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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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<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
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<b>Lord Collins of Highbury</b>	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Whip
<b>Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on Trent</b>	Spokesperson for NI Office, Scotland Office and Wales Office, Whip
<b>Baroness Blake of Leeds</b>	Whip
<b>Baroness Chapman of Darlington</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
<b>Lord Coaker</b>	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
<b>Lord Cryer</b>	Whip
<b>Baroness Gustafsson</b>	Minister of State, Department for Business and Trade and HM Treasury
<b>Lord Hanson of Flint</b>	Minister of State, Home Office
<b>Baroness Hayman of Ullock</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
<b>Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill</b>	Minister of State, Department for Transport
<b>Lord Hermer</b>	Attorney-General
<b>Lord Hunt of Kings Heath</b>	Minister of State, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
<b>Baroness Jones of Whitchurch</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Department for Business and Trade and Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, and Whip
<b>Lord Kennedy of Southwark</b>	Chief Whip
<b>Lord Khan of Burnley</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
<b>Lord Leong</b>	Whip
<b>Lord Livermore</b>	Financial Secretary, HM Treasury
<b>Baroness Merron</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care
<b>Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice, Whip
<b>Baroness Sherlock</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
<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, Whip
<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, 6 January 2025

## Community Ownership Fund Round 4

[HLWS348]

**Lord Khan of Burnley:** My Honourable Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Local Growth and Building Safety (Alex Norris MP) has today made the following statement:

The English Devolution White Paper set out the government's commitment to work in partnership with communities, to transfer power out of Westminster and put local decisions back in the hands of the people affected by them. The loss in recent years of shared community forums, places and institutions – whether it be local news outlets, community cafes, youth clubs, pubs, historic buildings, libraries or sport facilities – has eroded a sense of local civic pride and contributed to a feeling of decline in neighbourhoods and high streets. The government's approach to community empowerment will focus on putting people in control of these important assets. We will create new opportunities for communities to have a say in the future of their area and play a part in improving it, while acknowledging that this means nothing if people are not supported to contribute to this decision-making.

We recognise that community groups play a crucial role in promoting social cohesion and providing services which improve health and wellbeing, reduce anti-social behaviour, protect nature and offer support to groups in need. That's why, despite the difficult financial circumstances that we have inherited from the previous government, we have taken the decision to prioritise funding for community ownership. On 23 December 2024, during the Christmas recess, we announced the outcome of Round 4 of the Community Ownership Fund (COF), with 85 projects from across the UK receiving £36.2m in funding. This represents the largest ever COF announcement to date.

Projects such as Elmfield Hall in Lancashire, St Dunstan's House in Glastonbury, Caerphilly Rugby Football Club in Wales and the Mourne Mountain Rescue Base and Education Centre in Northern Ireland, have been awarded the crucial funding that will keep them in the hands of the communities they serve.

A total of £25.5m has been awarded to 57 projects in England, £5m has been awarded to 11 projects in Scotland, £2.1m has been awarded to 7 projects in Wales and £3.7m has been awarded to 10 projects in Northern Ireland.

The Community Ownership Fund is now closed. There will be no further application windows on the COF programme. We have taken this difficult decision due to the challenging inheritance left by the previous government.

While we are closing the Community Ownership Fund, this government remains committed to the communities' sector and community empowerment. We will deliver on the manifesto commitment to replace the community 'Right to Bid' with a strengthened 'Right to Buy' Assets of Community Value, creating a more robust pathway to community asset ownership. And we will seek to support high streets by strengthening Business Improvement Districts, which have helped to improve town and city centres across the United Kingdom for 20 years, while ensuring they operate to high standards and are accountable to their communities.

We have also implemented new High Street Rental Auction regulations, providing local communities and businesses with a right to rent premises that have long sat vacant, casting a cloud over the local area. The power will help to provide new shops and community spaces, supporting businesses and communities to access the high street and create vibrant, bustling spaces they can be proud of.

We encourage any community groups seeking funding to preserve community assets, including those who may have submitted an Expression of Interest (EOI) in the Community Ownership Fund but did not submit a full application, to continue to use the guidance and tools available through our development support provider on the [MyCommunity](#) site. These tools have been designed to help any organisation seeking to save an asset that is important to them and their local community and will remain available beyond the COF programme. The development support provider may also be able to help to suggest alternative sources of funding that organisations could look to secure.

Building on plans outlined in the English Devolution White Paper, there will be further announcements relating to communities in the new year, including on the community ownership of assets.

## Contingency Fund Advance: Annington Homes

[HLWS346]

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

Further to my statement HCWS323 on 17 December 2024 on developments in military housing, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) has a new cash requirement to fund the transaction to purchase 36,347 properties from Annington Property Ltd.

The deal represents a decisive break with the failed approach of the past and reverses a privatisation that currently costs the MOD £230 million a year in rent. It offers excellent value for money, as well as opening up the "once in a generation" opportunity for a new military housing strategy which will provide service families with a better standard of accommodation while contributing to wider Government objectives on house building and growth.

The agreed purchase price is nearly £6 billion; however, eliminating the liabilities associated with the leases creates budgetary headroom to partially fund this purchase, meaning that the public expenditure impact of this measure, and the impact on public sector net debt, is confined to £1.7 billion. The ONS have agreed this fiscal impact approach. Funding for the deal is being provided by HMT. The Treasury scored additional funding to the Reserve at Autumn Budget for this purpose.

Parliamentary approval for additional capital of £1,698,300,000 for this new expenditure and additional cash of £4,296,200,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the MOD. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £5,994,500,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

This is funding for a one-off financial transaction, and therefore does not reflect the MOD's cash management position.

### **General Practice: Investment and Reform Package 2025-26**

[HLWS349]

**Baroness Merron:** My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Wes Streeting MP) has made the following statement:

General practice is the cornerstone of our national health service, providing essential care to communities day in, day out, managing pressures across the healthcare system, and playing a pivotal role in delivering care closer to home.

On Friday 20 December 2024, I wrote to general practices to update them on proposals for the GP contract for 2025-26. I was pleased to confirm that general practice will receive a funding uplift of £889 million in 2025-26, representing a 7.2% cash growth and estimated real terms growth of 4.8%. This marks the largest funding uplift for general practice since the start of the 5-year framework and demonstrates this Government's commitment to delivering a neighbourhood health service—one of our key Manifesto pledges.

I fully recognise the financial pressures general practice has faced in recent years. Despite the challenging fiscal backdrop this Government inherited, we have made the necessary decision to ensure additional resources are allocated to primary care. This uplift to general practice reflects this Government's commitment to bring back the family doctor, end the 8am scramble and put general practice at the heart of the neighbourhood health service. It will support critical reforms which will make it easier for patients to get an appointment with the same doctor - particularly those with long term conditions - and help us shift from treatment to prevention, by going harder on tackling the biggest killers. I also wanted to take the opportunity to reassure newly qualified GPs employed through the ARRS scheme, announced last year, that they will continue to be supported throughout 2025-26 to sustain care delivery.

General practice is central to our plans for health service reform with the patient at the centre. This funding uplift represents a vital step towards the 'left shift' in care, ensuring that primary and community care receive a greater share of NHS funding and are able to deliver more care closer to home. There are already hundreds more full-time GPs in post than when the Government took office, reflecting the progress made in strengthening the workforce and meaningful progress towards improving access and outcomes for all.

Alongside the announcement of the funding uplift, the consultation with the General Practitioners Committee in England (GPC England) of the British Medical Association (BMA) on the 2025-26 GP contract began in December. This consultation provides a forum to discuss important proposed changes aimed at improving patient care and experience, by reducing inefficiencies, streamlining processes, and enabling general practice to deliver improved patient outcomes. The final reforms will be announced following the conclusion of the consultation in 2025, and I will keep the House updated.

These actions reflect our commitment to addressing the immediate pressures facing general practice while also laying the foundations for long-term reform. Through increased investment and meaningful changes, we expect GPs to deliver better access, improved continuity of care, and strengthened support for elective recovery.

### **Neonicotinoid Pesticides**

[HLWS347]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** My honourable friend, the Minister for Water and Flooding, Emma Hardy MP, has made the following Written Statement:

The UK Government is setting out its plans to deliver its commitment to end the use in England of toxic neonicotinoid pesticides that threaten vital pollinators.

Bees and other insects are critical pollinators. They play a key role in food production, with the economic benefits of pollination to crop production in the UK estimated at £500 million each year. Pollinators also support the wider environment and the beauty of our rural and urban spaces. Pollinators face many pressures - including loss of habitat, pests and pathogens and climate change - and their numbers and diversity have declined as a result. It is our responsibility to act now to reverse this trend.

One of the pressures on pollinators is the use of certain pesticides. Three specific neonicotinoid pesticides (clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiamethoxam) have already been removed from general use because of evidence that their use can harm pollinators. Even at doses that are not directly fatal to bees they can cause cognitive problems, impacting foraging abilities and the productivity of colonies.

Despite this, the last Government continued to allow the use of a neonicotinoid (thiamethoxam) seed treatment on sugar beet crops in England under emergency authorisation arrangements. Emergency authorisations are temporary measures intended to protect crops in

exceptional circumstances. We do not consider that they should be used to perpetuate the use of neonicotinoids that can have a long-term effect on biodiversity.

We will break free from this cycle. We will identify and assess potential changes to legislation that would stop the use of emergency authorisations for products containing clothianidin, imidacloprid or thiamethoxam.

We will also review and update the approach to decisions on applications for emergency authorisations in England. The revised approach will be set out in published guidance which will clearly state how future decisions on emergency authorisation will take full account of the importance of pollinators and of the risks they may face if emergency authorisation is granted.

These commitments are made by the UK Government in respect of the position in England only, because pesticide policy and regulation is devolved. A common approach to delivering on this issue is, however, highly desirable. The UK Government will therefore look to work with the devolved Governments in Northern Ireland (recognising the provisions of the Windsor Framework), Scotland and Wales to seek a consistent way forward across the UK.

