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**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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<b>Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on Trent</b>	Spokesperson for NI Office, Scotland Office and Wales Office, Whip
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<b>Lord Hunt of Kings Heath</b>	Minister of State, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
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<b>Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice, Whip
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<b>Baroness Smith of Cluny</b>	Advocate-General for Scotland
<b>Baroness Smith of Malvern</b>	Minister of State, Department for Education
<b>Baroness Taylor of Stevenage</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
<b>Lord Timpson</b>	Minister of State, Ministry of Justice
<b>Baroness Twycross</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Culture Media and Sport, Spokesperson, Cabinet Office, Whip
<b>Lord Vallance of Balham</b>	Minister of State, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
<b>Baroness Wheeler</b>	Deputy Chief Whip

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# Written Statements

*Monday, 2 December 2024*

## **BBC Funding Model: Licence Fee and Simple Payment Plan**

[HLWS269]

**Baroness Twycross:** I am repeating the following Written Ministerial Statement made on 29 November 2024 in the other place by my Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Lisa Nandy MP:

The Government is today providing an update on the short and long-term funding of the BBC.

The BBC is a vital British asset and makes a huge contribution to lives up and down the country. It supports our democracy, brings our communities together, and helps to shape and define our nation through telling stories about the lives of people in all parts of the UK. Continuing to make that contribution, and deliver the obligations placed upon it, requires that the BBC receives ongoing and sustainable public funding.

As the media landscape undergoes the next generational shift, the BBC too must adapt and be supported to do so. The forthcoming Charter Review is a key opportunity to set the BBC up for success long into the future. It will look at a range of issues and, as a priority for this Government, will start a national conversation to make sure the BBC truly represents and delivers for every person in this country. Charter Review will also look to uphold the BBC's independence and ensure that it maintains the trust of the public.

As we address these vital issues about the future form of the BBC, we must also ensure that there is a sustainable funding model that is fair for those who pay for it. The Government is keeping an open mind about the future of the licence fee, but we are clear that the BBC's funding and its operation are inseparable. As such, we will not be progressing the BBC Funding Model Review set up by the previous Government, and we are disbanding the expert panel set up to support that review, to whom we are grateful for their previous input.

In its place, the Government will be taking forward this issue as part of the Charter Review process, since what the BBC does and its future role is fundamentally influenced by how it is funded. We firmly believe that the unique obligations placed on the BBC demand continued, sustainable public funding to support its vital work. We will work closely with the BBC, and engage with other broadcasters, stakeholders across the creative industries as well as the British public to inform our thinking. This will include the opportunity for stakeholders and audiences across the country to respond to the Charter Review public consultation before the new charter comes into effect in 2028.

The Charter Review will be about ensuring the BBC thrives well into the future and can command the support of the people who pay for it. To achieve this aim, we must ensure the BBC is properly and fairly supported. The Government is determined to get the Charter Review right and future proof the BBC, but we can only deliver this if the BBC is on a stable financial footing for the remainder of this Charter Period. We will always take decisions on funding to provide certainty and stability to the BBC, reflecting our understanding of the pressures it faces, and ensuring those decisions deliver the best outcomes for Licence Fee payers.

To provide stability to the BBC and S4C over the remainder of this Charter Period, the licence fee will increase in line with CPI inflation, as required by the Licence Fee Settlement agreed by the last Government, in 2022. This means a £5 increase per household to £174.50 from April 2025, less than the £10.50 increase in the previous year. Based on our assumptions on future TV licence uptake, this increase will provide around £75 million more in licence fee income to support the BBC and S4C in delivering their essential public service remits, allowing them to continue to deliver world-class, educational and engaging programming.

This increase represents a return to the approach taken at the start of this Charter Period, using the average of CPI from the previous October to September. To provide certainty to the BBC, S4C and the public, the Government confirms that it intends to use this same approach for calculating uplifts in the remaining years of this Charter Period. We will introduce legislation to implement the April 2025 uplift when Parliamentary time allows.

We have already set out concerns about the impact of TV Licensing enforcement action on vulnerable households. While the Government strongly believes in public funding for the BBC given the public good it serves, we are aware of the financial difficulties faced by some households, and committed to supporting them to spread the cost of the TV licence. For this reason the Government is also announcing today a significant extension to the Simple Payment Plan.

For the BBC to be a truly national broadcaster, the BBC must be available even to those struggling. The Simple Payment Plan is an existing scheme that helps households struggling to pay for their licence fee throughout the year. However, it is currently available to a limited number of households. We will introduce legislation, when Parliamentary time allows, that BBC analysis suggests could double the number of households in financial hardship benefitting from the scheme to around 500,000 by the end of the Charter Period to support them to be able to access all the BBC offers. This forms part of a wider discussion I am having with the BBC and Ministry of Justice on how we can collectively reduce the impact of TV Licensing enforcement action on women and vulnerable people.

## Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner: Annual Report

[HLWS274]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** My rt hon Friend the Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention (Dame Diana Johnson) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I am pleased to announce that my rt hon Friend the Home Secretary is today publishing the Annual Report of the Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner.

The Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner covers independent statutory roles, who is appointed by the Home Secretary under the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

The Report covers the exercise of the statutory functions over the reporting year from April 2023 – March 2024.

This was the first and final report by Tony Eastaugh before leaving his post on 18 August 2024. I am grateful for his contribution to this important area of work and will be seeking to appoint a new Commissioner to fill this position as soon as possible.

The report has been laid before the House and will be available from the Vote Office and on GOV.UK.

## Building Safety

[HLWS267]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** My Right Honourable Friend the Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Angela Rayner MP) has today made the following Statement:

More than seven years after the Grenfell Tower tragedy, too many buildings in England still have unsafe cladding and the speed with which the problem is being addressed is far too slow. Only 30% of buildings identified in England with unsafe cladding have been fixed, with potentially thousands to be identified. As the remediation process drags on, residents continue to face distress, uncertainty and rising costs as they wait for action. This situation is completely unacceptable and must change.

For the first time, we have set firm targets for this important work. By the end of 2029 all buildings 18 metres and above with unsafe cladding in a government-funded scheme will be remediated, and all buildings 11 metres and above with unsafe cladding will either have been remediated, have a completion date or the landlords will be liable for severe penalties.

To drive this progress and ensure we meet these targets, I am today publishing our new Remediation Acceleration Plan which sets out decisive measures so that buildings with unsafe cladding are fixed faster, remaining buildings still at risk are identified and residents are supported throughout the process. The Remediation Acceleration Plan will be deposited in the House Libraries.

Many of the highest risk buildings are known to us. We must ensure they are urgently fixed. We intend to introduce new legal obligations on landlords to remediate unsafe cladding, with severe penalties, including criminal and civil sanctions for inaction. We also intend to provide further powers and resources to regulators so that bad actors are held to account.

We recognise the power of collaborative working and will drive coordination between regulators including through empowering metro mayors to lead local acceleration plans. Work is already underway with mayors being supported to play a new crucial role in driving remediation progress by leading local remediation acceleration plans alongside partners in local government, and this Government is determined to support and work effectively with mayors and combined authorities, who know their areas best, to deliver for residents.

Our plan sets out measures to accelerate cladding remediation in the social housing sector. From April 2025, we will also increase funding for social landlords applying for government remediation funding so that remedial works can start sooner. We will work with social housing providers and regulators to agree a long-term strategy for social housing remediation, to be announced in Spring 2025.

We are also publishing a joint plan that commits developers for the first time to stretch targets to assess all of their buildings by July 2025, to start or complete remedial works on 80% of their buildings by July 2026, and on all their unsafe buildings by July 2027. To meet these targets, developers will need to more than double the pace at which they have been assessing buildings and starting works so far this year. At least 28 developers have already endorsed the joint plan, covering over 95% of the buildings that developers need to remediate. We welcome the commitment that developers have made.

Developers have also agreed to expedite their work with social landlords to resolve contributions they should make towards works to make social sector buildings safe. This will mean that remedial works on affected social sector buildings will start sooner.

We will also ensure that the burden of paying for fixing historical building safety defects does not fall on leaseholders or further burden taxpayers. We intend that the Building Safety Levy will come into effect in Autumn 2025 and will be charged on all new eligible residential buildings in England. The levy will raise around £3.4 billion for remediation and help to ensure that those who are responsible for the building safety crisis help pay to put it right.

There is a long way to go to be confident that all buildings with unsafe cladding have been identified. Those responsible for their buildings' safety are failing to come forward to make their buildings known. There is a requirement to register buildings above 18m, but there is currently no single register that records all relevant buildings, and so identifying these buildings is a complex task. Through this plan we intend to introduce new legislation to drive action from those responsible for their

buildings' safety by tightening building assessment requirements and to create a comprehensive building register so that all relevant buildings can be more quickly identified.

However, we cannot wait for this change to start to make progress. We expect to have reviewed 175,000 Ordnance Survey building records for potential buildings at 11 metres in height and above by the end of March 2025. Through this approach, we expect to have reviewed 80% of the 11m+building stock, contacting responsible entities for those we believe might have a cladding risk concurrently, with plans to increase this to over 95% by late 2025.

We will share data with metro mayors, combined authorities and local regulators so that, when required, they can take action locally to ensure buildings are identified and remediated quickly. Residents who believe that their building may be unsafe can report this to regulators, or directly to us through the 'Tell Us' tool.

This government is clear that much more needs to be done to better protect blameless residents. All remediation projects should adhere to and evidence their compliance of the Code of Practice for the Remediation of Residential Buildings.

We will introduce new measures to support residents with the costs they face.

This includes new shared ownership guidance allowing leaseholders to sub-let their properties at market rates so that they are no longer penalised for issues that are no fault of their own and an updated process to limit the number of valuations that shared owners have to pay for when selling their homes. Social landlords continue to have the option to buy back homes where shared owners are unable to sell due to building safety issues.

Buildings insurance premiums are unacceptably high for too many leaseholders in buildings with fire safety issues. The Government will therefore work with insurers to consider whether, for the duration of remediation programmes, government might support the industry to reduce fire related liabilities in order to reduce the high insurance bills leaseholders are facing. We are also launching a public consultation on the introduction of a fair and transparent fee for leaseholders to pay to those who manage insurance for their buildings.

This Government has already reopened the Waking Watch Replacement Fund (WWRF) which has provided alarms in 346 high risk buildings. We estimate the fund has saved affected leaseholders on average £172pcm and it has played a role in preventing residents being evacuated from their homes. We are extending the Waking Watch Replacement Fund until the end of the next financial year, and will confirm long-term plans at the next stage of the spending review to protect leaseholders from costs while they wait for remediation to take place.

Finally, we are taking several actions that address criticisms the Grenfell Inquiry Report made of the manufacturers of cladding and insulation products. This

includes action towards preventing the most egregious companies, found to be part of the horrific failings that led to the Grenfell Tower tragedy, from being awarded government contracts. It also commits to system-wide construction products reform, including proposals on liabilities, robust sanctions and penalties against manufacturers.

The Remediation Acceleration Plan marks a pivotal moment in addressing the building safety crisis in England. We are taking decisive steps to fix buildings faster, identify all buildings with unsafe cladding, and ensure residents are safe and protected. We will work tirelessly to this end with resident groups and industry. I will provide an update in Summer 2025.

### **Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership**

[HLWS265]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** My Rt Hon Friend the Minister for Trade Policy and Economic Security (Douglas Alexander MP) has today made the following Statement:

On 27-28 November 2024, I attended the eighth meeting of the Commission of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) in Vancouver, Canada, where a number of issues were considered by CPTPP Ministers.

#### *Future Accessions to CPTPP*

At the meeting, a formal Commission Decision was taken to commence a CPTPP accession process with Costa Rica via establishment of an Accession Working Group (AWG).

