice with.

Public Expenditure

Asked by Lord Wigley

To ask His Majesty's Government how much money per head of population was paid by the Treasury to the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish Governments on the basis of the Barnett formula, in the most recent year for which figures are available. [HL2489]

Lord Livermore: All devolved government settlements are growing in real terms in 2025-26.

The devolved governments' Spending Review settlements for 2025-26 are the largest in real terms of any settlements since devolution. They are each receiving at least 20% more per person than equivalent UK Government spending in the rest of the UK. That translates into over £16 billion more in 2025-26.

The Barnett formula ensures broadly the same change in funding per person across the whole of the UK, while the underlying baseline funding broadly reflects higher needs in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The Fiscal Framework agreed between the UK and Welsh governments in 2016 added a needs-based factor into the Barnett formula to ensure Wales receives fair funding.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus: Vaccination

Asked by Lord Blunkett

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Merron on 18 November (HL2386), what lessons have been learned from the 2024 distribution of respiratory syncytial virus vaccines to primary care settings; and how these lessons will be applied to ensure early availability to all eligible patients from 1 September 2025. [HL2658]

Baroness Merron: The RSV vaccination programmes for pregnant women (to protect newborn babies) and older adults began in England on 1st September 2024. The national campaign is running year-round. It is not a seasonal programme.

UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) procure vaccines and manage UK buffer stocks for the RSV programmes. RSV vaccines are and will continue to remain available for primary care providers to order at any time throughout the year from UKHSA's NHS facing vaccine ordering website.

While a small number of primary care providers experienced delays with rolling out the programmes from 1st September, there have been no major issues with distributing RSV vaccines from central supply stocks. UKHSA will continue to monitor vaccine distribution, to ensure supplies remain readily available to providers so they can deliver the programmes.

Roads: Safety

Asked by Baroness Pidgeon

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to introduce a new road safety plan; and if so, what is their timescale for doing so. [HL2506]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: This Government takes road safety seriously, and we are committed to reducing the numbers of those killed and injured on our roads. My Department is developing our road safety strategy and will set out more details in due course.

Somaliland: Elections

Asked by Lord Boateng

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the fairness of recent presidential elections in Somaliland and of its progress towards recognition by the African Union and the international community. [HL2690]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK congratulates Somalilanders for peacefully exercising their right to vote on 13 November. We commend the National Electoral Commission for conducting a transparent voter registration and candidate nomination process and note that the preliminary assessment from observers has been that the election process was largely credible, transparent and inclusive. We stand ready to work alongside Somaliland to further strengthen democracy and accountability in the future.

The UK, alongside others in the international community, does not recognise Somaliland's unilateral declaration of independence. It is for authorities in Mogadishu and Hargeisa to resolve Somaliland's status through dialogue and broad consultation.

Windsor Framework

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent stakeholder engagement they have undertaken regarding the benefits of the Windsor Framework; and what steps they will take to engage further. [HL2630]

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what main issues emerged from their stakeholder engagement on the implementation of the Windsor Framework. [HL2631]

Baroness Twycross: This Government is committed to the faithful implementation of the Windsor Framework and stakeholder engagement is an important aspect of this. When agreeing the Windsor Framework both the UK and EU made commitments to implement enhanced engagement mechanisms, allowing stakeholders the routes to share their views on the implementation of the Framework.

Since the Political Declaration was published on 27 February 2023 the government has continuously engaged with relevant stakeholders to discuss the Windsor Framework and to ensure businesses are able to realise its benefits. We established the Joint Consultative Working Group (JCWG) sub-groups and the UK-EU joint engagement programme which meet regularly, with the most recent engagements taking place in October. This was referenced in the last UK-EU [Joint Statement](#), following the Specialised Committee on the Implementation of the Windsor Framework on 22 October.

Outside of these joint UK-EU engagements the UK government regularly engages with people and businesses in Northern Ireland. The Minister for the Cabinet Office has met with the First Minister and deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland to discuss the Windsor Framework. He also recently attended a roundtable at Queen's University Belfast with businesses and civic society representatives to discuss Windsor Framework implementation. Likewise, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland regularly engages with NI stakeholders and hosted a roundtable in Belfast for the Northern Ireland Business Brexit Working Group to discuss the Windsor Framework on October 31.

UK government departments continuously engage with stakeholders to discuss the technical aspects of the Windsor Framework arrangements and this government is committed to continuing this engagement further.

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