These measures come ahead of the publication of a new UK National Action Plan (NAP), which will set how pesticides can be used sustainably. The Government is committed to supporting farmers to protect their crops in more sustainable ways. This includes funding for research into precision breeding for virus-resistant varieties of sugar beet.

The plans are outlined in more detail in a document entitled “A new approach to the use of certain neonicotinoids on crops grown in England” which the Government is placing today in the House libraries. This document is also available on GOV.UK.

## **Zero Emission Vehicle Transition: 2030 Phase-out of New Petrol and Diesel Cars**

[HLWS350]

**Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill:** My Right Honourable friend, the Secretary of State for Transport (Heidi Alexander), has made the following Ministerial Statement.

Government has commenced a consultation on phasing out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars from 2030, driving forward the commitment made in our manifesto, supporting delivery of both our clean energy mission and our economic growth mission

The previous Government caused significant harm to the industry by moving goalposts on phase out dates, creating doubt in the minds of investors and boardrooms and putting at risk the billions of pounds of committed investment in the automotive sector and in the

chargepoint sector. Our plans will restore clarity for manufacturers, provide renewed confidence for charging infrastructure investors and give confidence to consumers considering making the switch. No new petrol or diesel cars will be sold after 2030. All new cars and vans will need to be 100% zero emission by 2035.

The need to transition away from a reliance on fossil fuels has never been clearer, and the transition to zero emission vehicles will play a critical role in quickly reducing carbon emissions and improving our energy security. It is not just an environmental necessity but an opportunity for the UK to lead in cutting edge technologies, representing a significant industrial opportunity for the UK. This shift promises cleaner air and quieter streets, enhancing quality of life in our communities. British people and businesses are already embracing electric vehicles because they are cheaper to run, great to drive and simpler to maintain.

This consultation marks a new phase of collaboration between the Government and the automotive and charging sectors as we support and work together with industry to grasp the opportunities of this ambitious and transformative shift - ensuring the prosperity and security of our nation, with higher growth, better jobs, and cheaper bills. This transformation is a challenge we can meet by working together.

The consultation is an opportunity to consider stakeholders' preferences on technology choices and the types of vehicles permitted between 2030 and 2035 alongside ZEVs. It commits to maintaining the trajectories in the ZEV mandate, while considering how the current arrangements and flexibilities are working, and what steps can be taken to support domestic manufacturing, and cement the UK's position as one of the major European markets for ZEVs.

In order to support the transition, we need to continue to accelerate the rollout of charging infrastructure right across the country, building on significant deployment to date. I have therefore also announced a broad package of measures that will make charging infrastructure quicker and easier to install, supporting £6 billion of private investment out to 2030. This includes simplifying planning rules, publishing our review to speed up grid connections, and continuing to provide resource funding for local councils up and down the country.

These new policies build on over £2.3 billion of government support to UK manufacturers and consumers to transition to zero emission vehicles.

We will work in partnership with the sector to harness the opportunity this transition represents to support thriving automotive and charging sectors, achieve our clean energy superpower mission, and build a prosperous, sustainable future.



## Written Answers

Monday, 6 January 2025

### Abiraterone: Prescriptions

Asked by *Lord Balfé*

To ask His Majesty's Government when, if at all, they expect that the drug abiraterone will be available on NHS prescription in England; and why NHS England has not made it available while it is in Scotland and Wales. [[HL3488](#)]

**Baroness Merron:** The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is the independent body responsible for developing authoritative, evidence-based recommendations for the National Health Service on whether new, licenced medicines represent a clinically and cost-effective use of resources.

The NICE has published guidance recommending abiraterone for the treatment of metastatic hormone-relapsed prostate cancer before chemotherapy is indicated, and for castration-resistant metastatic prostate cancer previously treated with a docetaxel-containing regimen. NHS England funds abiraterone for these indications of prostate cancer in line with the NICE's recommendations, making it routinely available for clinicians to prescribe to eligible patients.

The NICE was unable to recommend abiraterone for use in the treatment of newly diagnosed, hormone-sensitive, metastatic prostate cancer in its guidance published in 2021. However, the NICE is preparing to review this technology appraisal to determine whether to recommend abiraterone for this indication at current prices, following the patent expiry for abiraterone. Further information will be available on the NICE's website in due course.

Pending the outcome of this review, NHS England has published an interim clinical commissioning policy on 13 December 2024 that will make abiraterone acetate and prednisolone available as a routine commissioning treatment option, within the criteria set out in the policy for patients with newly diagnosed high-risk hormone-sensitive metastatic prostate cancer.

Health is a devolved matter and decisions on the availability of medicines in Scotland and Wales are a matter for their own administration.

### Abortion

Asked by *Lord Moylan*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they plan to update the assessment of abortion statistics by the UK Statistics Authority in order to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics. [[HL3549](#)]

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

Please see the letter attached from the Director General for Office for Statistics Regulation.

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Office for Statistics Regulation

The Lord Moylan House of Lords London SW1A 0PW  
19 December 2024

Dear Lord Moylan,

As Director General for Office for Statistics Regulation, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking when His Majesty's Government plan to update the assessment of abortion statistics by the UK Statistics Authority in order to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics (HL3549).

The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) was established in 2016 and is the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority (the Authority). OSR provides independent regulation of all official statistics produced in the UK. Before 2016, the Authority's Monitoring and Assessment team handled regulatory functions.

Accredited Official Statistics are official statistics that have been independently assessed by OSR to comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics. Accredited Official Statistics are called National Statistics in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.

Abortions Statistics for England and Wales produced by the Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (OHID, was previously Department of Health) were assessed as complying with the Code of Practice for Statistics in February 2012, and National Statistics designation was awarded[1].

It is a requirement of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 that the Code of Practice must continue to be complied with by the statistics producer in relation to the statistics. OSR regularly engages with the Head of Profession for Statistics for the Department of Health and Social Care to obtain general assurance on the Department's compliance with the Code of Practice, but the OSR team has not discussed the abortion statistics specifically in these conversations.

Once a set of statistics has been assessed, OSR can re-assess them at any time. Reassessments can be initiated as a result of concerns raised with us by users, including citizens, academic experts and policy stakeholders. While we do not currently have any plans to re-assess the abortion statistics in this financial year, we are always open to hearing the concerns of people with an interest in the topic area.

To that end, if you have any concerns regarding the trustworthiness, quality and value of these abortion statistics not complying with the Code of Practice for Statistics, please do contact me through our general contact email [regulation@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:regulation@statistics.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely

Ed Humpherson Director General for OSR

[1]Statistics on Abortion: Letter of Confirmation as National Statistics,

<https://uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/statistics-on-abortion-letter-of-confirmation-as-national-statistics/>

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Letter from National Statistician [PQHL3549.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-12-17/HL3549>

## Abortion: Statistics

Asked by *Lord Moylan*

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent advice they have taken from the UK Statistics Authority on fulfilling their responsibility under the Abortion Act 1967 to produce abortion statistics. [HL3550]

**Baroness Merron:** In accordance with the Abortion Act 1967, all abortions in England must be notified to the Chief Medical Officer within 14 days of the procedure. This information is used by the Department to monitor compliance with the act. The Department also publishes this data in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics, to ensure it is available to commissioners and providers of abortion services and others with an interest in abortion in England and Wales. There is no legal duty placed on the Department to publish data collected through abortion notification forms.

The Department regularly consults the Office for Statistics Regulation, which is the independent regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority, and provides independent regulation of all official statistics produced in the United Kingdom.

## Academies

Asked by *Lord Watson of Invergowrie*

To ask His Majesty's Government, for each Academy Order made between 1 January 2024 and 30 November 2024 under section 4(A1) of the Academies Act 2010, whether they will list (1) the name of the school, (2) the school's unique reference number (URN), (3) the date of the order, (4) the date on which the Academy was established, if applicable, and the Academy's URN, (5) the reason for revocation, if applicable, and the date of revocation, and (6) where the Order is in place, whether revocation is being considered; and if not, what plans there are for academisation and when, including the name of the sponsor. [HL3568]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** Between 1 January and 30 November 2024, 48 schools were issued an academy order under section 4(A1) of the Academies Act 2010. The attached spreadsheet details the school name, URN, the date of the academy order was issued, the current status, the date and reason for revocation (where applicable) and any subsequent information relating to potential revocation.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL3568\_table\_schools\_issued\_academy\_order  
[HL3568\_table\_schools\_issued\_academy\_order\_under\_section 4A1.docx.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-12-17/HL3568>

## Access to Work Programme

Asked by *Lord Godson*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many disabled people were in receipt of an Access to Work grant in the financial years (1) 2021–22, (2) 2022–23, and (3) 2023–24, and by sector. [HL3668]

### Baroness Sherlock:

- 38,620 people were in receipt of payments for Access to Work provision in 2021 to 2022.
- 49,020 people were in receipt of payments for Access to Work provision in 2022 to 2023.
- 61,630 people were in receipt of payments for Access to Work provision in 2023 to 2024.

Table 6 of the latest Access to Work Official Statistics includes the number of individuals who were in receipt of Access to Work Provision within each financial year. The latest publication can be found here: [Access to Work statistics: April 2007 to March 2024 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/access-to-work-official-statistics)

The information requested about the number of individuals who received a payment for AtW provision by sector is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

## Access to Work Programme: Business

Asked by *Lord Godson*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many people were in receipt of an Access to Work grant by small, medium, or large business in the financial years (1) 2021–22, (2) 2022–23, and (3) 2023–24. [HL3666]

**Baroness Sherlock:** Estimates of the number of individuals who received a payment for an Access to Work element, by employer size, at the end of each of the last three financial years, are provided in the table below.

Employer Size	End of March 2022	End of March 2023	End of March 2024
Small (0-49 employees)	8,180	10,770	17,480
Medium (50-249 employees)	2,680	3,190	4,420
Large (250 or more employees)	18,330	20,690	27,880
Missing	180	150	140
Total	29,370	34,800	49,920

These figures are rounded to the nearest 10 and do not include payments for an Access to Work assessment. Data

on the number of Access to Work recipients by employer size is not directly recorded in the Access to Work admin datasets, so these estimates are derived from information which may provide insights to employer size. They may change in future as a consequence of subsequent system updates or changes to methodology.