CPTPP Ministers have reaffirmed on several instances that CPTPP is open to Accession Requests by economies that can satisfy the 'Auckland Principles', namely; i) preparedness to meet the Agreement's high standards; ii) a demonstrated pattern of complying with trade commitments; and iii) recognition that decisions are dependent on the consensus of the CPTPP Parties.

Through extensive discussions and deliberations on all accession requests, the UK and other CPTPP Members have identified that Costa Rica can satisfy the three Auckland Principles. As such, in Vancouver, CPTPP Ministers formally decided to commence the accession process with Costa Rica and establish an Accession Working Group.

This move demonstrates that CPTPP remains a living agreement, and one which is designed to expand and bring in new high standards economies. Over time this expansion process will grow the global reach of the agreement, creating further opportunities for CPTPP Members.

It is expected that the first AWG meeting will take place in the first half of 2025, during Australia's year as CPTPP Chair. The UK will continue to work with CPTPP Members to consider and discuss the remaining Accession Requests in accordance with the Auckland

Principles, and the establishment of an AWG for Costa Rica will not prevent this process.

To ensure that interested stakeholders are provided the opportunity to feed in views on the accession process of Costa Rica, today the Department for Business and Trade will launch a period of public engagement that will run across 8 weeks, closing on 24 January 2025. During this period, we will ask stakeholders what issues they would like us to consider when engaging in discussions on whether Costa Rica should join CPTPP and the terms on which they should join. The link to the public engagement questionnaire can be found here: [https://ditresearch.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_2bnop4ZwgdoynVvk](https://ditresearch.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2bnop4ZwgdoynVvk)(opens in a new tab).

#### *CPTPP General Review*

In addition to discussing future accessions, CPTPP Ministers also discussed progress on the CPTPP General Review during the meeting in Vancouver. The Joint Ministerial Statement (known as the “Vancouver Statement”) published following the meeting summarises the progress made in 2024, during the first phase of the General Review, and sets out the forward workplan for 2025. In 2025 members will deepen their discussions on whether and how the agreement should be revised or updated to remain relevant to the trade and investment issues and challenges we all face today, including in a number of areas of particular interest to the UK. The Vancouver Statement can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cptpp-joint-ministerial-statement-in-vancouver-canada-28-november-2024>(opens in a new tab).

The Department for Business and Trade has also today published a factual summary of responses received to the public engagement period on the General Review which was carried out from January to February 2024. These responses continue to inform our ongoing engagement in the General Review.

#### *Entry into force*

CPTPP Ministers at the meeting also warmly welcomed the impending Entry into Force of the agreement for the UK. In that vein, I would like to take this opportunity to confirm that the UK will accede to CPTPP on 15 December 2024 and that the Agreement will come into force on this date with Japan, Singapore, Chile, New Zealand, Vietnam, Peru, Malaysia and Brunei. Australia also recently ratified the UK’s Accession Protocol, on 25 October 2024, which means the agreement will enter into force with Australia on 24 December 2024. The deal will come into force with the remaining Parties 60 days after they each ratify.

When the UK accedes, the CPTPP will become a truly global trade deal, bringing new opportunities for British businesses, supporting jobs across the entire UK, and shaping the future of international trading rules.

## **Contingent Liability Continuation: Ukraine**

[HLWS264]

**Lord Coaker:** My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Luke Pollard MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I wish to inform the House that I am today laying a Departmental Minute to advise of an extension to an existing contingent liability associated with the provision of support to the Armed Force of Ukraine.

Since the start of the Russia’s illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, the UK has been at the forefront of international support to Ukraine, providing essential military capability to the Armed Forces of Ukraine. We have developed capabilities, working with UK industry, to increase the support to the Armed Forces of Ukraine to defend against the threat from Russia.

The Departmental Minute describes the contingent liability that the MOD will hold, which will provide an indemnity for any sums (including any legal or other associated costs) that UK Defence industry might be liable to pay in relation to legal action brought against them by a third party in respect of liabilities arising from any damage to property, injury or loss of life from any unforeseen malfunction of a system operated by the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

The MOD and other stakeholders are taking all reasonable measures to mitigate the risk of injury and or damage and Defence Legal Advisors assesses the likelihood to any risk arising as Low. The maximum contingent liability held against the MOD is unquantifiable and will remain for the full service life of the system.

It is usual to allow a period of 14 Sitting Days prior to accepting a contingent liability, to provide Members of Parliament an opportunity to raise any objections.

This notification confirms the intention to extend a contingent liability that was initially agreed in July, during the pre-election period when Parliament had been dissolved and the normal process for notification of reportable contingent liabilities could not be followed. Further details are provided in the Departmental Minute.

## **Defence Industrial Development**

[HLWS271]

**Lord Coaker:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence (The right hon. John Healey MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Today I am announcing plans to develop a new Defence Industrial Strategy that will be published in late spring 2025. I have published a Statement of Intent setting out the focus of the strategy and invitation to consultation on GOV.UK.

The UK faces acute and growing threats to our national security: Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the threat of escalation against NATO allies; conflict in the Middle East; tensions in the Indo-Pacific region and rising geopolitical instability.

The deteriorating security environment means we need a New Era for Defence: to restock our Armed Forces for today and the future; enact a deep reform of MOD procurement; add urgency and co-ordination to our efforts to support Ukraine; and develop a new Defence Industrial Strategy that is aligned to the Government's growth mission, creates new partnerships with industry, innovators and allies, and is matched to the urgency of the situation.

The Government's primary mission is to secure the highest sustained growth in the G7 – with good jobs and productivity growth in every region and nation in the UK. Defence has a significant role to play, and the Government has confirmed Defence as one of the eight priority growth sectors in its new industrial strategy.

Our aim is to produce a better, more integrated, more innovative and more resilient defence sector. A defence industry that can innovate at speed to help Ukraine defeat Russia; with the resilience to deter aggression by our adversaries; able to seize the opportunity presented by the technologies of the future, while growing our share of today's market through a new focus on exports.

The Statement of Intent published on GOV.UK outlines the proposed framework we will adopt and provides an early signal of our approach. It also sets out the priorities for this strategy which will inform extensive consultation with the defence sector.

I invite all stakeholders to respond to this Statement of Intent and consultation questions, either publicly or privately, by end of February 2025.

## Emergency Evacuation Information Sharing Consultation and Policy

[HLWS272]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** My rt hon Friend the Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention (Dame Diana Johnson) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I am today publishing the Government's response to the Emergency Evacuation Information Sharing Plus (EEIS+) consultation, which provides further detail of our new Residential PEEPs policy.

This policy, which was previously announced in a written ministerial statement on 2 September 2024 (HCWS62), introduces new measures to improve the fire safety for vulnerable residents in high-rise and higher-risk residential blocks of flats, and represents a milestone in addressing the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, a key priority for this Government.

Following publication of this Government response, subject to parliamentary approval, we will move to lay Regulations to implement the new policy.

A copy of the Government response will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and it will also be published on GOV.UK.

## HIV Action Plan: Monitoring and Evaluation Framework Report

[HLWS270]

**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:

This government is committed to ending new HIV transmissions within England by 2030. On 28 November, the Prime Minister made a significant downpayment on this as he announced that emergency department opt-out testing for HIV will be extended to both extremely high and high prevalence areas during 25/26, backed by £27million of funding from DHSC budgets, further confirming our determination.

I am pleased to update the House on the publication of the third HIV Action Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Framework 2024 Report. This report provides an annual overview to Parliament of the government's progress towards no new HIV transmissions within England by 2030, as committed to in the 2021 HIV Action Plan.

We are making progress towards our shared goals, and we should be encouraged by some of the highlights from the report.

- HIV testing in sexual health services increased by 8% from 2022 showing greater rises in some key population groups, such as gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men (GBMSM) where a 36% increase can be observed. This is coupled by a substantial progress to reduce new HIV diagnoses first made in England between 2019 and 2023, particularly among the same population group.
- Overall, new HIV diagnoses first made in England fell by 12% from 2,801 in 2019 to 2,451 in 2022. However, this figure rose by 15% to 2,810 in 2023.
- The blood borne virus (BBV) opt-out testing in emergency department Programme has been a great success and has helped us identify a significant proportion of new HIV diagnoses in 2023.
- England continues to be one of the few countries in the world officially meeting the 95-95-95 targets when using the global measurement methods. However, in response to stakeholders' suggestions, UKHSA adjusted the UNAIDS 95 95 95 targets, for the first time, so that they also account for people diagnosed but not in active HIV care and people for whom information on viral suppression was not reported. This new approach shows UNAIDS 90-90-90 goals were met in England in 2023 and partially met for the UNAIDS 95-95-95 goals, with 96% of all those living with HIV being diagnosed; 94% of those diagnosed receiving treatment, and 92% of those treated being virally suppressed and thus unable to pass on the virus.

- Due to success in HIV treatment, over half of people living with HIV are over the age of 50.

However, there is more work to be done to achieve our shared ambitions.

- Inequalities are widening in access to HIV prevention interventions, treatment and ongoing care, quality of life and stigma across most demographic characteristics, in particular, age, ethnicity, gender identity and exposure. For example, among men exposed through sex with men, HIV diagnoses fell by 35% amongst white men between 2019 and 2023, whilst in men from ethnic minority backgrounds, there was an increase of diagnoses from 26% in 2019 to 33% in 2023.
- Similarly, there has been a significant increase in identifying need for and initiation of HIV Pre-exposure prophylaxis (or PrEP): highest in white GBMSM and lowest in people from ethnic minority groups such as black African and black Caribbean.

As we reach the later stages in ending transmission, it is likely identifying everyone living with the virus and narrowing inequalities will become more challenging. Our approach relies therefore on concerted efforts across the whole system.

DHSC, the UK Health and Security Agency (UKHSA), NHS England and a broad range of system partners in consultation with people living with HIV, their friends and families and the voluntary and community sector, are considering evidence from this report and working together to develop a new HIV Action Plan that will address these challenges. We aim to publish the Plan in summer 2025.

I will keep Parliament updated on our progress and trust you will continue to support our shared goal of becoming the first country in the world to end HIV transmission.

### **Northern Ireland Act 1998: Consent Process**

[HLWS268]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Hilary Benn) has today made the following Statement:

Schedule 6A of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Article 18 of the Windsor Framework provides Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly (MLAs) with the opportunity to consider whether Articles 5-10 of the Windsor Framework (concerning the trade in goods) should continue to apply.

The upcoming vote is a decision for the Assembly, in accordance with the law. However, under the terms of Schedule 6A, where an MLA other than the First and deputy First Minister table a motion on democratic consent, I am under a legal duty to take reasonable steps to provide MLAs with such explanatory materials as it is reasonable to provide in order to assist them when deciding the question.

In recognition of the short time window within which the motion would be tabled and the vote held, I have

written to the Speaker of the Assembly today and enclosed explanatory materials that would discharge that duty. These materials have been published on GOV.UK and I shall ask that a copy be placed in the Library of the House for the record.

More broadly, the Government has also set out its commitment to resetting relations with the EU and negotiating new agreements which can remove unnecessary barriers to trade for businesses in the UK trading with the EU. In the Government's view, only the Windsor Framework arrangements in place under Articles 5-10 provide a credible basis to pursue those negotiations whilst also respecting Northern Ireland's unique circumstances and its place in the UK's internal market. The Government will listen carefully to the result of the vote, meet its legal duties flowing from that, and will engage fully with business, civic society and political leaders in Northern Ireland as that work continues and will update the House in due course.