### **Afghanistan: Women**

*Asked by Baroness Goudie*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to join Australia, Canada, Germany and the Netherlands in their case against Afghanistan before the International Court of Justice for violations of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. [HL3303]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The Government supports the initiative to refer the Taliban to the International Court of Justice for violations of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. We have repeatedly condemned Taliban restrictions on women and girls' rights, including through UN Security Council and Human Rights Council resolutions. As the Foreign Secretary said on 24 August, the exclusion of women from all aspects of public life is another tragic setback for Afghanistan. We are discussing with international partners ways to hold them accountable. More broadly, officials regularly press the Taliban to reverse their inhuman restrictions, both bilaterally and with international partners.

*Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan following the recent introduction of the law on "the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice" and the ban on them training in any medical capacity. [HL3392]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The Government is deeply concerned at reports of a ban on women accessing medical training in Afghanistan and have repeatedly and strongly condemned Taliban restrictions on women and girls. Officials have directly pressed the Taliban to reverse their repressive so-called 'vice and virtue' law and have been raising the issue of the Taliban ban on women accessing medical education and training in Afghanistan since 4 December. We consider the Taliban's actions to be short-sighted and a grotesque backwards-step. Our ongoing support to those Afghans most in need is more essential than ever, and we remain committed that at least 50% of those reached by UK aid are women and girls.

*Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to join proceedings against Afghanistan (1) brought by Germany, Canada, Australia and the Netherlands before the International Court of Justice for violations of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, or (2) referred to the

International Criminal Court by Chile, Costa Rica, France, Luxembourg, Mexico, and Spain regarding the situation of women and girls. [HL3393]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The Government supports the initiative to refer the Taliban to the International Court of Justice for violations of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and we welcome the continued focus on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan by the International Criminal Court. We have repeatedly condemned Taliban restrictions on women and girls' rights, including through UN Security Council and Human Rights Council resolutions. As the Foreign Secretary said on 24 August, the exclusion of women from all aspects of public life is another tragic setback for Afghanistan. We are discussing with international partners ways to hold them accountable. More broadly, officials regularly press the Taliban to reverse their inhuman restrictions, both bilaterally and with international partners.

*Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government when was their last engagement with the Taliban, what was discussed and whether the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan was raised in those exchanges. [HL3396]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** We have repeatedly condemned Taliban restrictions on women and girls' rights, both bilaterally and internationally. Officials from the Doha-based UK Mission to Afghanistan continue to press Taliban acting ministers and Afghan officials on human rights abuses in Afghanistan. Officials visit Kabul regularly, raising issues directly with senior members of the Taliban, including their unacceptable policies towards women and girls. Most recently, on 16 December, officials raised the ban on women accessing medical education and training in Afghanistan and urged the Taliban to reverse the ban.

### **Ageing and Older People: Public Appointments**

*Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential merits of establishing a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing in England. [HL3547]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The Office for Equality and Opportunity maintains the legal framework for discrimination law. This includes the Equality Act 2010 and its protections for older people (through the protected characteristic of age) in a variety of settings, including work and the provision of services.

The Equality Act 2010, including its provisions relating to age, is enforced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. In addition, the Equality Advisory and Support Service advises and assists individuals on issues relating to equality, including where they believe they



may have been discriminated against on the basis of their age. We are committed to supporting these institutions to carry out their important functions. The Office for Equality and Opportunity is not considering establishing a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing at this time.

### **Agriculture: Beavers and Wild Boar**

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to introduce a compensation scheme for farmers for any damages to crops by (1) beavers and (2) wild boars, or to provide other financial support for farmers whose land beavers and wild boars are living on or travelling through. [HL3580]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** This is a devolved matter and so this reply applies to England only.

Sustainable Farming Incentive, Countryside Stewardship and Landscape Recovery offer support for farmers through payments for actions that deliver both environmental and agricultural benefits. Some actions can be used to mitigate the effects of species such as beavers and wild boar, for example by buffering of watercourses or restoration of habitats, allowing space for their activity. Beaver protection and management capital grants are available in Countryside Stewardship to protect permanent crops and trees from beaver damage, and to manage beavers and their dams where there is a risk of serious damage or flooding to crops, infrastructure, or human or animal health.

### **Air Pollution: Mental Health**

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of research led by Dr Mary Abed Al Ahad of the University of St Andrews showing that people exposed to high levels of pollution are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety and psychosis; and whether they plan to reduce pollution in cities as a result. [HL3624]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** Poor air quality is one of the largest environmental risks to public health in the UK. Epidemiological studies have shown that long-term exposure to air pollution (over years or lifetimes) reduces life expectancy, mainly due to cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and lung cancer. Short-term exposure (over hours or days) to elevated levels of air pollution can also cause a range of health impacts.

Defra has not yet reviewed the research led by Dr Mary Abed Al Ahad. The Government continues to consider and evaluate the evidence of links between exposure to air pollution and a wide range of health effects including, adverse birth outcomes, diabetes, and increased dementia risk, as well as mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety and psychosis.

The Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants provides independent advice to the Government on how

air pollution impacts on health, including on emerging research.

The Government is committed to protecting the public from the harm of pollution and will introduce a Clean Air Strategy to deliver our existing legally binding air quality targets, including a series of interventions to reduce emissions so that everyone's exposure to air pollution is reduced.

### **Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse**

*Asked by Baroness Finlay of Llandaff*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to data released by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities on 3 December showing that alcohol-specific deaths in England in 2023 rose to their highest level for the fourth year in a row, what plans they have to produce a new national alcohol strategy. [HL3492]

**Baroness Merron:** It is unacceptable that alcohol deaths are now at record high levels. 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 better understand how we can best reduce alcohol-related harms.

### **An Ciste Infheistiochta Gaeilge: Finance**

*Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask His Majesty's Government how much funding they have provided to An Ciste Infheistiochta Gaeilge, the Irish Language Investment Fund, in each year since it was established. [HL3345]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** The Irish Language Investment Fund, An Ciste Infheistiochta Gaeilge, was established by a grant-in-aid of £8 million from the Government in 2010 in connection to the Hillsborough Castle Agreement.

In 2020, the Government announced the provision of an additional £4 million in capital funding to An Ciste as part of the commitments in relation to Northern Ireland's unique circumstances that were agreed in the New Decade, New Approach agreement.

The Block Grant Transparency publication, which sets out changes to devolved government funding from the 2015 Spending Review onwards in detail, will shortly be updated with changes made at Autumn Budget 2024.

### **Antimicrobials: Drug Resistance**

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government how they plan to ensure that medical schools have integrated antimicrobial stewardship competencies into undergraduate curriculums, to help meet the aims of the five-year antimicrobial resistance action plan; and whether the Department of Health and Social Care is primarily responsible for coordinating this with the

General Medical Council and the Department for Education. [HL3490]

**Baroness Merron:** The standard of medical training is the responsibility of the General Medical Council (GMC), which is an independent statutory body. The GMC has the general function of promoting high standards of education and co-ordinating all stages of education to ensure that medical students and newly qualified doctors are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for professional practice.

Each individual medical school sets its own undergraduate medical curriculum. This has to meet the standards set by the GMC, who then monitor and check to make sure that these standards are maintained. Whilst curricula do not necessarily highlight specific conditions for doctors to be aware of, they instead emphasise the skills and approaches that a doctor must develop in order to ensure accurate and timely diagnoses and treatment plans for their patients.

The NHS England Antimicrobial Resistance Programme, a prescribing workstream, has collaborated with the Workforce Training and Education directorate to co-produce, with stakeholders from university schools of pharmacy, an indicative curriculum and competency framework for antimicrobial resistance and antimicrobial stewardship, as a part of the new initial education and training programme for United Kingdom pharmacists who will graduate with independent prescribing rights from 2025/26. The prescribing workstream has plans to make contact with the GMC and the Nursing and Midwifery Council during 2025/26 to establish how antimicrobial stewardship is taught and examined in undergraduate medical and nursing courses in England, and to support improvement as required.

## Apprentices

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Newcastle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to make apprenticeships more financially viable for young people and their families. [HL3616]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** This government has a driving mission to break down barriers to opportunity and we want to rebalance opportunities towards young people, who have the most to gain from apprenticeships.

From April 2025, the Apprentice Minimum Wage will increase by 18% from £6.40 to £7.55. This welcome increase will boost the hourly wage for thousands of young apprentices across a range of sectors, and those in their first year of an apprenticeship. We also know that many employers pay their apprentices more than the minimum. Latest data shows that the median gross hourly pay for apprentices in 2023 was £11.63 an hour.

The department continues to provide employers and providers with additional funding to support more apprenticeship opportunities for young people. The department provides £1,000 to both employers and training providers when they take on apprentices aged 16

to 18, and up to age 24 for apprentices with an education, health and care plan, or who have been in local authority care. These payments can be used to support costs such as work equipment, uniforms or travel.

Apprentices aged under 25 who have been in local authority care may be eligible for a £3,000 bursary, as well as wages from their employer. The bursary is not subject to tax and is not treated as income for benefits purposes.

Apprentices may also be eligible for local discounted travel schemes. For example, apprentices over 18, living in a London borough and in the first year of an apprenticeship, can get discounted travel with an Oyster photocard.

## Apprentices: National Vocational Qualifications

*Asked by Baroness Redfern*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase the number of apprentices who are studying for vocational qualifications. [HL3353]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** An apprenticeship is a job with training. Through a combination of on and off the job training, an apprenticeship will enable an apprentice to be competent in a specific occupation. Not all apprenticeships will include a mandatory qualification, but some will, such as a degree or a professional accreditation.

This government is reforming the apprenticeships offer into a new levy-funded growth and skills offer, which will offer greater flexibility to employers and learners and align with the industrial strategy. It will feature shorter duration apprenticeships and new foundation apprenticeships for young people in targeted, growing sectors. These will help more people learn high-quality skills at work and fuel innovation in businesses across the country. The department will take the time to work closely with employers and providers to design new training that offers young people a route into good, skilled work and meets the needs of the industrial strategy.

The department continues to pay additional funding to employers and training providers to support them to take on young apprentices, apprentices with learning difficulties and disabilities, and care leavers.

The department is continuing outreach work in schools and colleges through the Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge programme and targeting young people through the Skills for Life campaign.

## Armed Conflict: Civilians

*Asked by Baroness Helic*

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to reviewing the Geneva Conventions and legal standards for humanitarian treatment and protection of civilians during war. [HL3260]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** We continue to call for International Humanitarian Law (IHL), including the Geneva Conventions of 1949, to be respected around the world. International Humanitarian Law provides the minimum level of compliance required by parties to armed conflict. However, parties to the Geneva Conventions can choose, as the UK does, to implement policy that goes beyond these legal obligations, providing greater protection for civilians during war. Promoting IHL compliance is the cornerstone of UK humanitarian policy, as is evidenced by our activities recorded in the UK Voluntary Report on the Domestic Implementation of IHL.

### Armed Forces: Housing

*Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress has been made in upgrading the accommodation for armed forces personnel and their families at military establishments in the UK. [HL3262]

**Lord Coaker:** For FY 2024-25, circa £440 million is currently forecast to be spent on maintaining and improving SFA. This includes improving insulation, remediating homes with damp and mould issues and the upgrade of heating systems.

The Ministry of Defence is committed to reviewing its standard for accommodation with the aim of improving the condition of SFA across the estate, and to improve the lived experience for Service families. As part of this, the MOD has recently regained ownership of circa 36,000 SFA properties through the deal with Annington Property Limited, substantially increasing its ability to redevelop and improve our estate further.

### Artificial Intelligence

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking (1) to regulate, and (2) to encourage investment and innovation in the AI sector. [HL3461]

**Lord Vallance of Balham:** We are committed to building an AI sector that can scale and win globally, ensuring conditions are right for global AI companies to want to call the UK home. The AI Opportunities Action Plan will outline how we achieve this by securing the necessary infrastructure, talent and data access, and detailing steps to support adoption across the economy.

In the King's Speech we committed to introducing new, binding and highly targeted requirements on the handful of companies developing the most advanced AI models. They will support growth and innovation by reducing uncertainty for AI developers and boosting public trust.

*Asked by Lord Mott*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they will publish the Artificial Intelligence Opportunities Action Plan. [HL3507]

**Lord Vallance of Balham:** The AI Opportunities Action Plan will set out recommended actions for Government to grow the UK's domestic AI sector and drive adoption of AI across the economy to boost growth and improve products and services. The action plan will be published soon.

### Artificial Intelligence: Copyright

*Asked by Lord Sarfraz*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the policy implications of using copyrighted content as artificial intelligence training data. [HL3327]

**Lord Vallance of Balham:** The Government is carefully considering issues relating to copyright and AI, including the implications of using copyrighted content as AI training data.

The Government has launched a consultation on a package of measures to address copyright and AI issues. This will seek views and evidence of potential policy implications for the creative and AI sectors.

*Asked by Lord Sarfraz*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of copyright protection for works of art generated using artificial intelligence. [HL3328]

**Lord Vallance of Balham:** The Government is carefully considering issues relating to copyright and AI, such as copyright protection for AI-generated works of art.

The Government has launched a consultation on a package of measures to address copyright and AI issues. This will include seeking views on protection for the outputs of generative AI.

### Arts: Artificial Intelligence

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the statement by the Creative Rights in AI Coalition, published on 16 December; and whether they intend further regulations on the use of creatively owned property to train AI. [HL3566]

**Baroness Twycross:** We have seen the statement by the Creative Rights in AI Coalition and look forward to assessing it in the context of the consultation on Copyright and AI which we published on 17 December 2024 and closes on 25 February 2025. The consultation can be found on the gov.uk website.

### Asylum: Costs

*Asked by Lord Murray of Blidworth*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the cost to the Home Office of the pilot scheme which extends from 28 days to 56 days the

"move-on" period for people whose asylum claims have been granted and who are resident in Home Office-funded accommodation or otherwise in receipt of Home Office-funded support. [HL3482]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** The Home Office has recently introduced a time-limited pilot giving newly recognised refugees 56 days' notice to move on from asylum accommodation, in order to support local authorities as we seek to clear the asylum backlog and transition to eVisas.

We do not expect that the pilot will materially affect our forecast spend on asylum costs over the current Spending Review Period.

### Asylum: Syria

*Asked by Lord Empey*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that those formally associated with the Assad regime, including those responsible for torture and the suppression of human rights in Syria, are not given asylum in the United Kingdom. [HL3433]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** While all asylum claims are routinely considered on their individual merits, it is standard procedure to deny protection to anyone who has committed crimes against peace, war crimes, crimes against humanity, other serious crimes abroad or acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

### Avian Influenza: Compensation

*Asked by Lord Roborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many avian influenza compensation scheme claims were paid in (1) 2023, and (2) 2024 to date. [HL3458]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** In 2023 58 claims for compensation for avian influenza were paid. To date, in 2024 7 claims for compensation have been paid.

### Bangladesh: Elections

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to encourage free and fair elections in Bangladesh. [HL3578]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** The UK is committed to supporting free, fair, participatory, and peaceful elections in Bangladesh. We support the Interim Government's efforts to establish a pathway toward an inclusive democratic future and free elections. We continue to emphasise to the Interim Government the critical importance of respecting human rights, upholding the rule of law, and ensuring access to justice - key pillars of democracy. During the Minister for the Indo-Pacific's recent visit to Dhaka, she met with political leaders where she encouraged progress towards an inclusive political

settlement. Our Bangladesh Collaborative, Accountable and Peaceful Politics programme promotes the protection of civic and political space. We are providing up to £27 million under this programme.

### Beavers: Conservation

*Asked by Lord Lucas*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they expect to complete their review of beaver release policy in England. [HL3187]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** This is a devolved matter, and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

We will continue to work with Natural England to develop our approach to beaver reintroductions in England. Further information on this will be published in due course.

### Beverage Containers: Deposit Return Schemes

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to introducing a deposit return scheme on plastic bottles and cans in England. [HL3163]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** On 19 November 2024, the Government published a policy update reaffirming its commitment to deliver a Deposit Return Scheme in October 2027. The materials included in the scheme are single use (PET) plastic, steel, and aluminium drink containers. UK Government will work closely with the Scottish Government and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in Northern Ireland to launch the scheme across England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

We laid the regulations for England and Northern Ireland before Parliament on 25th November 2024. This is a significant milestone. We plan for the regulations to come into force in late January (assuming parliamentary time allows). The application process for the deposit management organisation (DMO) for the deposit return scheme is now live and appointment of the DMO(s) for England, Northern Ireland and

Scotland is planned for April 2025.

### Bicycles: Manufacturing Industries

*Asked by Baroness Pidgeon*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the use of state subsidies in the production of (1) e-bikes, and (2) bicycles, made by (a) EU nations, (b) North American nations, (c) China, and (d) the rest of the world. [HL3405]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The Trade Remedies Authority is the UK's independent investigatory body that exists to defend the UK against unfair international trade



practices, including assessing harm from subsidies. Where UK economic interests are being damaged by such unfair practices, action will be taken. The UK has in place an anti-subsidy and an anti-dumping measure on e-bikes from China, and one anti-dumping measure on bikes/bike parts from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Tunisia. The Trade Remedies Authority is currently reviewing all three measures.

*Asked by **Baroness Pidgeon***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the number of jobs in the UK in (1) the bicycle manufacturing industry, (2) the e-bike manufacturing industry, and (3) the supply chains of the bicycle and e-bike manufacturing industries. [HL3406]

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

A response to the Hon lady's Parliamentary Question of 11th December is attached.

The Baroness Pidgeon MBE

House of Lords

London

SW1A 0PW

17 December 2024

Dear Lady Pidgeon,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question, asking what assessment has been made of the number of jobs in (1) the bicycle manufacturing industry, (2) the e-bike manufacturing industry, and (3) the supply chains of the bicycle and e-bike manufacturing industries (HL3406).

The estimated number of employees in Great Britain working in the manufacture of bicycles and invalid carriages in 2023 was 2,700, according to the latest available data from the Business Register and Employment Survey1.

The latest UK Standard Industrial Classification of Economic Activities 20072 does not have a unique classification for the manufacture of e-bikes, therefore we are unable to provide an estimate of jobs for this industry.

The supply chain of the bicycle and e-bike manufacturing industries could include a large number of different industrial classifications. We do not hold information on which industries are part of these supply chains and therefore are unable to provide an estimate for the number of jobs in the UK for supply chain industries.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Letter from National Statistician [PQHL3406 (1).pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-12-11/HL3406>

## Biodiversity and Climate Change

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

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to build stronger links between national strategies for biodiversity and climate change. [HL3341]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** Tackling biodiversity and climate change together is important both nationally and internationally. This government is demonstrating international leadership in this space. We have recently appointed Ruth Davis OBE as Special Representative for Nature; she will champion our ambition to put climate and nature at the heart of our foreign policy.

On the 30th of July, we announced a rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP). We are working with civil society, business and local government to review and revise the EIP to develop an ambitious programme to better protect the environment, create a zero-waste economy, save nature, reach net zero and adapt to climate change.

We are committed to concluding the review by the end of the year. A statement of key findings will be published in early 2025, to be followed by publication of a revised EIP.

## Biodiversity: International Cooperation

*Asked by **Lord Randall of Uxbridge***

To ask His Majesty's Government when they intend to publish details of progress made in implementing the Global Biodiversity Framework. [HL3409]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** The UK is committed to meeting the requirement to submit to the Convention on Biological Diversity its seventh and eighth national reports in February 2026 and June 2029, respectively. These reports will provide an assessment of our progress on the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework, including progress towards the national targets which we submitted on 1 August.