### **Online Advertising: Taskforce Progress Report**

[HLWS273]

**Baroness Twycross:** I am repeating the following Written Ministerial Statement made today in the other place by my Honourable Friend, the Minister for Creative Industries, Arts and Tourism, Sir Chris Bryant MP:

The Online Advertising Taskforce is publishing today its Progress Report 2023-24, summarising work carried out since the publication of its Action Plan last year.

The Online Advertising Taskforce brings government and industry together to help tackle harms associated with paid-for online advertising and improve transparency, accountability and trust in the online advertising supply chain. Its primary focus has been on tackling illegal advertising and minimising children being served advertising for products and services illegal to sell to them.

The Taskforce Action Plan brought together and built on work that was in progress to strengthen evidence, minimise harm and protect consumers and businesses, including promoting and extending industry initiatives which address in-scope harms associated with paid-for online advertising.

In response to the Action Plan, six working groups were formed, each with a specific focus on an area identified within the Plan. Some focussed on pre-existing industry initiatives that could be enhanced, while others focussed on particular issues affecting transparency and accountability in online advertising, and the development of responsive strategies. These groups have been key drivers of action, enabling closer collaboration and development of more detailed insight and there is further work that these groups can take forward to build on the achievements so far.

Alongside this report I am also publishing an Online Advertising Experiences survey commissioned by DCMS and carried out by Ipsos. This report covers perceived



exposure to illegal and misleading advertising online, including parental perception of child exposure. It provides insight into the type and scale of exposure, impacts, and any follow up actions taken. It was commissioned to provide a baseline understanding of how people understood the risks online, particularly those associated with online advertising. While this report provides useful evidence and takes us a step further in understanding online advertising behaviours, the Research Working Group, under the Taskforce, will assess how we can build on this evidence.

I chaired a further meeting of the Taskforce on 4 November, at which we agreed updated terms of reference and a renewed focus for the next year. The continued work of the Taskforce and its working groups will be very important to help us understand and address the issues facing the online advertising sector, particularly those around trust and transparency. This will allow for further work in this area, with the work already completed enabling a sharper focus moving forward.

The progress report and research are published on gov.uk today and copies will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

### **Personal Injury Discount Rate**

[HLWS266]

**Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede:** My right honourable friend the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP) has today made the following Statement:

This morning, I notified the London Stock Exchange group that I would today lay a Statutory Instrument to change the discount rate applicable to personal injury lump sum compensation payments in England and Wales to 0.5%. The new rate will come into force on 11 January 2025, in line with the statutory timelines set out in the Damages Act 1996, as amended by the Civil Liability Act 2018.

As Lord Chancellor, it is my statutory duty under the Damages Act to periodically determine the discount rate which courts must consider when awarding compensation for future financial losses in the form of a lump sum payments in personal injury cases. This rate is commonly known as the Personal Injury Discount Rate.

On 15 July 2024, I met the requirement to review this rate at least every five years when I commenced a review and consulted both HM Treasury and an independent Expert Panel for their advice. I have now received their advice, for which I am very grateful, and considered it alongside the responses to two recent Calls for Evidence and further advice, evidence and analysis which has been made available to me. It is on the basis of this evidence, and having followed the review framework set out in the Damages Act, that I have determined that a single rate of 0.5% is the appropriate determination for me to make in this review.

A full statement of reasons, explaining how I have decided upon this rate, will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses. It will also be published on gov.uk, alongside the full advisory report that was provided to me by the Expert Panel.

# Written Answers

Monday, 2 December 2024

## Africa: Agriculture

Asked by **Baroness Kennedy of Cradley**

To ask His Majesty's Government what advice and support they are providing to the African Union's Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme. [[HL2792](#)]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The Government is an active supporter of the African Union's Comprehensive Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP). We engage closely in the Development Partners Coordination Group and the Technical Working Group that support the CAADP agenda. UK funding for CAADP is channelled through various agricultural support programmes, including the Africa Food Trade and Resilience Programme. This UK support helps African partners to eliminate hunger and reduce poverty by supporting economic growth through agriculture-led development.

## Age: Discrimination

Asked by **Baroness Altmann**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether any of the Ministers or Parliamentary Under Secretaries responsible for equalities are responsible for dealing with ageism. [[HL2591](#)]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The Minister for Women and Equalities and the Minister of State for Women and Equalities both have responsibility for ensuring that older people are protected from unlawful ageism (age discrimination) by maintaining the existing strong protections in the Equality Act 2010. These protections make it unlawful for an employer, service provider or someone exercising public functions to treat a person less favourably because of age, unless this can be objectively justified.

## Agriculture: Capital Investment

Asked by **Lord Taylor of Holbeach**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) changes in farmers and growers' investment behaviour following the autumn Budget, and (2) the consequential impact on the achievement of their economic growth targets. [[HL2946](#)]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** As with all businesses impacted by a change in tax, we can expect there to be some changes. However, for most farm businesses where there remains a strong rationale to invest and grow, changes to inheritance tax are unlikely to overwhelm that rationale.

We are continuing to support the farm sector as it moves to a more self-reliant and sustainable sector. That

is why we secured the largest budget in this country's history for sustainable food production - £1.8 billion in 2025/26 a part of a total budget of £2.4 billion.

## Alcoholic Drinks: Labelling

Asked by **Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the value of Government-funded research into the impact of calorie labelling on alcohol products, given that such information has been provided on other drinks for many years. [[HL2696](#)]

**Baroness Merron:** The Department commissioned a National Institute for Health and Care Research study on understanding the impact of alcohol calorie labelling on alcohol and calorie selection, purchasing, and consumption. This study is underway, and due to end in 2026. The findings from this work will be useful in showing the potential impact of calorie labelling on reducing calorie intake and alcohol consumption.

Under our Health Mission, the Government is committed to prioritising preventative public health measures to support people to live longer, healthier lives. The Department will continue to work across Government to determine the best ways to reduce alcohol-related harms.

## Arts: Education

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

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of introducing an arts premium to allow for schools to pay for arts opportunities such as music lessons, as recommended in the report by the Sutton Trust, *A class Act: Social mobility and the creative industries*, published on 13 November. [[HL2585](#)]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The government believes that creative subjects like arts, music and drama are vital elements of the rounded and enriching education that every child deserves. Arts and music should not be the preserve of a privileged few, in or beyond the classroom.

The government has established an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, covering ages 5 to 18, chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE. The review will seek to deliver a curriculum which is rich and broad, so that children and young people get a excellent foundation in the core skills of reading, writing and mathematics whilst ensuring they do not miss out on subjects such as music, arts, sport and drama, as well as vocational subjects.

This government does not currently plan to introduce an arts premium. However, the department continues to make significant investment in arts and music, over and above core school budgets. The department has already confirmed £79 million in revenue funding this academic year for Music Hubs, which support music education in 90% of primary schools and 82% of secondary schools in England, alongside capital funding of £25 million for

musical instruments and equipment. The department has also confirmed more than £30 million for the Music and Dance Scheme this academic year, so it can continue to remove financial barriers to specialist music and dance education for children whose families could not otherwise afford it. The department has also recently announced a new £2 million initiative for the Music Opportunities Pilot over four years, supporting disadvantaged children to learn a musical instrument or to sing.

### Arts: Finance

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to ban creative arts institutions and conservatoires that receive state funding from charging for auditions, as recommended in the Sutton Trust's report *A class Act: Social mobility and the creative industries*, published on 13 November. [HL2586]

**Baroness Twycross:** Creative education and a career in the Creative Industries should never be the preserve of a privileged few. The Government will support the aspiration of every person who wants to go to further and higher education. Universities and conservatoires are autonomous bodies, independent from government and are responsible for their own admissions decisions. Where providers deem it necessary for applicants to undertake auditions, interviews or other admissions tests, it is their responsibility to ensure these additional admissions processes are not creating or reinforcing barriers to opportunity and the ways they will ensure this are detailed in their Access & Participation plans.

### Blood Cancer

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the levels of blood cancer in England; and what plans they have to involve the blood cancer community, including patients, clinicians and industry representatives, in the development of a potential cancer strategy for England. [HL2717]

**Baroness Merron:** The National Cancer Registration Service and the National Cancer Analysis Service collect information on levels of blood cancer in England. They show that in 2022 there were 35,466 diagnoses for blood cancer, broken down to 15,196 for females and 20,270 for males.

To help shape a 10-Year Health Plan to make the National Health Service fit for the future, the Government is inviting people to share their views, experiences, and ideas at the Change NHS online portal. We are also currently in discussions about what form a potential cancer strategy for England should take, including its relationship to the 10-Year Health Plan and the Government's wider Health Mission, and will provide updates in due course.

### British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty

*Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the forthcoming treaty between the UK and Mauritius on the Chagos Archipelago will include (1) a guaranteed right-of-return to the outer islands for all Chagossians worldwide, and (2) adequate compensation and reparations; and whether any compensation scheme would be established in consultation with Chagossians, and be overseen by an independent body. [HL2408]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** Under the terms of the agreement between the UK and Mauritius, Mauritius will be free to implement a programme of resettlement on the islands, other than Diego Garcia. The terms of resettlement will be for Mauritius to determine. We will also work with Mauritius to start a new programme of visits for Chagossians to the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia. The UK provided compensation to the Chagossian community in the 1980s that courts have ruled was paid in full and final settlement. As part of the agreement between the UK and Mauritius, we will finance a new trust fund for Mauritius to support Chagossians. We will also increase our support to Chagossians living in the UK and around the world, through new and existing projects.

### Broadcasting Programmes

*Asked by Baroness Fraser of Craigmaddie*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the adequacy of the current framework, conditions and support for film and television producers headquartered outside London, including the application of Ofcom's regional quotas for public service broadcasters in relation to companies which have a substantive base only outside London, in enabling the commissioning of programmes from every part of the UK. [HL2573]

**Baroness Twycross:** The Government is committed to supporting the growth of the TV and film industry across the whole of the UK. As the Secretary of State has made clear, the television sector specifically is too centralised in London and the South East. That is why the Government has called on broadcasters to be more ambitious in growing the sector in other parts of the country, in order to spread its benefits to towns and cities across the UK. DCMS is taking forward work to understand the opportunities and challenges to further growing the television industry outside of London and the South East to enable commissioning and production activity across the UK. We are committed to working with the sector to ensure the right framework, conditions and support are in place for this to happen.

All public service broadcasters are subject to regional programme making quotas, which are set and monitored by the independent media regulator Ofcom, who also

produce the associated guidance. Any changes to these quotas are similarly a matter for Ofcom.

On the matter of film, the Government maintains a UK-wide funding programme, including investment in infrastructure and tax reliefs to support independent British content. We fund the British Film Institute (BFI) to support the film sector through nationwide funding and initiatives. The BFI's ten-year strategy, Screen Culture 2033, sets out its core principle to reach across the full breadth of our nation. The BFI have sought to devolve funding, share power and support networks across regions. They have been awarded £9 million to enable seven Skills Clusters across the UK to identify skills gaps, coordinate local skills training, and develop clearer pathways to long-term employment in the sector.

We support the British Film Commission's work and our funding has supported the growth of seven geographic production hubs across the UK, by investing in infrastructure and attracting global film productions that bring inward investment into the local and national economy.

The Government recently introduced the Independent Film Tax Credit to support homegrown talent, which will mean that productions with a budget up to £15 million will be eligible for a relief of 53% on qualifying expenditure, whilst films with a budget up to £23.5 million are also eligible and the relief will be tapered. We support independent content across the nations and regions through the £28 million UK Global Screen Fund. The Chancellor recently confirmed that UK Visual Effects costs in film and high-end TV productions will receive a 5% increase in Audio-Visual Expenditure Credit from 1 April 2025, for an overall rate of 39%.