## British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty

*Asked by **Lord German***

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the validity of the Maldives' claim to sovereignty over the Chagos Islands. [HL3300]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** The negotiations on the exercise of sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory/Chagos Islands were between the UK and Mauritius, following a long-standing dispute. They were bilateral negotiations between the two countries: no other states were involved. The Maldives are a valued partner and we are in regular contact with them about a range of issues.

*Asked by Lord Kempson*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is its timeline for the agreement and ratification of a treaty with Mauritius on the sovereignty of the British Indian Ocean Territory, and whether they still plan to pursue ratification of such a treaty in 2025. [HL3309]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** On 20 December, the UK and Mauritian governments released a joint statement reiterating their commitment to finalising a treaty as quickly as possible. The timetable for treaty ratification has not yet been confirmed. However, following signature, the Treaty will be laid before Parliament in the usual way, consistent with the Constitutional Reform and Governance (CrG) Act 2010. The Government also intends to bring forward a Bill to implement the Treaty in domestic law.

### **British Overseas Territories: Companies**

*Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking together with the Overseas Territories to improve the transparency of the beneficial ownership of assets. [HL3480]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** On 21 November, the Foreign Secretary launched his campaign to tackle illicit finance and corruption. Tackling financial secrecy by raising the bar on corporate transparency globally, including in partnership with the Overseas Territories, will be an important priority within this campaign.

At the Joint Ministerial Council last month, I confirmed the UK Government's expectation that OTs implement fully public registers of beneficial ownership. Fully public registers have already been introduced in Montserrat and Gibraltar, and commitments were made by the Falkland Islands and Saint Helena to introduce these by April 2025. Saint Helena has recently passed relevant legislation.

Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands committed to implement registers of beneficial ownership accessible to those with legitimate interest, which offer the maximum possible degree of access and transparency whilst containing the necessary safeguards to protect the right to privacy in line with respective constitutions, at the latest by June 2025.

### **Business: Equality**

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to encourage companies to increase diversity in senior leadership roles, particularly in relation to (1) ethnic minorities, and (2) women. [HL3331]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The Department for Business and Trade sponsors two voluntary and business-led initiatives: the FTSE Women Leaders Review and the

Parker Review on ethnic minority leadership. Both reviews encourage companies to achieve voluntary targets - 40% representation of women on boards and in senior management, and at least one ethnic minority director on company boards.

The 2024 report showed that 42.1% of the FTSE 350 board members were women behind only France who has adopted a quota approach to diversity and ahead of other countries with quotas. The 2024 Parker review reported that 77% of boards FTSE 350 boards had met their target.

### **Cabinet Office and Prime Minister: Staff**

*Asked by Lord Kempson*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will place in the Library of the House a current organisational chart of the senior staffing structure of the Cabinet Office and 10 Downing Street, including (1) all organisational units and (2) their headcount. [HL3496]

**Baroness Twycross:** The latest Cabinet Office organisational chart is due for publication on the 30th of January as part of gov.uk transparency publications. This will contain all organisational units, including 10 Downing Street, and headcount. I will arrange for a copy of the organisational chart to be deposited in the house libraries upon publication.

### **Cabinet Office: Staff**

*Asked by Lord Kempson*

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the objectives, work and structure of any units, teams or groups within the Cabinet Office working on European Union matters, relations or policy, and what is the headcount for those units. [HL3497]

**Baroness Twycross:** On 24 July 2024, the Prime Minister announced via a Written Ministerial Statement that responsibility for the UK's relationship with the EU, including co-chairing the ministerial structures under the UK's treaties with the EU, would move to the Cabinet Office.

The EU Relations Secretariat was established in the Cabinet Office to give effect to the Government's manifesto commitments to reset the relationship with the EU, deliver on our commitments in the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement and Trade and Cooperation Agreement, and implement the Windsor Framework in good faith and protect the UK's internal market.

The EU Relations Secretariat brings together civil servants who were already working on EU relations from across the government. The data on this headcount will be published in 2025. The next update to the Cabinet Office organogram with a breakdown of grades will be published on 30 January 2025.

## Carbon Emissions

Asked by *Lord Offord of Garvel*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assumptions they use for internal modelling purposes for traded carbon values in each year up to 2030. [HL3619]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's (DESNZ) traded carbon values for modelling purposes are used to estimate the financial cost of purchasing allowances in the United Kingdom Emissions Trading Scheme (UK ETS) under different scenarios. These values are owned by DESNZ and not by the UK ETS Authority which governs the UK ETS.

The most recent set of traded carbon values for modelling purposes, for 2024, were published on the Government's website on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2024 and are attached. The assumptions are listed on the publication.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Traded carbon values [Traded carbon values used for modelling purposes 2024.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-12-18/HL3619>

## Carbon Emissions: Taxation

Asked by *Lord Offord of Garvel*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimates they have made of carbon prices in 2030. [HL3618]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** I refer the Hon Lord Offord of Garvel to the answer provided by the Secretary of State on 10 December 2024 to Question 18202.

## Care Homes and Hospices: Costs

Asked by *Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to protect the services of hospices and private care homes in the light of the increase in National Insurance contributions and other increased costs in the budget. [HL3680]

**Baroness Merron:** The biggest investment in a generation for hospices has been announced by the Government, ensuring that hospices can continue to deliver the highest quality end of life care possible for their patients, families, and loved ones.

This was through a £100 million boost for adult and children's hospices to ensure they have the best physical environment for care, and £26 million of revenue to support children and young people's hospices. Further details of the funding allocation and dissemination will be set out this year.

To support local authorities to deliver key services such as adult social care, the Government is making available up to £3.7 billion of additional funding for social care

authorities in 2025/26, which includes a £880 million increase in the Social Care Grant.

We have taken necessary decisions to fix the foundations in the public finances at the Autumn Budget. The employer National Insurance contribution rise will be implemented April 2025, and the Department will set out further details on the allocation of funding for next year in due course, including through planning guidance.

## Care Leavers: Asylum

Asked by *Lord Murray of Blidworth*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether local authorities are required to continue to accommodate former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children for whom they had responsibility once those individuals are over the age of 18; and, if so, in what circumstances and on what basis do such requirements arise. [HL3551]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** Local authorities are responsible for accommodating all children in care and care leavers aged 16 or 17. When care leavers reach age 18, local authorities do not have an automatic duty to accommodate them. However, they do have continuing duties to help all care leavers, including former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) care leavers, to make a successful transition from care to independence, including providing them with a personal adviser, whose role includes helping them to secure suitable accommodation.

Where a young person is in foster care immediately before their eighteenth birthday, local authorities have a duty to support them to 'stay put' with their former foster carer to age 21. Around half of eligible young people choose to 'stay put' when they turn 18. This includes providing financial support to meet all reasonable costs of supporting the young person.

If a decision is made that a former UASC care leaver does not have leave to remain in the UK and is 'appeal rights exhausted', and does not have recourse to public funds, local authorities must undertake a human rights assessment to determine whether failing to provide support would leave them destitute and infringe their human rights. If the local authority determines that support is necessary, they can provide accommodation and a subsistence allowance to cover living costs.

## Charity Commission: Complaints

Asked by *Lord Black of Brentwood*

To ask His Majesty's Government what action they have taken following the findings by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman about the failures by the Charity Commission in its handling of complaints about the case of Lara Hall. [HL3528]

**Baroness Twycross:** The Charity Commission is independent from government. This is an ongoing process, and we understand that the Charity Commission

continues to engage with the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

## Chess

*Asked by Lord Wigley*

To ask His Majesty's Government how much financial support has been provided to schools for the promotion of chess in each of the last three years. [HL3576]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

In the 2023/24 financial year, the department allocated £200,000 through the Strengthening Chess in Primary Schools grant, supporting primary schools to improve their pupils' access to chess.

More broadly, at the Autumn Budget 2024, the government announced an additional £2.3 billion for mainstream schools and young people with high needs for the 2025/26 financial year, compared to 2024/25. This means that overall core school funding will total almost £63.9 billion next year.

Each year schools receive core funding from the department to cover their expenditures. These expenditures could include teacher salaries, school lunches, electronic resources, art and craft supplies, or any other number of items.

It is for headteachers to decide how best to manage their budgets, including spending on the promotion of extracurricular activities such as chess. This funding is not ringfenced.

Schools may also choose to utilise their pupil premium funding to support enrichment. The pupil premium grant is funding to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in state-funded schools in England. Schools must use this funding in line with the menu of approaches which are based on the evidence of how best to improve attainment for disadvantaged pupils. This includes the flexibility to use pupil premium to tackle non-academic barriers to success, including providing enrichment opportunities to benefit those pupils who may not be able to have access otherwise.

## Children and Young People: Reading

*Asked by Baroness Rebuck*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the National Literacy Trust Annual Literacy Survey 2024 results, particularly the finding that only 34.6 per cent of children and young people aged 8 to 18 said they enjoy reading in their spare time; and what steps they are taking to reverse this decline. [HL3316]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** High and rising school standards, with excellent foundations in reading, writing

and mathematics, are at the heart of the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and give every child the best start in life.

The department knows that reading for pleasure is hugely important and brings a range of benefits. In addition to strong links with attainment, wide recreational reading expands pupils' knowledge about the world and language, as well as their understanding of subject-specific academic and technical vocabulary.

Further, pupils who read regularly report heightened levels of social and emotional wellbeing. For many, reading is a form of relaxation, a place to escape everyday challenges and a source of entertainment. Readers can adopt new perspectives, develop empathy and become more socially conscious.

In recognition of this, the department has implemented a range of measures to support reading for pleasure.

The English hubs programme supports the teaching of phonics, early language development and reading for pleasure with a further £23 million committed for the 2024/25 academic year to support this work. Further the government's reading framework provides guidance on improving reading teaching provision, to ensure that every child is not only able to read proficiently, but also develops a genuine love of reading.

The current national curriculum states that teachers are expected to encourage pupils to develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information. The programmes of study for English make clear the importance of reading for pleasure.

The government has established an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review (CAR), covering ages 5 to 18, chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE, an expert in education policy.

The CAR will look closely at the key challenges to attainment for young people, in line with the government's ambition for a curriculum that delivers excellent foundations in reading, writing and mathematics, and ensures every young person gets the opportunity to develop the creative, digital, and speaking and listening skills particularly prized by employers.

## Children: Protection

*Asked by Baroness Grey-Thompson*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the findings set out in the report *Eroding the right to family life: human rights violations in Britain's child protection systems*, published by the Children and Families Truth Commission on 15 November, and whether they will produce guidance to ensure that local authorities intervene early, fulfil their duty to provide support services to families in need, and regularly review care plans to ensure that children in the child protection system can be reunited with their families at the earliest possible opportunity. [HL3304]



**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** Local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare.

All local authorities must adhere to statutory guidance including ‘Working together to safeguard children 2023’, which is attached and can also be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>. The guidance is clear that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children relies on providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge.

Ofsted inspects whether local authorities are delivering appropriately for children.

On 18 November 2024, the department published ‘Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive’, which is attached and can also be accessed here: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67375fe5e0fc07b53499a42/Keeping\\_Children\\_Safe\\_\\_Helping\\_Families\\_Thrive\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67375fe5e0fc07b53499a42/Keeping_Children_Safe__Helping_Families_Thrive_.pdf). This sets out this government’s approach to reforming the system of support for children and families, including rebalancing the system toward earlier intervention through the national roll out of family help and child protection reforms. The local government finance policy statement published on 28 November 2024, by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government confirmed that the rollout of these reforms will be supported by £500 million of funding from April 2025. The statement is accessible here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-finance-policy-statement-2025-to-2026/local-government-finance-policy-statement-2025-to-2026>.

Family Help is a seamless, non-stigmatising offer of support delivered by multi-disciplinary community-based teams. It combines the strengths of targeted early help and section 17 work, with an emphasis on whole family working and greater flexibility on who leads work with families, ensuring children and families receive the right support at the earliest opportunity, crucially improving their outcomes and also reducing costs to public services.

Through the £45 million Families First for Children Pathfinder programme and Family Networks pilot running in ten local authorities, the department is testing models and approaches to parental support and advocacy, so that parents feel empowered to have a strong voice when navigating the child protection process. Through the same programme, we are also testing stronger multi-agency approaches to support families. This includes new Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams and Lead Child Protection Practitioners, who are qualified social workers with strong expertise in child protection and assessments. These teams will see local authority, police, and health and other relevant agencies work together in an integrated way to help families overcome challenges, stay together wherever possible, and thrive whilst keeping children safe.

The introduction of Family Help and reforms to child protection from April 2025 will produce a fundamental shift in the way the department is able to respond to children and families who need help. The changes will

form part of an improved end-to-end system that offers a seamless system of support, ensuring children and families access the right support at the right time, delivered by the right person.

More detailed guidance on these reforms will be published in the new year which will confirm the changes we expect local authorities and their partners to deliver, including minimum expectations for delivery and opportunities for local flexibility.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL3304 attachment 1 [HL3304 attachment - Working together to safeguard children 2023.pdf]

HL3304 attachment 2 [HL3304 attachment - Keeping Children Safe Helping Families Thrive.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-12-09/HL3304>

## China: Foreign Relations

*Asked by Viscount Waverley*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Chancellor of the Exchequer is planning to visit China in early 2025, and what level of priority they are giving to developing a relationship with China built on trade and investment. [HL3629]

**Lord Livermore:** A strong UK-China relationship is important for both countries, and investment and growth are priorities for this government. China is one of our biggest trading partners and therefore it is important to have serious, pragmatic discussions with its leaders, cooperating where we can, competing when needed and challenging where we must.

The Prime Minister met President Xi Jinping at the G20 Summit in November and agreed that the Chancellor should visit Beijing in 2025 to discuss economic and financial cooperation with her counterpart, Vice Premier He Lifeng. Ministerial travel will be confirmed in the usual way.

## China: Uyghurs

*Asked by Lord Rooker*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken since 4 July to monitor the actions that the government of China has taken against Uyghurs in Xinjiang. [HL3241]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** This Government stands firm on human rights, including in Xinjiang, where China continues to persecute and arbitrarily detain Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim minorities.

We continue to monitor the situation closely. For example, the Government conducts independent visits to areas of major concern wherever possible, and supports NGOs in exposing and reacting to human rights violations.

We continue to coordinate efforts with our international partners to hold China to account, for example, joining a statement led by Australia on Xinjiang at the UN General Assembly on 22 October.

### Civil Service

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential impact of job cuts on the efficiency and output of the Civil Service. [HL3462]

**Baroness Twycross:** This government is committed to ensuring departments consider overall value for money in resourcing decisions.

To this end, it has introduced a 2% target for reduction to administration budgets in financial years 2024-25 and 2025-26 and a stop to all non-essential spending on consultancy, with an aim to halve spending in future years.

As set out in the Budget, the government has committed to developing a long-term strategic plan for a more efficient and effective Civil Service, including bold options to improve skills, harness digital technology and drive better outcomes for public services.

Decisions relating to the size and cost of the Civil Service workforce will be considered as part of the Spending Review process. HM Treasury and the Cabinet Office will work closely with departments to develop plans that achieve the government's reform objectives for the Civil Service.

### Civil Service: Innovation and Productivity

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of how increasing funding to the Civil Service could (1) support innovation in technology and processes, and (2) improve productivity. [HL3417]

**Baroness Twycross:** The Government is committed to a strategic plan for the Civil Service which supports improved productivity and drives innovation.

In a [speech](#) on 9 December, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster set out the Government's plans for public sector reform. Phase 2 of the Spending Review will also include a focus on how departments can support innovation and boost productivity in the Civil Service.

### Civil Service: Management

*Asked by Baroness Finn*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will provide a list of all Civil Service committees that exercise management functions in relation to the Civil Service, including the membership of each committee; and what changes, if any, have been made to the Civil Service Governance Framework since the publication in November 2023 of the Independent Review of

Governance and Accountability in the Civil Service by Lord Maude of Horsham. [HL3603]

**Baroness Twycross:** A review was carried out in April 2024 that resulted in the streamlining of civil service governance structures and fora.

Current Civil Service committees that exercise management functions in relation to the Civil Service include the:

- Civil Service Board
- People Board
- Civil Service Operations Board
- Location and Property Board
- Data and Digital Board
- Senior Leadership Committee

Membership of these committees are as follows:

*Civil Service Board:*

- Cat Little CB (Chair - CS Chief Operating Officer, Cabinet Office)
- Sir Chris Wormald (Cabinet Secretary, Cabinet Office)
- Tamara Finkelstein CB (Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs)
- Dame Bernadette Kelly (Department for Transport)
- Sir Matthew Rycroft (Home Office)
- Sir Peter Schofield (Department for Work and Pensions)
- Dame Antonia Romeo (Ministry of Justice)
- Sarah Healey CB CVO (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government)
- James Bowler CB (HM Treasury)
- Sir Philip Barton (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office)
- John Paul Marks (Scottish Government)
- David Williams CB (Ministry of Defence)
- Jeremy Pocklington CB (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero)

*People Board:*

- Sarah Healey (Chair - Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government)
- Fiona Ryland (Government Chief People Officer, Cabinet Office)
- Sir Philip Barton (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office)
- Sir Jim Harra (HM Revenue & Customs)
- Gareth Davies (Department for Business and Trade)
- Dr Andrew Goodall (Welsh Government)
- Susan Acland-Hood (Department for Education)
- Sarah Munby (Department for Science, Innovation and Technology)
- Beth Russell (HM Treasury)

- Phil Swallow (Home Office, Non Executive Board Member)
- Professor Dame Angela McLean (Government Office for Science)
- Susannah Storey (Department for Culture, Media and Sport)

*Civil Service Operations Board:*

- Cat Little (Chair - CS Chief Operating Officer, Cabinet Office)
- Joanne Davidson (Digital and Data)
- Marco Salzedo / Clare Gibbs (Commercial)
- Conrad Smewing / James McEwen (Finance)
- Fiona Ryland (People)
- Nick Smallwood (Project Delivery)
- Tara Smith (Department for Business and Trade)
- Nina Cope (Ministry of Defence)
- Justin Holliday (HM Revenue and Customs)
- Debbie Alder (Department for Work and Pensions)
- Jane Cunliffe (Department for Education)

*Location and Property Board:*

- Jeremy Pocklington CB (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero - Chair)
- Angela MacDonald (HM Revenue and Customs)
- Susan Acland-Hood (Department for Education)
- Peter Schofield (Department for Work and Pensions)
- Sarah Munby (Department for Science, Innovation and Technology)
- Antonia Romeo (Department of Justice)
- John-Paul Marks (Scotland Office)
- Nick Joyce (Department For Transport)
- David Kuenssberg (Home Office)
- Catherine Webb (HM Treasury)
- Damian Paterson (Government Legal Department)
- Sarah Harrison (Cabinet Office)
- Nina Cope (Ministry of Defence)
- Sarah Homer (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs)
- Catherine Vaughan (Department for Business and Trade)
- Juliet Chua (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office)

*Data and Digital Board:*

- Sarah Munby (Chair - Department for Science, Innovation and Technology)
- Joanna Davinson (Government Chief Digital Officer)
- Sir Ian Diamond (Office of National Statistics)
- Jim Harra (HM Revenue and Customs)
- Susan Acland-Hood (Department for Education)
- Peter Schofield (Department for Work and Pensions)
- Matthew Rycroft (Home Office)

- Paul Lincoln (Ministry of Defence)
- Megan Lee Devlin (Ministry of Justice)
- Conrad Smewing (HM Treasury)
- Bella Powell (Government Security Group)
- Doug Gurr (Non-Executive Board Member, Department for Health and Social Care)
- Paul Willmott (Non-Executive Board Member, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology)

*Senior Leadership Committee:*

- Dame Antonia Romeo (Chair - Ministry of Justice)
- Sir Chris Wormald (Cabinet Secretary, Cabinet Office)
- Cat Little - (CS Chief Operating Officer, Cabinet Office)
- Sarah Healey (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government)
- James Bowler (HM Treasury)
- Sir Philip Barton (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office)
- Fiona Ryland (Government Chief People Officer, Cabinet Office)
- Baroness Gisela Stuart (First Civil Service Commissioner)
- Tamara Finkelstein (Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs)
- Dame Bernadette Kelly (Department for Transport)
- Brian McBride (Lead Non Executive Board Member, MoD)
- Sir Matthew Rycroft (Home Office)
- Sir Peter Schofield (Department for Work and Pensions)
- David Williams (Ministry of Defence)

## Climate Change Convention

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of proposals to reform the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP) process outlined in an open letter published on 15 November by the Club of Rome; and what actions they are taking to improve the (1) process and (2) outcomes for future COPs. [[HL3342](#)]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** The changing climate is the greatest long-term global challenge our country faces, and the UNFCCC remains the most effective global forum for tackling climate change. We have seen its successes: the Glasgow Climate Pact, COP28's Global Stocktake agreement to transitioning away from fossil fuels, the historic climate finance goal agreed at COP29. The UK continues to champion a transparent, inclusive, and effective COP process and is engaged in discussions within the UNFCCC on arrangements for COPs, where

we advocate for increased efficiency within the process in a way that supports enhanced ambition and strengthened implementation in line with the science.