### **Bus Services: Greater London**

*Asked by Baroness Randerson*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the rate of bus accidents in London leading to personal injury or death, compared with that in other UK cities; and what lessons have they drawn about the impact of the bus franchise model used by Transport for London and its potential application elsewhere. [HL2623]

**Lord Henty of Richmond Hill:** The department publishes statistics on road casualties based on collisions reported by the police using the STATS19 system. STATS19 groups together buses and coaches as a single vehicle type. Bus operations in London are the responsibility of the Mayor of London and Transport for London (TfL). TfL publish information about bus incidents on its network, alongside reports on specific bus related safety issues.

Data on the number of bus occupant casualties in London boroughs and other local authorities is published annually as part of the department's casualty statistics, though direct comparisons are not made between different areas.

Casualty rates are not published at this level due to the unavailability of local authority level traffic data for modes other than cars.

The government will introduce a Buses Bill later this Parliamentary session. This will put the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders right across England to choose the model that works best in their area, whether that be franchising, strengthened Enhanced Partnership with private operators or local authority ownership. We believe local leaders are best placed to make decisions about bus services in their area.

### **Buses: Accidents**

*Asked by Lord Rooker*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the incidence of bus accidents leading to death or injury. [HL2632]

*Asked by Lord Rooker*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the number of people hospitalised each day as a result of bus accidents. [HL2633]

*Asked by Lord Rooker*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have conducted any research into whether bus contracts prioritising speed lead to increased accidents or injury. [HL2634]

*Asked by Lord Rooker*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they hold a national database of people killed or injured in bus accidents. [HL2635]

**Lord Henty of Richmond Hill:** Road safety is a priority for the government, and we expect bus operators to uphold the highest standards of safety, policed by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, and upheld judicially by the Traffic Commissioners. The Department for Transport's guidance to local transport authorities on developing their Bus Service Improvement Plans makes clear that these should include plans setting out how LTAs and local bus operators will work together to ensure that bus services are safe and perceived to be safe by all. That same philosophy applies also to franchising and contracting by local transport authorities and to their operators.

The Department for Transport maintains a database of road injury collisions and casualties, including those involving buses or coaches, based on data reported by police using a system known as STATS19. Statistics on the number of people killed and injured in bus or coach collisions are published annually on GOV.UK.

The latest figures can be found in published Table RAS0601 and show that in 2023, the latest year for which figures are available, 59 people were killed and 4,286 injured in collisions involving buses or coaches. The

number of casualties which were hospitalised is not recorded within the STATS19 dataset.

*Asked by Lord Rooker*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether there is any evidence that the fare cap has affected bus operations leading to accidents. [HL2636]

**Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill:** The Department does not hold any data which suggests that the national bus fare cap has led to accidents.

### **Côte d'Ivoire: Human Rights**

*Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their latest assessment of the human rights situation in Côte d'Ivoire. [HL2835]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** On 5 November, at Côte d'Ivoire's Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council, the UK pressed Côte d'Ivoire to improve rights of freedom of association, assembly and peaceful demonstration ahead of next year's Presidential elections. We also highlighted the need to protect civil society and the rights and physical safety of LGBT+ individuals who continue to face widespread discrimination. We do recognise however that Côte d'Ivoire has taken steps to improve its human rights situation in recent years, developing its legal and institutional framework for human rights and playing an active role on the UN's Human Rights Council. The UK Government is committed to work closely with local civil society, human rights defenders and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire on human rights.

### **Cryptocurrencies**

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the increased value of cryptocurrency; and whether they intend to introduce regulations to ensure oversight of the crypto market. [HL2681]

**Lord Livermore:** Price volatility is a defining characteristic of cryptoasset markets and speaks to the importance of having appropriate regulatory protections in place. That is why the government intends to proceed with creating a new financial services regulatory regime for cryptoassets.

This will include the creation of new regulated activities for cryptoassets, such as operating a cryptoasset trading platform, and stablecoin issuance. The new framework will also include admissions and disclosures, and market abuse regimes.

### **Debts: Developing Countries**

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Sheffield*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address unsustainable international debt, as set out in the Labour Party Manifesto 2024. [HL2642]

**Lord Livermore:** Tackling unsustainable debt is one of the Government's key international priorities. As a member of the Paris Club and G20, the UK is committed to providing debt treatments through the Paris Club and the G20 Common Framework, for countries that need it. The UK continues to work with our international partners to push for more timely, orderly and predictable restructurings.

We are also committed to tackling the underlying drivers of unsustainable debt, including through enhancing debt sustainability and transparency. The UK is a strong advocate of the G20 Operational Guidelines for Sustainable Financing – we have committed to adhering to these guidelines and call on other countries to do the same.

### **Dentistry: Pay**

*Asked by Baroness Redfern*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the use of 'units of dental activity' for the remuneration of dental work, in favour of patient-centred system which prioritises prevention. [HL2858]

**Baroness Merron:** To rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to National Health Service dental care, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

There are no perfect payment systems, and careful consideration needs to be given to any potential changes to the complex dental system, so that we deliver a system that is better for patients and the profession.

### **Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Devolution**

*Asked by Lord Watson of Wyre Forest*

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the dates of meetings the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport has had since 5 July with her counterparts in the Scottish Parliament, Senedd Cymru, and the Northern Ireland Assembly. [HL2648]

**Baroness Twycross:** The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport met with Angus Robertson MSP on 31 July and 20 August 2024. She has not yet met with her counterparts in Senedd Cymru and the Northern Ireland Assembly since 5 July.

The Minister for Sport, Media, Civil Society and Youth met with Maree Todd MSP on 9 September 2024; with Neil Gray MSP on 9 September and 16 September 2024; with Kate Forbes MSP on 19 November 2024; with Jack Sargeant MS on 16 September and 20 September 2024; and met with Gordon Lyons MLA on 8 October 2024. The Minister for Creative Industries, Arts and Tourism met with Minister Gordon Lyons MLA on 3 September 2024.

### Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Domestic Visits

*Asked by Lord Watson of Wyre Forest*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport has to visit (a) Belfast, (b) Cardiff, and (c) Edinburgh. [HL2651]

**Baroness Twycross:** The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport visited Edinburgh in August 2024 and looks forward to visiting both Cardiff and Belfast in early 2025, subject to parliamentary business.

### Department for Culture, Media and Sport: ICT

*Asked by Lord Watson of Wyre Forest*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the cost and make of all technology, including phones, laptops and tablets, issued to special advisers in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. [HL2646]

#### Baroness Twycross:

Technology	Make	Unit Cost	No. Issued devices	Total cost
Laptop	Apple Mac	£1,271.15	3	£3,813.45
Mobile	Apple iPhone	£352.00	3	£1,056.00

Total cost: £4,869.45

DCMS prioritises reusing existing technology. Instead of buying new equipment for each person, the department prioritises repurposing and reusing existing devices within the department. This 'Reuse' model maximises the lifespan of their technology assets.

### Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Newspaper Press

*Asked by Lord Watson of Wyre Forest*

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the dates and times of meetings that ministers in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport have held with representatives of UK newspapers since 5 July. [HL2649]

*Asked by Lord Watson of Wyre Forest*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions ministers in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport have had since 5 July regarding the protection of victims of illegal press intrusion. [HL2650]

**Baroness Twycross:** Ministers and officials working in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport regularly engage with stakeholders on a range of press-related issues. Details of ministerial meetings are published on a quarterly basis on Gov.uk.

### Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Official Visits

*Asked by Lord Watson of Wyre Forest*

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the dates and locations of all ministerial visits made by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport since her appointment. [HL2647]

**Baroness Twycross:** Since her appointment, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport has made a range of ministerial visits across the UK, supporting treasured national and local assets across DCMS sectors, and meeting the people with skin in the game and a stake in the outcome in their own communities, to understand what they need and how the Government can support them. Details of ministerial meetings are published on a quarterly basis on Gov.uk.

### Development Aid

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Sheffield*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the Official Development Assistance budget for 2025–26 is spent on development overseas rather than on in-donor refugee support expenses. [HL2641]

**Lord Livermore:** The UK has always reported ODA spending consistent with internationally agreed OECD Development Assistance Committee rules. This includes certain support for refugees arriving from developing countries. The Home Secretary is committed to ensuring that asylum costs fall and has already acted, taking measures to reduce the asylum backlog, reform the asylum accommodation system to end the use of expensive accommodation, and increase detention capacity to facilitate more asylum removals. We expect these decisions to drive down in-donor refugee costs, creating more space in the ODA budget to spend on our international development priorities overseas. On current forecasts, ODA spending outside of in-donor refugee costs in 2025 will be more than the £11.0bn spent in 2023.

## Diego Garcia: Chagossians

Asked by *Baroness Lister of Burtersett*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Human Rights Watch report *That's When the Nightmare Started: UK and US Forced Displacement of the Chagossians and Ongoing Colonial Crimes*, published in February 2023, what assessment they have made of the lawfulness and implications of preventing Chagossians from returning to the island of Diego Garcia. [[HL2409](#)]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** Under the terms of the agreement, Mauritius will be free to implement a programme of resettlement on the islands other than Diego Garcia. The terms of resettlement will be for Mauritius to determine. We will also work with Mauritius to restart visits to the islands, including Diego Garcia, for Chagossians.

## Disability

Asked by *Baroness Grey-Thompson*

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the Government response to the Concluding observations on the initial report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, published by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in October 2017, what steps they are taking to deinstitutionalise persons with disabilities, and develop community-based independent living schemes, in collaboration with organisations of persons with disabilities. [[HL2829](#)]

**Baroness Merron:** Through our proposed reforms to the Mental Health Act, we want to ensure people get the support they need in the community, improve care and prevent admission to hospitals. We recognise that strong community support must be in place to improve care and reduce reliance on mental health hospitals for people with a learning disability and autistic people. We will engage with expert stakeholders to inform implementation planning, including in respect of the development of strong community services.

The National Health Service's *2024/25 priorities and operational planning guidance* sets out the objective of reducing reliance on mental health inpatient care for people with a learning disability and autistic people. In 2024/2025, NHS England has allocated £124 million of transformation funding for learning disability and autism services which includes funding to reduce reliance on mental health inpatient settings.

We recognise how important the right housing arrangements are in supporting people to live independently, and the need to support people to live behind their own front door wherever possible. We incentivise the supply of supported housing in England for older people and adults with a physical or learning disability, autistic people, or adults with mental ill-health. The Government will bring forward details of future

investment in affordable housing at the multi-year Spending Review next year.

The Government is required to provide an annual update outlining the progress the United Kingdom has made on the Committee's recommendations following the 2016 inquiry and most recently gave evidence to the Committee at a dialogue in Geneva in March 2024.

## Disability and Ethnic Groups: Equality

Asked by *Lord Shinkwin*

To ask His Majesty's Government why the draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill has not yet been published; and when they plan to publish it. [[HL3017](#)]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The King's Speech set out our intention to publish the draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill during the first session.

The Bill will deliver our manifesto commitments to introduce mandatory pay gap reporting for large employers on ethnicity and disability, and extend the right to make equal pay claims to ethnic minority and disabled people. We intend to consult on these measures before we publish the Bill and will announce our plans in due course.

## Education: Disadvantaged

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Sheffield*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the finding in the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report *UK Poverty 2024: The essential guide to understanding poverty in the UK*, published on 23 January, that of all entrants into first class undergraduate degrees in 2021–22, "just one per cent had a parent who was long-term unemployed or had never worked"; and what steps they are taking to reduce this educational attainment gap. [[HL2517](#)]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The department will support the aspiration of every person who meets the requirements and wants to go to university, regardless of their background, where they live and their personal circumstances.

Too many people across our country do not get the chance to succeed. The department will act to address the persistent gaps for different student groups and to break down the barriers to opportunity. Opportunity should be available to all and it is the department's aspiration that no groups are left behind.

The data cited in the Joseph Rowntree report is sobering. The department's data shows that the progression rate to higher education (HE) for pupils who received free school meals at age 15 fell for the first time in nearly two decades, falling from 29.2% in the 2021/22 academic year to 29% in 2022/23.

The department expects universities to strengthen efforts to improve access and outcomes for disadvantaged students. There are already many examples of great

practice throughout the sector which show a real commitment to social justice. These include targeting outreach support to those who are least likely to enter HE and working with local colleges to develop study pathways. However, the department wants HE providers to play a stronger role in expanding access and improving outcomes for disadvantaged students, making sure they are delivering strong and ambitious access and participation plans.

As part of this, the department is exploring how it can best support disadvantaged pupils at every stage of the student journey, from prior attainment to access, progression and outcomes. The department will consider the right level of transparency for students, the support available for different groups and ensure that providers commit to, and are held to account for, an ambitious approach to access and participation.

For the 2025/26 academic year, the department will be increasing loans for living costs by 3.1%. This approach ensures that the most support is targeted at students from the lowest income families, while keeping the student finance system financially sustainable.

The government continues to provide means-tested non-repayable grants to low-income students with children and/or adults who are financially dependent on them.

### Electric Scooters: Regulation

*Asked by Lord Rogan*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of official statistics published by the Department for Transport on 26 September which show that there were 1,387 casualties in collisions involving e-scooters in Great Britain in 2023, and that there were six deaths; and what weight they give to these statistics when considering legalising the use of private e-scooters on public roads. [HL2584]

**Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill:** This Government takes road safety very seriously and reducing those killed and injured on our roads is a key priority.

The Department is looking to better understand the safety of e-scooters. That is why we have extended the rental e-scooter trials for a further two years, to 31 May 2026, and commissioned a second national evaluation of the trials to expand the evidence base on e-scooter safety.

We are carefully considering how micromobility can help to deliver our transport objectives safely, including the possibility of legislation on e-scooters. The Government will consult before making any legislative changes and will consider the full range of evidence on e-scooter safety, including road safety statistics.

### Electric Vehicles

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to assist the electric vehicle market in meeting

targets for electric vehicles, in accordance with their zero-emission vehicle mandate. [HL2643]

**Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill:** The Government is committed to supporting the transition to zero emission vehicles and the Zero Emission Vehicle Mandate includes a range of flexibilities. Over £2.3bn funding was announced in the Autumn Budget to support manufacturers, businesses and consumers with this transition. The funding sits alongside a range of favourable tax incentives, designed to encourage the uptake of zero emission vehicles.

Additionally, the Zero Emission Vehicle Mandate includes a range of flexibilities to accommodate manufacturers' different starting points in the transition.

### Employment

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the finding in the Resolution Foundation report Get Britain's Stats Working, published on 20 November, that official labour force data has potentially overlooked nearly one million workers. [HL2729]

**Lord Livermore:** Data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) remains subject to a number of quality concerns following a fall in response rates and are currently badged as official statistics in development.

As set out in its November 2024 Labour Market Overview, [1] the Office for National Statistics (ONS) recommend using LFS data alongside other labour market indicators, including Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real-Time Information (RTI) and Workforce Jobs (WFJ). The ONS note that the long-term coherence between the RTI and WFJ suggests that these sources may be likely to provide a more reliable estimate of employment, particularly for employees.

The ONS are continuing to improve the quality of the LFS, as described in its latest report LFS performance and quality monitoring report, [2] and will carry out a further reweighting of LFS estimates, detailed in its Labour market transformation article [3], that will bring them into line with the ONS' latest assessment of population numbers. The ONS is continuing to develop the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) as the long-term solution for collecting labour market data [4].

[1]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/november2024>

[2] [LFS performance and quality monitoring report: July to September 2024](#)

[3] [Labour market transformation article](#)

[4]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/labourmarkettransformationupdateonprogressandplans/july2024>



## Employment: Women

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase the number of women in top-paid jobs. [HL2778]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** This Government is focussed on harnessing the creativity and brilliance of every woman in our country, and that includes ensuring they are able to access high paying sectors and roles. There is a wide array of work across Government which contributes to realising this ambition, whether that is by supporting start-ups, female entrepreneurs, or getting more women into, or returning to, highly-paid STEM careers.

In terms of work focussed solely on this issue, the Government continues to support the FTSE Women Leaders Review. This business-led framework sets targets to support talented, diverse leadership in the UK's top companies.

Additionally, our Invest in Women Taskforce, is ensuring women-led start ups get the funding they need. The Taskforce is establishing a funding pool of more than £250 million for female-founded businesses through private capital, making it one of the world's largest investment funding pools aimed solely at female founders.

## Energy: Prices

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to protect vulnerable consumers from energy price increases. [HL2644]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** In the short-term, we are continuing to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides an annual £150 rebate off energy bills for eligible low-income households. The Government and industry have worked together to deliver a £500m Winter Support Commitment for customers, and we applaud suppliers stepping up on this matter.

Our Warm Homes Plan will transform homes across the country by making them cheaper and cleaner to run, rolling out upgrades from new insulation to solar and heat pumps. Next year will see a total investment of £3.2bn from government, social housing providers and obligations on suppliers.

We will continue to provide substantial funding to Local Authorities to support those most in need. At the Autumn Budget 2024, the Government announced that £1 billion, including Barnett impact, will be invested to extend the Household Support Fund (HSF) in England by a full year until 31 March 2026, and to maintain Discretionary Housing Payments in England and Wales.

## Equality Advisory and Support Service

Asked by *Baroness Gohir*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they last evaluated the Equality Advisory and Support Service helpline. [HL2825]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The Equality Advisory & Support Service (EASS) is a government-commissioned helpline that provides free advice and support to individuals in England, Scotland, and Wales on issues relating to equality and human rights. The last competitive tendering process was run in 2022, the resulting contract is still in place.

Officials regularly monitor and receive updates on the service from EASS, including reports on common and emerging trends received by the helpline.

Asked by *Baroness Gohir*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many calls the Equality Advisory and Support Service helpline received in each year between 2016 and 2023; and of those, how many and what percentage of calls were about religion and belief; and how many and what percentage of calls were received from those who identified as Muslim. [HL2826]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The Equality Advisory & Support Service (EASS) is a government-commissioned helpline that provides free advice and support to individuals in England, Scotland, and Wales on issues relating to equality and human rights.

The EASS statistics for overall contacts to the service and of those relating to religion or belief are listed below. The statistics for the percentage of the cases related to religion and belief that were received from those who identified as Muslim is not available.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Overall Contacts</i>	<i>Religion and Belief</i>
2016*	8,478	2.2%
2017	39,386	2.1%
2018	44,500	2.2%
2019	31,953	2.0%
2020	44,044	1.5%
2021	62,065	2.9%
2022	48,300	2.0%
2023	64,780	1.8%

\*data for 2016 is from October 2016 until year end (3 months)

## Equality and Human Rights Commission

Asked by *Lord Bradley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the current terms of reference of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. [HL2693]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The Equality Act 2006 details the establishment, duties, powers and constitution for the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

Further information regarding the governance of the EHRC can be found on their website: [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com).

### Female Genital Mutilation

*Asked by Lord Swire*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many prosecutions there have been for female genital mutilation in each of the past five years. [HL2775]

*Asked by Lord Swire*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many convictions there have been of female genital mutilation in each of the last five years. [HL2776]

**Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede:** The Ministry of Justice publishes information on prosecutions and convictions for female genital mutilation in the Outcomes by Offence data tool published at [Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: June 2024 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-june-2024) under the following HO offence code: 00852 – Offences under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003.

There have been 2 prosecutions and 1 conviction under the Female Genital Mutilation Act in the period 01 July 2019 to 30 June 2024.

### Food: Hygiene

*Asked by Lord Rooker*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Merron on 24 October (HL1589), what costs will fall on food premises in England if a requirement to display food hygiene rating certificates is introduced. [HL2725]

**Baroness Merron:** Mandatory display of ratings at premises in England would not impose additional burdens on businesses other than requiring them to display the rating stickers which are provided to them free of charge following food hygiene inspections. In its most recent assessment in 2022, the Food Standards Agency estimated a one-off cost of £3.5 million for the approximately 490,000 food businesses within scope of the scheme for familiarisation with the new requirements. This would equate to a one-off cost of £7 per business. There are no expected recurring costs.

### Gambling: Regulation

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the calls in The Lancet Public Health Commission on gambling, published on 24 October, for stronger policy and regulatory controls for gambling. [HL2637]

**Baroness Twycross:** The Government is committed to strengthening protections to ensure that the sector can thrive, without the risks that can ensue from harmful gambling. We are acutely aware of the impact harmful gambling can have on individuals and their families. We are committed to reviewing the best available evidence from a wide range of sources and working with all stakeholders in order to support the industry and ensure there are robust protections in place to protect those at risk, and we have noted the Lancet Public Health Commission's report. We will provide further updates to the House soon.

### Health Professions: Reviews

*Asked by Lord Bradley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what were the terms of reference of the reviews they have commissioned of six healthcare regulators, to be led by Dr Penny Dash. [HL2881]

**Baroness Merron:** In July, my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care asked Dr Penny Dash to carry out a review, looking at patient safety across the health and care landscape in England, within the context of the wider regulation and improvement of the quality of care. The guidance, *Review of patient safety across the health and care landscape: terms of reference*, published on 15 October 2024, is available on the GOV.UK website, in an online-only format.

### Health Professions: Training

*Asked by Lord Lansley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take to address the workforce shortages identified in the Royal College of Anaesthetists' The Anaesthetic Workforce: UK State of the Nation Report published on 20 November. [HL2707]

*Asked by Lord Lansley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the scale of the bottleneck between medical foundation training and medical specialty training (1) in anaesthesia, and (2) across all other medical specialties; and what steps they are taking to address it. [HL2708]

**Baroness Merron:** We are committed to training the staff we need, including anaesthetists and all other medical specialities, to ensure patients are cared for by the right professional, when and where they need it.

As of July 2024, there were 14,085 full time equivalent (FTE) anaesthetists working in the National Health Service and other core organisations in England. This is 407, or 3.0%, more than a year ago and 1,950, or 16.1%, more than five years ago. This includes 7,492 FTE consultants, which is 278, or 3.9%, more than a year ago and 886, or 13.4%, more than five years ago.

We have launched the 10-Year Health Plan which will set out a bold agenda to reform and repair the NHS. Ensuring we have the right people, in the right places, with the right skills will be central to this vision. We will ensure that the number of medical specialty training places meets the demands of the NHS in the future. NHS England will work with stakeholders to ensure that any growth is sustainable and focused in the service areas where the need is greatest.

### Home Office: Staff

*Asked by Lord Kempson*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many staff making decisions on asylum cases are employed by the Home Office; and how many additional staff they plan to recruit by the end of 2025. [HL2405]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** According to the regularly published data available online at [Immigration and protection data: Q2 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/data-and-data-sets/immigration-and-protection-data), there were 2,464 FTE decision makers in place as of June 2024.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Immigration and Protection data  
[L\_P+Q2+2024+Transparency+PUBLISHED+v3 (4).xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-11-11/HL2405>

### Homes for Ukraine Scheme

*Asked by Baroness Harris of Richmond*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to withdraw the 'thank you' payments to sponsors of the Homes for Ukraine scheme. [HL2577]

**Lord Khan of Burnley:** Thank you payments remain in place for sponsors of Ukrainian guests under the Homes for Ukraine (HfU) scheme. As the first HfU visas are coming to an end, guests will be eligible to apply for a Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE) visa for a further 18 months. To thank them for their continued generosity, thank you payments for eligible sponsors will be extended for guests previously on HfU who move to a UPE visa.