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to advocate for a ban on the presence of fossil fuel lobbyists at future United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conferences of the Parties. [HL3489]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** The changing climate is the greatest long-term global challenge our country faces. The UNFCCC remains the most effective global forum for tackling this crisis.

The UK continues to champion a transparent, inclusive, and effective UNFCCC process that supports enhanced ambition and strengthened implementation of the Paris Agreement and COP outcomes, including the Global Stocktake agreement and the new climate finance goal agreed at COP29.

It is the joint responsibility of the UNFCCC Secretariat, their Presiding officers, and the annually nominated Presidency to uphold the rigorous standards which govern each meeting of the Conference of Parties, reflecting the importance of impartiality.

### Coal: Mining

*Asked by Baroness Smith of Llanfaes*

To ask His Majesty's Government which specific disused coal tips will be supported with the £25 million funding announced in the Autumn Budget. [HL3367]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** We are committed to supporting the Welsh Government in ensuring disused coal tips are safe. That is why we allocated £25 million of funding in 2025/6 for essential work being undertaken by the Welsh Government to keep disused coal tips maintained and safe. It is for the Welsh Government to allocate funding and as confirmed in their draft budget, the Welsh Government will do this by expanding the Coal Tip Safety Grant. The Welsh Government, in administering this fund, will work with local authorities in Wales to determine exactly which tips get the money.

### Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals

*Asked by Baroness Finn*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Paymaster General and Minister for the Cabinet Office on 19 November (HC14112), whether there are any informal working groups or sub-committees of the HD Committee. [HL3540]

**Baroness Twycross:** The Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals (known as the HD Committee) only has one sub-committee, the Advisory

Military Sub-Committee. There are no other sub-committees or working groups for the committee.

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

*Asked by Lord Booth*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to establish a unit within the Civil Service dedicated to promoting trade with parties to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the CPTPP as a bloc. [HL3531]

**Baroness Gustafsson:** The Department has a dedicated team focused on the implementation of the CPTPP Agreement now it has entered into force. They work closely with the Free Trade Agreement Utilisation (FTAU) team who exist to promote the benefits of the UK's FTAs. To coincide with entry into force of CPTPP, the department published 70+ new guides for exporters on great.gov.uk. There is an ambitious programme of business engagement on CPTPP which included over 50 DBT-led events across October and November. Following entry into force, FTAU will continue to deliver practical support in utilising the agreement, including through workshops and webinars.

### Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership: Small Businesses

*Asked by Lord Booth*

To ask His Majesty's Government how they intend to raise awareness among small and medium-sized enterprises of the UK's accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), and of the benefits of membership, including by reference to the size and growth of the CPTPP market. [HL3586]

**Baroness Gustafsson:** The Department has an extensive programme of engagement to raise awareness of CPTPP, an agreement comprising over 500 million people and a combined GDP of £12 trillion in 2023, when including the UK, among small and medium-sized enterprises.

We aim to reach as many businesses as possible to ensure they have the knowledge needed to take advantage of the commercial opportunities afforded to them in CPTPP markets. This includes running over 60 webinars, workshops, roundtables and events for, and often in partnership with, UK businesses.

The Department has also published 70+ practical CPTPP guides on great.gov.uk, aimed at supporting SMEs.



## Conversion Therapy

*Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the conversion practices guidance issued by the state of Victoria in Australia on how to pray, in the context of their proposals to publish a Conversion Practices Bill in due course. [HL3670]

*Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many meetings they have held with members of the Ban Conversion Therapy Coalition. [HL3671]

*Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the efficacy of the research that they commissioned into conversion therapy undertaken by Coventry University. [HL3672]

*Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the human rights implications of their proposed Conversion Practices Bill. [HL3673]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** Officials have a good understanding of legislation on conversion practices across a number of overseas nations and territories, including in the Australian state of Victoria. A jurisdiction's decision on whether and how to legislate in this area will depend on their specific legal framework and context. This Government has been clear that the draft Bill we publish will respect the important role that religious leaders have in supporting those exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Government has and will continue to meet with numerous stakeholders representing a wide range of views as we develop this work. This includes an array of organisations both in favour of, or concerned by, the prospect of this legislation.

The research undertaken by Coventry University was commissioned by a previous administration and published in October 2021. This Government's work to develop draft legislation is informed by the available evidence base on conversion practices, which includes but is not limited to the Coventry University study.

Finally, I can also confirm that the Government is considering all possible impacts and relevant rights in relation to this work, in line with the requirement to consider the compatibility of legislation with Convention rights as an integral part of the policy-making process.

## Coronavirus and Influenza: Vaccination

*Asked by Lord Scriven*

To ask His Majesty's Government what performance management arrangements are in place, if any, to ensure the take-up of flu and COVID-19 vaccinations by NHS staff. [HL3414]

*Asked by Lord Scriven*

To ask His Majesty's Government what performance management arrangements were in place, if any, to ensure the take-up of flu and COVID-19 vaccinations by NHS staff in (1) 2022, and (2) 2023. [HL3415]

**Baroness Merron:** NHS England plays an important role in supporting the National Health Service to run effective influenza and COVID-19 vaccination programmes for NHS staff.

As part of this, NHS England provides a range of resources and tools to support this offer and is working to increase influenza and COVID-19 vaccination uptake in 2024/25. In addition, improved Federated Data Platform reporting is providing more detailed regional uptake intelligence. NHS England is encouraging integrated care boards to work with the highest performing trusts in their region to share best practice and lessons learned, and provide additional support for those providers where uptake is low.

## Coronavirus: Vaccination

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what preventive measures they are considering to address a potential rise in excess deaths from COVID-19 in 2025, particularly among at-risk groups, due to the changes in the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's recommendations on eligibility for vaccination against COVID-19. [HL3512]

**Baroness Merron:** The Government is guided by the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccines and Immunisation (JCVI) on eligibility for vaccination programmes. Given the continued effectiveness of vaccines and improved treatments, for most people there is a much lower risk of severe illness compared to earlier in the pandemic.

The JCVI advises that older people and those who are immunosuppressed are the two groups who continue to be at higher risk of severe disease and death, and that vaccination every six months remains appropriate given the durability of protection afforded by the currently available vaccines. Its advice is to offer vaccination in autumn 2025 and spring 2026 to these groups, and also any individuals living in care homes for older adults, as care homes for older people are particularly high-risk settings and may include some younger individuals. This advice is available at the GOV.UK website, in an online only format. The Government is considering this advice carefully and will respond in due course.

Appropriate levels of testing will remain to support diagnosis for clinical care and treatment, and to protect very high-risk individuals and settings. Those who are clinically extremely vulnerable and immunocompromised are part of the group who is eligible for COVID-19 treatments in the community, enabling them easy access to anti-viral treatments. The Government will also maintain essential COVID-19 surveillance activities in the

community, primary and secondary care, and in high-risk settings.

*Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether an increase in the number of GP appointments will be needed as a result of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's recommendations on COVID-19 vaccine eligibility for 2025. [HL3513]

**Baroness Merron:** The independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises the Department on the approach to vaccination and immunisation programmes. The aim of the COVID-19 immunisation programme is to prevent serious disease, leading to hospitalisation and/or mortality, arising from COVID-19. On 13 November 2024, the JCVI published advice on the COVID-19 vaccination programme in 2025 and spring 2026. This advice is available on the GOV.UK website, in an online only format.

For spring 2025, the JCVI advises that, as with previous spring campaigns, a COVID-19 vaccine should be offered to adults aged 75 years old and over, residents in a care home for older adults, and the immunosuppressed aged six months and over. The Government has accepted the JCVI's advice on eligibility for the spring 2025 COVID-19 vaccination programme. The Government is considering the advice for autumn 2025 and spring 2026 carefully, and will respond in due course.

In the 12 months to October 2024, an estimated 379.6 million general practice appointments were delivered, of which approximately 2.8 million were appointments for COVID-19 vaccinations. As the JCVI has not advised for an expanded cohort of vaccine eligibility for 2025 compared to 2024, noting that advice on autumn 2025 is still being considered, additional capacity for general practice appointments is not likely to be required.

### **Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents**

*Asked by **Lord Wallace of Tankerness***

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to signing and ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents. [HL3521]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** The UK Government recognises the significant work done by the Council of Europe in this area and is committed to the core principles outlined in the Convention. The Freedom of Information Act enables individuals to freely access official information from a wide range of public authorities. As it stands, in this government's view, the Convention would not allow for the appropriate protection of sensitive information and of journalistic independence, as Parliament intended when the Act passed. The Government proactively discloses

information beyond our obligations under the Act and will continue to do so.

### **Countryside Stewardship Scheme**

*Asked by **Lord Roborough***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier payments to farmers are being delayed from December 2024 to mid-2025; what is the reason for any delay; and what assessment they have made of the impact on farmers' finances. [HL3167]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** There are no delays to payment for existing Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier customers. Since 1 December we have paid around 14,000 customers with both Mid-Tier and Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship agreements, the revenue payment total around £151 million.