To fund this extended support for HfU guests moving to the UPE scheme, from 1 April 2025, thank you payments will be paid at a flat rate of £350 per month for all sponsors of guests on HfU and UPE visas, regardless of how long guests have been in the UK.

Following this additional 18 month period, thank you payments will end. This is designed to empower guests to live independently, with enough time for guests and sponsors to plan for next steps, including to secure independent accommodation if needed or convert a sponsorship to a lodging arrangement.

To support this transition, we are signposting sponsors to the Government's 'rent a room' scheme for those who wish to convert their lodging arrangements with their sponsors. If sponsors move to an arrangement where they

charge rent, they will no longer be eligible for thank you payments.

### Honours

*Asked by Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay*

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to the creation of a new order of chivalry commemorating Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. [HL2797]

**Baroness Twycross:** There are no plans to create a new order of chivalry.

*Asked by Baroness Neville-Rolfe*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Twycross on 20 November (HL2246), whether they intend to discontinue the British Empire Medal. [HL2852]

**Baroness Twycross:** There are no plans to discontinue the British Empire Medal.

### Housing: Electrical Safety

*Asked by Lord Foster of Bath*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to provide consumer information to improve the electrical safety of those living in alternative housing such as caravans, houseboats, tiny homes, and other non-traditional housing. [HL2614]

*Asked by Lord Foster of Bath*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that those permanently living in alternative housing (such as caravans, houseboats, tiny homes, and other non-traditional housing) are as safe from electricity in their homes as people living in traditional properties. [HL2615]

*Asked by Lord Foster of Bath*

To ask His Majesty's Government how they intend to regulate installers of electrical systems working in non-traditional housing, to ensure quality and parity with approved installer registration schemes. [HL2616]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** Everyone deserves to feel safe and secure in their homes, regardless of tenure or agreement type.

Non-permanent structures separate from the land, such as mobile homes and houseboats, are legally defined as chattels rather than buildings. They are not subject to the legal framework in the Building Regulations which covers electrical installation work. They are, however, subject to consumer protection legislation in the same way as any other consumer goods. Under the Consumer Rights Act 2015 (CRA), goods should be as described, of a satisfactory quality, and fit for a particular purpose when they are purchased. The CRA 2015 applies to contracts entered into after the 1 October 2015 when the Act came into force.

As most non-traditional homes are owner-occupied there is no legal requirement for the owner to have the electrics checked in their property on a regular basis, though we would recommend they do so.

On mobile home sites, the owner must ensure they comply with the conditions of their licence provided by the local authority, to ensure that proper health, safety and amenity standards are maintained.

The Government has no plans to introduce any specific schemes relating to electrical safety in non-traditional homes at this time.

### Human Trafficking: Sexual Offences

*Asked by Baroness Goudie*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to reduce demand for trafficking for sexual exploitation. [HL2618]

*Asked by Baroness Goudie*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to prevent organised crime groups from advertising victims of trafficking and other sexual exploitation offences on websites advertising sexual services. [HL2619]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** The trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation is a truly horrific crime. This Government has set out an unprecedented mission to halve violence against women and girls in a decade, and we will use all the levers available to us to deliver this.

We continue to work closely with law enforcement to ensure there is a relentless pursuit of prolific perpetrators, including through operational intensification initiatives.

We are also clear that online platforms are a significant enabler of sexual exploitation and must be responsible and accountable for content on their sites, including taking proactive steps to prevent their sites being used by criminals. The Online Safety Act 2023 sets out priority offences, including sexual exploitation and human trafficking offences, and companies will need to adopt measures and put in place systems and processes to identify, assess and address these offences based on a risk assessment, or face significant penalties.

Home Office Ministers regularly meet with stakeholders, including NGOs and law enforcement partners, to promote the better identification and prosecution of perpetrators, and to enhance support for victims who are trapped within commercial sexual exploitation.

### Mental Health Bill (HL)

*Asked by Baroness Grey-Thompson*

To ask His Majesty's Government which organisations the Department of Health and Social Care consulted on the Mental Health Bill and their wider mental health policy. [HL2828]

**Baroness Merron:** The Mental Health Bill reflects the recommendations of Professor Sir Simon Wessely's Independent Review into the Mental Health Act of 2018, which engaged widely with a number of organisations. The review's advisory panel brought together a range of stakeholders to serve as a forum for gathering evidence and insight throughout the course of the review. The membership of the advisory panel comprised of individuals with lived experience, advocacy organisations, professionals and representative bodies, and representatives from the statutory system.

Following this, the Government ran an extensive public consultation on the proposals in the *Mental Health Act White Paper*, which received more than 1,700 responses. A draft bill was then published in 2022 for pre-legislative scrutiny (PLS), during which a range of stakeholders and organisations representing service users, patients, and professionals provided their views on how the draft bill could be improved.

The Mental Health Bill has been further strengthened through recommendations made by the PLS joint committee. Since July 2024, we have further engaged with range of key stakeholders, and we will continue to engage further, and consult widely, on the development of the Mental Health Act Code of Practice, the statutory guidance which will inform practice under the bill.

### Music

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to protect grassroots music, particularly in relation to the high number of music venue closures. [HL2728]

**Baroness Twycross:** The Government is working closely with the live music sector to support an economically sustainable grassroots music sector.

The Government response to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee's report on grassroots music venues, published 14 November, sets out our commitment to working with the sector to support the sustainability of the entire music ecosystem. In particular, the Government is urging the live music industry to introduce a voluntary levy on tickets for stadium and arena shows, to help safeguard the future of the grassroots music sector.

Following the Autumn Budget, we are continuing to support Arts Council England's (ACE's) successful Supporting Grassroots Music Fund which provides grants to grassroots music venues, recording studios, promoters and festivals.

### National Food Crime Unit

*Asked by Lord Rooker*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they expect the National Food Crime Unit of the Food Standards Agency to obtain the full powers to operate as set out in

the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. [HL2723]

**Baroness Merron:** The Food Standards Agency's (FSA) National Food Crime Unit works to prevent, detect and investigate fraud within our food system. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has the power under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 to grant food crime officers access to specific investigative powers under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.

The drafting of secondary legislation to grant these powers and to bring food crime officers under the necessary remit of the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) for complaint handling purposes is at an advanced stage and is currently undergoing final review by both IOPC and the FSA.

It is intended that a regime of scrutiny by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) will also be placed on a legislative footing. A recent FSA bid for primary legislation included a Private Member's Bill within the handout list for the first session, though this was not taken forward. However, in October 2024, HMICFRS agreed to a voluntary inspection regime for the FSA's use of investigatory powers whilst work progresses to secure primary legislation. The FSA is working with HMICFRS to put appropriate arrangements in place for the voluntary inspection regime and Home Office officials are updating their minister of this arrangement.

*Asked by Lord Rooker*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to bring the National Food Crime Unit of the Food Standards Agency within the remit of the Independent Office for Police Conduct and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services. [HL2724]

**Baroness Merron:** The Food Standards Agency's (FSA) National Food Crime Unit works to prevent, detect and investigate fraud within our food system. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has the power under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 to grant food crime officers access to specific investigative powers under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.

The drafting of secondary legislation to grant these powers and to bring food crime officers under the necessary remit of the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) for complaint handling purposes is at an advanced stage and is currently undergoing final review by both IOPC and the FSA.

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## Offenders: Electronic Tagging

*Asked by Lord Patten*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of electronic tagging to monitor convicted criminals sentenced to punishment in the community. [HL2557]

*Asked by Lord Patten*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of (1) curfew tags, (2) location tags, and (3) alcohol tags, respectively. [HL2558]

**Lord Timpson:** There are lots of different types of Electronic Monitoring (EM) and effectiveness is dependent on a number of factors. Some of the EM technology is relatively new and so the Department is undertaking a comprehensive EM expansion programme designed to evaluate the effectiveness of EM on specific cohorts of individuals. We are robustly evaluating the effectiveness of each of the four projects (Acquisitive Crime – targeting burglars, robbers and thieves, Licence Variation, Domestic Abuse Perpetrators on Licence, and Alcohol Monitoring on Licence) to better understand the impacts of different forms of EM.

Evaluations will start to be published from the beginning of 2025. We are unable to predict the conclusions of these evaluations, which will be reviewed by an independent peer reviewer.

There is clear evidence that alcohol monitoring devices positively affect behaviour during the period of monitoring. England and Wales have a comprehensive programme of alcohol monitoring in place compared with international comparators. Since their introduction, alcohol monitoring tags have demonstrated a 97% compliance rate.

## Office for National Statistics: Industrial Disputes

*Asked by Baroness Neville-Rolfe*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Smith of Basildon on 21 October (HL1278), what is the most recent estimate of how many days a week Office for National Statistics (ONS) staff attend the office on average, expressed as percentage of staff attending their assigned workplace over an average working week, or closest equivalent

metric; and what plans ONS has to increase that average attendance rate. [HL2117]

**Baroness Twycross:** The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority.

Please see the letter attached from the National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority.

The Baroness Neville-Rolfe DBE CMG  
House of Lords  
London  
SW1A 0PW  
1 November 2024

Dear Baroness Neville-Rolfe,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Smith of Basildon on 21 October (HL1278), what is the most recent estimate of how many days a week Office for National Statistics (ONS) staff attend the office on average, expressed as percentage of staff attending their assigned workplace over an average working week, or closest equivalent metric; and what plans ONS has to increase that average attendance rate (HL2117).

The ONS collects attendance data for each of our sites on a weekly basis. Table 1 shows the average daily number of individuals as a percentage against our headcount who have attended each office in the last four weeks for which data are available. Individuals who attend regularly will appear in this data on each day they attend an office.

It should be noted that, while our general office attendance expectation is 40% of working time in line with our estate's capacity, this is currently set at 20% in Manchester and Darlington and has only recently been increased to 40% in Edinburgh. Additional flexibilities have been extended to colleagues where genuinely required, including a period of further adjustment which ended in October.

In addition, PCS has entered into formal dispute with the ONS in relation to these attendance expectations, taking action short of strike in the form of non-compliance with the requirements. There are currently 1161 PCS members employed by the ONS.

The ONS remains committed to office attendance and various initiatives are underway to increase the diversity and value of in-person interactions. Following our announcement in November 2023, we launched events scheduled throughout 2024 with a greater focus on in-person events. This has included an increase in the number of face-to-face 'in conversation with the National Statistician' events, leadership events with the Grade 6 and Grade 7 community, and the start of new site-focused events that aim to bring colleagues together and create a better community across our office locations.

With our extended flexibility provisions period ending, we would naturally expect to see some increase in office attendance. However, as trade unions have achieved a mandate to prolong action short of a strike this could continue to impact office attendance for a further period.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

Table 1: Average daily ONS office location attendance as a rounded percentage by week, from week beginning 16 September 2024[1].

	<i>Newport</i>	<i>Titchfield</i>	<i>London</i>	<i>Darlington</i>	<i>Manchester</i>	<i>Edinburgh</i>
Week beginning 16/09/2024	17%	17%	18%	8%	5%	Less than 5%
Week beginning 23/09/2024	16%	19%	17%	7%	Less than 5%	12%
Week beginning 30/09/2024	17%	17%	18%	7%	6%	Less than 5%
Week beginning 07/10/2024	16%	18%	20%	Less than 5%	5%	Less than 5%

Source: Office for National Statistics

[1] Where figures are less than 5% or not available, the specific number has been suppressed to protect the confidentiality of colleagues in line with our data policy.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

UKSA Letter [PQHL2117 V3 (1).pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-10-29/HL2117>

## Older People: Discrimination

Asked by **Baroness Altmann**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of discrimination against older people, especially in the workplace; and whether the Office for Equality and Opportunity is reviewing this area. [HL2592]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** Unlawful age discrimination is unacceptable, whether occurring in employment, the provision of services or any other context covered by the Equality Act 2010. Any

differential treatment based on age must be objectively justifiable, otherwise it will rightly be unlawful.

In a workplace context the abolition of the default retirement age has helped older workers and where unlawful treatment is alleged, the employee may take their case to an employment tribunal. As a first step in any dispute, the parties may consult Acas which operates a Government-funded helpline for people with employment disputes and early conciliation by Acas is required before a claim reaches a tribunal hearing.

The Government keeps all aspects of the Equality Act 2010 under review, to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

### Out of Area Treatment: Mental Health Services

*Asked by Lord Scriven*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many out of area hospital admissions for mental health patients there were in (1) 2022, (2) 2023, and (3) 2024 to date. [HL2769]

**Baroness Merron:** The following table shows the amount of adult acute mental health out of area placements in each of the last three years:

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Inappropriate placements active during year	4,870	4,655	5,900
Inappropriate placements active at year end	605	695	805
Appropriate placements active during year	470	320	325
Appropriate placements active at year end	65	65	95
Total out of area placements active during year	5,340	4,975	6,225
Total out of area placements active at year end	670	760	900

Source: Out of Area Placements in Mental Health Services, NHS England.

Note: Information about OAP placements in other mental health services, such as specialist mental health inpatient services or services for children and young people, is not available. The information provided is for financial years and goes up to March 2024 before the new data collection begins.

### Out-of-school Education

*Asked by Lord Storey*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many unregistered schools are currently operating. [HL2588]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** An unregistered school is defined as any setting that is operating as an independent school without registration. It is a criminal offence under section 96 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 for a person to operate an unregistered independent school. The department does not retain data about the number of unregistered schools operating.

The department works closely with Ofsted, the Crown Prosecution Service and the police to identify and close unregistered schools to ensure children are protected from harm. Ofsted has powers under section 97 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 that allows for unannounced inspections of settings believed to be operating in breach of registration requirements. A team of inspectors are employed to identify, investigate and inspect any setting where there is evidence to suggest that an unregistered independent school is operating.

### Overseas Trade: EU Countries and USA

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure the UK's trade relationships with the US and EU remain strong. [HL2683]

**Baroness Gustafsson:** The EU and the US are two of our largest trading markets, together accounting for over 64% of total UK trade. We are committed to strengthening our trade and investment relationships with both the EU and US and to working together to remove unnecessary barriers to trade.

As set out by the Chancellor, we recognise that our markets are highly interconnected. This government's main priority is growing the UK economy – strengthened trade with our most economically important partners is a major part of that.

### Pensions Regulator: Equality

*Asked by Baroness Altmann*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the policy of the Pensions Regulator for using the term "gender" in place of the Equality Act 2010's terms of (1) "sex", and (2) "gender reassignment" in its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. [HL2595]

**Baroness Sherlock:** The Pensions Regulator's (TPR's) strategy is wide-ranging, to ensure that it is fully inclusive and includes groups beyond the nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, that encompass sex and gender reassignment. TPR uses 'gender' as was defined by the Office of National Statistics at the time the strategy was published, and will

review their EDI Policy at the point of strategy refresh or when ONS issue new guidance, if earlier.

### Ports: Fees and Charges

*Asked by Lord Fuller*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the overall competitiveness of UK port charges on a regional basis for the bulk cargoes that support global trade, in comparison with those of the UK's principal trading partners in the European Union. [HL2617]

**Lord Henty of Richmond Hill:** No such formal assessment has been made. However, the UK ports sector is market-oriented and competitive both internally and externally, with ample capacity available at national level for bulk cargoes.

### Pupils: Bullying

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Derby*

To ask His Majesty's Government, as part of Anti-Bullying Week, what steps they are taking (1) to collect, record and monitor data on reports of bullying in schools and subsequent responses, and (2) to improve the availability and quality of anti-bullying training and support for teachers [HL2391]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The department collects and monitors data on bullying of children and young people through robust national surveys such as the National Behaviour Survey, the Health Behaviours of School-aged Children Study and the Crime Survey for England and Wales.

Schools should develop their own approaches for monitoring bullying and exercise their own judgement as to what works best for their pupils. All schools are legally required to have a behaviour policy with measures to prevent all forms of bullying. Schools have the freedom to develop their own anti-bullying strategies appropriate to their environment and are held to account by Ofsted.

Decisions relating to teachers' professional development rests with schools, headteachers and teachers. They are in the best position to judge their requirements and access development.

The department published advice in 2017 to support schools with addressing incidences of bullying. The guidance is clear that schools should make appropriate provision for a bullied child's social, emotional and mental health needs. The guidance is available here: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/625ee64cd3bf7f6004339db8/Preventing\\_and\\_tackling\\_bullying\\_advise.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/625ee64cd3bf7f6004339db8/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advise.pdf).

In 2016, the department also published a practical tool to help schools, which can be found on the Educate Against Hate website, here: <https://educateagainsthate.com/resources/respectful-school-communities-self-review-signposting-tool-2/>.

The department is currently reviewing the impact of these previous programmes and considering next steps to tackle bullying in schools.

### Refugees: Uyghurs

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government to what extent they take account of the resolution of the House of Commons of 22 April 2021 declaring Uyghur Muslims to be subjected to a genocide in Xinjiang when determining their policy with regard to refugee status. [HL2600]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** All asylum and human rights claims are carefully considered on their individual merits in accordance with our international obligations. Each individual assessment is made against the background of any relevant caselaw and the latest available country information. Our position on the Uyghurs in China is set out in the relevant country policy and information note on the gov.uk website.

When someone establishes a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm in their country, they are normally granted protection and are not expected to return there.

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have offered to receive any Uyghur refugees held in detention centres in other countries or facing repatriation to China. [HL2601]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** The United Kingdom will always take seriously our responsibility, alongside others, to help those fleeing war and persecution. Under the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), the UK relies upon referrals from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

UNHCR has the global mandate to provide international protection and humanitarian assistance to refugees. UNHCR refer individuals for resettlement in accordance with their standard resettlement submission criteria, which are based on an assessment of protection needs and vulnerabilities. The UK does not seek to influence the cases that the UNHCR refers.

### Schools: Sanitary Products

*Asked by Baroness Benjamin*

To ask His Majesty's Government what provision secondary schools have to enable girls to access sanitary products when needed. [HL2605]

*Asked by Baroness Benjamin*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the treatment of girls in schools who wish to go to the toilet to use sanitary products, and what steps they are taking to ensure that such girls are treated with empathy and dignity. [HL2607]



Asked by **Baroness Benjamin**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to support schools to encourage 'period positivity', to avoid degrading or embarrassing children during their periods, and to enable them to access what they need. [HL2608]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** It is crucial that every young person is supported to achieve and thrive. All state-maintained primary and secondary schools, alongside 16-19 educational organisations, are eligible for the period products scheme, which supports this by providing free period products to girls and women in their place of study so that nobody misses out on education because of their period. There is high take-up from the sector, with 99% of secondary schools having used the scheme since it began.

The scheme assists in breaking the stigma surrounding menstruation by making products readily available during school time. Guidance for the scheme suggests that schools consider the potential impact of any perceived stigma around periods when making products available and contains several examples and insights from learners on how to best distribute products.

The advice on standards for school premises is clear that suitable toilet and washing facilities must be provided for the sole use of pupils. It is for schools to find reasonable ways, in accordance with the law, to balance every child's right to access clean and safe toilet facilities when they need them, with every child's right to have a safe and calm environment to learn in. The guidance is attached and can also be accessed at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/410294/Advice\\_on\\_standards\\_for\\_school\\_premises.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/410294/Advice_on_standards_for_school_premises.pdf).

Since September 2020, menstrual wellbeing has been part of statutory health education for primary and secondary pupils. This includes being taught about menstrual wellbeing, key facts about the menstrual cycle and implications for emotional and physical health. The relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) statutory guidance is currently being reviewed and my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education has said that she will analyse consultation responses, look at recent evidence and talk with stakeholders before deciding on next steps. The RSHE statutory guidance is attached and can also be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Advice on standards for school premises [Advice on standards for school premises.pdf]

RSHE statutory guidance [RSHE Guidance.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-11-18/HL2605>

## Schools: Sanitation

Asked by **Baroness Benjamin**

To ask His Majesty's Government what guidance they plan to issue about school policies which allow children to go to the toilet only during morning break and lunchtime, particularly where there are not enough toilets to accommodate all children during those times. [HL2606]

Asked by **Baroness Benjamin**

To ask His Majesty's Government what guidance they have issued to schools about policies of giving girls detention or suspension for using the toilet outside break time when they have their periods. [HL2609]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The advice on standards for school premises (2015) is clear that suitable toilet and washing facilities must be provided for the sole use of pupils. It is for schools to find reasonable ways, in accordance with the law, to balance every child's right to access clean and safe toilet facilities when they need them, with every child's right to have a safe and calm environment to learn in.

All schools are required by law to have a behaviour policy which outlines effective strategies that will encourage good behaviour. It is for school leaders to develop and implement a policy which reflects their school's individual contexts and needs. Any policy must be lawful, proportionate, and reasonable and comply with the school's duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

The 'Behaviour in schools' guidance provides advice on how schools should use sanctions lawfully, including the need for a consistent approach and any adjustments that may need to be made.

## Social Rented Housing: Fire Prevention

Asked by **Lord Foster of Bath**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the electrical safety checks requirement relating to England's social rented sector specified in the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 has been implemented; and if not, when it will be issued. [HL2613]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** This government is committed to raising standards so that social housing tenants live in decent homes, are treated with fairness and respect and have issues resolved quickly.

A consultation on electrical safety in the social rented sector was carried out between June 2022 and August 2022 by the previous government. This government is considering the responses to the consultation and will set out next steps shortly.

## Social Services: Finance

*Asked by Lord Scriven*

To ask His Majesty's Government what financial assessment they have made to determine if the £600 million of grant funding for social care in 2025–26 will be sufficient to cover the cost of increased employer National Insurance contributions to social care providers. [HL2639]

**Baroness Merron:** The Government considered the cost pressures facing adult social care as part of the wider consideration of local government spending within the Spending Review process. This assessment took into account a wide range of factors, including changes to employer National Insurance contributions, and the National Living Wage increases.

In response to the range of pressures facing local authorities, the Government is providing a real-terms uplift to core local government spending power of approximately 3.2%, which includes £1.3 billion of new grant funding in 2025/26.

## South China Sea: Shipping

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to increase the number and frequency of 'freedom of navigation' operations through contested areas in the East and South China Seas, including the Taiwan Strait. [HL2656]

**Lord Coaker:** The Ministry of Defence does not routinely comment on future deployments for reasons of operational security. However, the UK has a clear interest in peace and stability in the East and South China Seas along with the Taiwan Strait, and remains committed to upholding international law and to freedom of navigation.

## Students: Fees and Charges

*Asked by Lord Johnson of Marylebone*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the change in total fee incomes to all higher education providers resulting from the increase in undergraduate tuition fees for the 2025–26 academic year. [HL2402]

*Asked by Lord Johnson of Marylebone*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the financial impact of the increase in employer National Insurance contributions announced in the Autumn Budget on higher education providers. [HL2403]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The government recognises that UK higher education (HE) creates opportunity, is an engine for growth in our economy and supports local communities. The 3.1% increase to tuition fee limits for the 2025/26 academic year will provide additional financial help for HE providers after seven

years of no increases to maximum tuition fees, which has meant that fees have not kept pace with inflation. The department plans to publish an assessment of impacts, including on equality, of the planned tuition fee and student finance changes shortly.

The department is aware that HE providers will have to pay increased National Insurance contributions. As my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer set out in the Autumn Budget 2024 statement, raising the revenue required to fund public services and restore economic stability requires difficult decisions, which is why the government has asked employers to contribute more.

The Office for Students (OfS) is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the financial sustainability of the HE sector. The OfS has made its own estimate of the impacts in their update published on 15 November 2024, and the update is attached.

The department also understands the financial pressures that the sector is currently facing, which is why my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education has already taken the first step of appointing Sir David Behan as interim Chair of the OfS to oversee the important work of refocussing the OfS's role to concentrate on key priorities, including the HE sector's financial sustainability. The department continues to work closely with the OfS as the independent regulator of HE in England to understand the changing financial landscape.

The department knows how vital securing a sustainable future for the HE sector is for the success of students. We will set out our longer-term plans for HE reform by next summer.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL2402 attachment [HL2402 attachment.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-11-11/HL2402>

*Asked by Lord Godson*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they made of the degree of contact hours that were being provided to students on courses at higher education providers when deciding to increase tuition fees to £9,535 from September 2025. [HL2575]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** Higher education (HE) providers must be transparent about the way courses are advertised and delivered, to give students the information they need to make informed decisions. This should include information about the number and type of contact hours that students can expect, such as the balance between teaching that is delivered face-to-face and online.

The Office for Students (OfS) is the independent regulator of HE in England. The OfS regulates through conditions that apply to registered providers. Whilst the conditions of registration do not include a ratio of face-to-face to online teaching, they specify how providers must ensure that students receive a high-quality academic experience. For example, students must receive effective

engagement, up-to-date resources, and sufficient support whilst undertaking their courses. The OfS can investigate providers where it has concerns that they are not providing the high-quality teaching students should expect.

If students are not happy with the quality of education they are getting, they should complain directly to the university or college first. If they are not happy with the outcome, they can escalate the complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

Virtual learning can be of huge benefit to students, but it must support and not detract from the quality of a student's learning experience. The OfS published its Blended Learning Review report in October 2022. It called on providers to make sure students have clear information about what they can expect when applying for courses and to work with their students to evaluate their experiences of blended learning.

### Takeovers: Disclosure of Information

*Asked by Lord Lee of Trafford*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to review the duties of public company directors about informing shareholders when they receive a serious takeover approach. [HL2621]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The Government has no plans to review the duties of public company directors in relation to informing shareholders of a takeover approach. Directors owe a number of fiduciary duties to shareholders, including the need to exercise reasonable care, skill and diligence, and to promote the success of the company for the benefit of its shareholders as a whole.

### UK Relations with EU

*Asked by Lord Frost*

To ask His Majesty's Government what are their objectives in their proposed "reset" of relations with the European Union; what issues they are discussing with the European Union as part of that proposed reset; and when they expect those discussions to conclude. [HL2820]

**Baroness Twycross:** The Government has already begun working to reset the relationship with our European friends and to put the UK's relationship with the EU on a more solid, stable footing. The Prime Minister met with Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in Brussels on 2 October and they agreed to strengthen the UK-EU relationship in areas including the economy, energy, resilience and security; and to hold the first UK-EU Summit in early 2025. The Minister for the Constitution and European Union Relations is taking forward this work with his counterpart in the European Commission Maroš Šefčovič, who was confirmed on 27 November.

### Universal Credit

*Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett*

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the terms of reference of the planned review of Universal Credit mentioned in the Labour Party Manifesto 2024; when they intend to publish its findings; and what mechanisms are planned to ensure that the voices of those with experience of claiming universal credit are heard. [HL2622]

**Baroness Sherlock:** We are committed to reviewing Universal Credit to make sure it is doing the job we want it to do. We have begun this work with the announcement of the Fair Repayment Rate in the Budget and we will continue to work with stakeholders closely as the review progresses. We will regularly update Parliament on progress.

### Universities: Standards

*Asked by Lord Godson*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the consistency of standards at English universities given that the proportion of students receiving a first-class degree was 7 per cent in 1997 and 29.5 per cent in 2022–23. [HL2576]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** Unjustifiable increases in the proportion of top degrees being awarded threaten to undermine the value of degrees. Data published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, now a part of Jisc), shows in the past two years the proportion of top degrees being awarded has begun to return to pre-Covid levels. In 2022/23, 30% of students of UK higher education (HE) providers qualified with a first class honours first degree, down from 32% in 2021/22 and 36% in 2020/21. This is still an increase on the 22% qualifying with a first class honours first degree in 2014/15.

The Office for Students (OfS) is the independent regulator of HE providers in England. The department is working with the OfS to ensure vigilance about any concerns over grade irregularities which would damage the reputation of HE in England.

In 2022/23, the OfS opened 14 investigations into providers based on regulatory intelligence relating to quality. It has to date published 11 reports on these assessments. The investigations to examine the reasons for sharp increases in the rates of students being awarded first class and upper second class honours degrees at three providers are ongoing. The OfS also publishes an annual report of degree classifications over time, which analyses graduate attainment rates and uses statistical modelling to assess to what extent the increases and decreases in these rates could be statistically accounted for by changes in the prior attainment of, and distribution of subjects studied by, graduate populations.

## Veterinary Services: Antimicrobials

Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to support veterinary practices to adopt an aligned approach to antimicrobial use, and increase the use of antimicrobial prescribing guidelines. [HL2810]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** A key commitment of the AMR National Action Plan is to work alongside the veterinary profession to ensure they are supported to prescribe antibiotics responsibly and support animal health and welfare. The Veterinary Medicines Directorate lead on this work and have funded online training for both farm animal and companion animal vets through the RCVS Knowledge VetTeamAMR (attached: VetTeamAMR – RCVS knowledge) initiative. This provides important advice on how to manage different diseases and conditions where antibiotics are most commonly used, as well as modules on diagnostics, behaviour change, and infection control. The Veterinary Medicines Regulations were revised in 2024 and include provisions which increase the scrutiny on antibiotic prescribing. We have published [guidance](#) (attached: Veterinary Medicines Guidance) to help vets comply with the AMR elements of the VMRs and ensure responsible use of antibiotics under the cascade. We also work alongside the veterinary profession through antibiotic stewardship groups to encourage and support the development and dissemination of [guidelines to vets](#) (attached: Guidelines and guidance on the responsible use of veterinary medicines). Examples include the recently updated BSAVA/SAMSoc guidance for dogs and cats, the PROTECT ME guidelines for horses, the Pig Veterinary Society prescribing principles and guidance for dairy vets on reducing antibiotic milk residues.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Guidelines/guidance on responsible use [HL2810 Guidelines and guidance on the responsible use of veterinary medicines - GOV.UK.pdf]

VetTeamAMR - RCVS Knowledge [HL2810 VetTeamAMR - RCVS Knowledge.pdf]

Veterinary medicines guidance [HL 2810 Veterinary medicines guidance - GOV.UK.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-11-25/HL2810>

## Women and Equalities: Civil Servants

Asked by **Baroness Altmann**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many civil servants work in (1) the Race Equality Unit, (2) the Disability Unit, (3) the Women and Equalities Unit, and (4) the Office for Equality and Opportunity. [HL2596]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** Overall staff figures for the Office for Equality and Opportunity total 133.8 Full

Time Equivalents, of which the Race Equality Unit total 6 FTE, the Disability Unit total 19.8 FTE and the Women and Equalities Unit total 36.5 FTE. This excludes any temporary time limited resource from wider Cabinet Office.

## Workplace Pensions

Asked by **Baroness Altmann**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether simpler pension fund statements are being produced and sent to clients by all pension providers as required. [HL2593]

Asked by **Baroness Altmann**

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the total contributions into (1) defined contribution, (2) defined benefit, and (3) other, pension schemes for the past five years. [HL2594]

**Baroness Sherlock:** From October 2022, new requirements were introduced for schemes used for automatic enrolment to provide a simpler annual benefit statement. The Department continues to work with the Financial Conduct Authority and The Pensions Regulator to ensure compliance. Additionally, the Department plans to monitor/review the regulations within 5 years of being introduced as per the regulations (Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Disclosure of Information) (Statements of Benefits: Money Purchase Benefits) (Amendment) Regulations 2021)).

The Department publishes annual official statistics on [workplace pension participation and saving trends](#). This provides estimates on the total amount saved into workplace pensions for those eligible for Automatic Enrolment, which was over £131bn in 2023. The table below holds the estimates of the total amount saved over the last 5 years, in 2023 earnings terms, which are also found in the official statistics noted above. As requested, the breakdowns by DB and DC schemes and other/unknown are also shown.

(£ Billions) in 2023 earnings terms	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Defined Contribution (DC)	49.3	49.9	53.8	55.7	60.8
Defined Benefit (DB)	63.8	68.6	72.5	64.8	65.8
Other/Unknown	1.5	2.0	2.4	2.2	5.2
Total	114.6	120.5	128.7	122.8	131.8

Notes: Estimates of amounts saved into workplace pensions are derived from ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) data. The saving attributed to 'other/unknown' is a result of respondents answering 'unknown' or failing to answer when asking what their workplace pension scheme type was, despite reporting a positive value of pension saving.

## Young People: Supported Housing

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Southwell and Nottingham*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the recommendation in the report *The Voices of Supported Lodgings: Strong foundations for our future*, published by Homes for Good and Safe Families on 16 October, that the Government should introduce a 'supported lodgings lead' within every regional care co-operative with responsibility for supported lodgings provision. [HL2478]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The department welcomes the report from Homes for Good and Safe Families on supported lodgings and appreciate the work they do in the sector to raise awareness of fostering, adoption and supported lodgings.

The department is considering the recommendations made in the report, and how we can support the supported lodgings sector to continue to grow, so that all children have the chance to thrive in safe, loving homes.

The department is working with local authorities and partners to co-design and set up the first Regional Care Co-operatives through two pathfinders in Greater Manchester and the South East. It will be for each Regional Care Co-operative to decide its staffing structure, including whether to have a supported lodgings lead, depending on their regional needs and priorities.

The department will continue to consider opportunities to promote and grow the supported lodgings sector, as every child growing up in care should have a stable, secure environment where they feel supported, and we need more good quality options for children and young people.

## Zimbabwe: Commonwealth

Asked by *Baroness Hoey*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their response to the Commonwealth Secretary-General's

letter inviting heads of government of all Commonwealth member states to make known to her by 26 November their views on Zimbabwe's request to re-join the Commonwealth. [HL2913]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The UK has always been clear that we would like to see Zimbabwe return to the Commonwealth when the time is right. However, currently we do not share the Secretariat's assessment of Zimbabwe's progress or readiness in line with the shared values and principles laid out in the Commonwealth Charter. Whilst we recognise there has been progress, we believe further steps are needed on democracy, governance and human rights before Zimbabwe makes a formal application to re-join the Commonwealth. We note some of the findings in the Commonwealth Election Observation Report and support the recommendations. We would encourage a further Commonwealth assessment mission to Zimbabwe in 2025 to follow up on these areas. The UK strongly values our partnership with Zimbabwe and stands ready to support further reforms in this regard, through the Commonwealth and other fora.

## Zimbabwe: Human Rights

Asked by *Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their latest assessment of the human rights situation in Zimbabwe. [HL2836]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** We continue to monitor the human rights situation in Zimbabwe. The UK continues to engage with the Government of Zimbabwe on the importance of upholding the rule of law, including constitutional rights to assembly and association and to ensure due process for all Zimbabweans. We are committed to maintaining a constructive dialogue with the Government of Zimbabwe which will enable us to pursue shared interests, support Zimbabwe's most vulnerable people, deepen our strong people-to-people links and raise issues relating to human rights.

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