More information about the timing and content of the new expanded Higher Tier scheme will be published later in December.

### **Cycling**

*Asked by **Lord Berkeley***

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made on developing the Avenue Verte cycle route launched at the UK–France Joint Leaders' Declaration in March 2023. [HL3584]

**Lord Henty of Richmond Hill:** The Avenue Verte cycle route was put in place in advance of the 2012 London Olympic Games, using existing National Cycle Network paths for the British section of the route. At the UK-France Joint Leaders' Declaration, both nations agreed to promote the route in support of the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris. The Department of Transport commissioned Sustrans to deliver a series of promotional activities along the British side of the Avenue Verte walking and cycling route over 2024 and this is now complete. Sustrans is also assessing the feasibility of improving sections of the route as part of the Paths for Everyone programme.

### **Cyprus: Diplomatic Relations**

*Asked by **Lord Rogan***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether it is their policy to reinstate talks between the Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus to reunite the island; and, if so, how the Prime Minister's decision to meet the President of the Republic of Cyprus but reportedly not the President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus during his visit to the region on 9–10 December supports this objective. [HL3362]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** The UK, as a Guarantor Power and a friend to all parties, will continue to support UN efforts to create an enduring settlement on

the Cyprus issue. The Prime Minister met President Christodoulides to discuss a wide range of issues across our bilateral relationship. During the Prime Minister's visit, senior officials met Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot negotiators to encourage both sides to engage constructively with the UN-led process on Settlement. We do not recognise the so-called "TRNC" but will continue to work with all Cypriots including Turkish Cypriots and their representatives as part of the UN process.

### Data Centres: Investment

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to encourage more investment into new data centres in the UK. [HL3626]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The Government is actively taking steps to remove blocks to the growth of our data centre sector. This includes changes to planning rules, designating the sector as critical national infrastructure (CNI), introducing new legislation to improve security and resilience, and securing more than £25 billion in investment for the sector.

CNI designation signals the Government's intention to better partner with data centres to promote development that delivers maximum community benefit and mitigation of risks.

Additionally, as part of work to future-proof digital infrastructure, the Government is implementing cross-sectoral power reforms to reduce connection timelines and publishing an AI Opportunities Action Plan.

### Deep Sea Mining

*Asked by Lord Mott*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of deep-sea mining. [HL3503]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The UK recognises the potential impacts of deep sea mining are not fully understood and supports a moratorium on the granting of mining licences by the International Seabed Authority (ISA) until sufficient scientific evidence is available to assess the impact on marine ecosystems, and strong, enforceable environmental regulations, standards and guidelines are adopted by the ISA.

Through the UK's sponsorship of academic research and existing exploration licences, over 70 peer-reviewed publications supporting a greater understanding of environmental issues associated with deep sea mining have already been produced, with more to come.

*Asked by Lord Mott*

To ask His Majesty's Government how they plan to ensure that deep seabed mining activities and their long-term effects are transparent. [HL3506]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The UK Government is committed to transparency in all aspects of its deep sea

mining policy and strongly advocate for it as a core aspect of the UK's negotiating position at the International Seabed Authority.

The UK commissions independent reviews, sponsors academic research, and funds projects like the Seabed Mining and Resilience to Experimental Impact project. These initiatives aim to understand and publicly share the long-term environmental impacts, supporting informed decision-making and responsible policy development.

### Deep Sea Mining: Environment Protection

*Asked by Lord Mott*

To ask His Majesty's Government when the UK Deep-Sea Mining Environmental Science Network last met. [HL3505]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** The UK is a world leader on tackling climate change and an international advocate for the highest possible environmental standards. We recognise the growing pressure to extract deep-sea resources and are concerned about the potential impacts of mining activities on the fragile marine environment.

This is why the UK supports a moratorium on the granting of exploitation licenses for deep sea mining projects by the International Seabed Authority (ISA). We will not sponsor or support the issuing of any such exploitation licences for deep sea mining by the ISA until there is sufficient scientific evidence about the potential impact on deep sea ecosystems. This is why the UK has been driving the need for strong enforceable environmental regulations, standards and guidelines to be developed by the ISA and put in place before any mining commences.

To support this, the UK successfully launched a new multi-disciplinary UK deep sea mining environmental expert network to champion UK expertise in environmental sciences, leading on filling gaps in knowledge in order to provide sufficient scientific evidence to fully understand the potential environmental impacts of deep sea mining. The Network has gained 75 members who are multidisciplinary across environmental sciences, and plans are underway for the Networks inaugural meeting to take place early in 2025.

### Deep Sea Mining: Research

*Asked by Lord Mott*

To ask His Majesty's Government what research they are undertaking on the long-term effects of deep-sea mining. [HL3504]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** In 2022 the UK government commissioned an independent deep sea mining evidence review conducted by the British Geological Survey, National Oceanography Centre and Heriot Watt University and it was published in October 2022.

The government, through UK Research and Innovation and National Environment Research Council, (UKRI-NERC) is also funding the 5-year SMARTEX (Seabed Mining and Resilience to Experimental Impact) project which aims to build a better understanding of the ecosystem in the Pacific abyss and add to the scientific evidence base for informed decision-making by understanding the long-term environmental impacts of mining and whether this will have serious consequences for the ecosystem.

## Deer

*Asked by **The Earl of Caithness***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to publish the deer management strategy; and if so, when. [HL3646]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** We are considering how to go further to reduce the impacts of deer on our woodlands and will have an update in due course.

## Devon and Cornwall Police

*Asked by **Lord Swire***

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly about the leadership of the Devon and Cornwall Police. [HL3563]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** It is for locally elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to make decisions around appointing, suspending, and removing chief constables. The Office of the PCC for Devon and Cornwall have kept the Home Office updated on the decisions taken by the PCC about the leadership of the force. I welcome the recent appointment of James Vaughan QPM as interim Chief Constable for Devon & Cornwall Police

It is vital that all forces have strong leadership that instils the right culture across the workforce. That is why the College of Policing are working to embed consistent leadership standards across all forces and ranks.

In her Written Ministerial Statement of 19 November 2024 (HCWS232), the Home Secretary announced her intention to present a White Paper to Parliament next year on reforms to deliver more effective and efficient policing, to rebuild public confidence and to deliver the Government's Safer Streets mission. This reform programme will be a collaborative endeavour with policing, and will include exploring how to strengthen police workforce, leadership, and culture.

## Devon and Cornwall Police: Standards

*Asked by **Lord Swire***

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to placing the Devon and Cornwall Police under special measures. [HL3518]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** Where serious failings or concerns are identified, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services may choose to escalate a police force to 'Engage', also known as 'special measures', which is a form of enhanced monitoring. These decisions are made by His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary (HMCIC), independently of Government.

Devon & Cornwall Police was escalated to Engage by the Inspectorate in October 2022 over concerns surrounding their crime data integrity, their call handling (which has since been addressed) and their management of sexual and violent offenders. The force has been subject to enhanced monitoring since.

HMCIC, Andy Cooke, chairs the Police Performance and Oversight Group (PPOG), where forces in Engage present their progress against HMCIFRS' concerns and recommendations and are able to receive support from the sector. The Home Office attends these meetings to monitor what progress is being made, and to consider what further support may be required.

When HMCIFRS is satisfied that 'sustained and sustainable' improvements have been made by a force against concerns identified, the Inspectorate may release it from its Engaged status.

## Diagnosis: Artificial Intelligence

*Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick***

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to invest in artificial technologies to aid health diagnosis, particularly in relation to detecting diabetic retinopathy. [HL3564]

**Baroness Merron:** The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) reviewed the use of artificial intelligence technologies, such as automated grading in the NHS Diabetic Eye Screening (DES) Programme, in 2021. At the time, it concluded that this should not be used due to the limited evidence that it provides better health and value for money when compared to manual grading.

We are aware that the UK NSC has received a submission via its annual call process to consider automated retinal image analysis systems in the NHS DES programme. The UK NSC is currently reviewing all annual call proposals. Further information on the annual call process can be found on the GOV.UK website, in an online only format.

## Disability: Rented Housing

*Asked by **Baroness Thomas of Winchester***

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Smith of Malvern on 17 December (HL3216), whether they will consult with interested parties and expedite the implementation of the remaining parts of section 36 and associated



Schedules of the Equality Act 2010 to address the shortage of housing for disabled people. [HL3702]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The government is continuing to consider the remaining parts of section 36 and associated Schedules. We will set out next steps in due course.

### Drugs: Policy

Asked by **Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to devolve drugs policy to councils or mayors. [HL3609]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** Local areas already have an important role to play in tackling drugs and reducing harms through Combatting Drugs Partnerships which operate in all areas of England. There are examples of effective work by mayors and councils, working with policing, health, housing and employment agencies locally that show the value of the contribution being made by local partnerships.

### Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme

Asked by **Baroness Anelay of St Johns**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the conclusions of Duke of Edinburgh Award's Impact Report 2024, published in December, with regard to the impact of participating in the Award on young people's social and emotional development, and well-being. [HL3251]

**Baroness Twycross:** The Government welcomes the Duke of Edinburgh Award's 2024 Impact Report, which demonstrates the effective use of data to measure the outcomes for young people participating in youth programmes.

On 12th November, the Secretary of State announced a new National Youth Strategy, which will be developed together with young people and the youth sector.

### Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Act 2022

Asked by **Baroness Kennedy of Cradley**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the effectiveness of the Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Act 2022. [HL3479]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** The Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Act 2022 introduced emergency legislation to crack down on Russian dirty money including measures to move faster and harder when imposing sanctions, the creation of a Register of Overseas Entities to help crack down on foreign criminals using UK property to launder money and measures to strengthen the UK's Unexplained Wealth Order regime to better support law enforcement investigations on property owned by overseas entities.

Government is required to conduct post-legislative scrutiny on legislation within five years. A review and assessment of the effectiveness of this Act will be made within five years of its commencement.

In the interim, Government publishes a report on the number of Unexplained Wealth Orders applied for and obtained annually. This contains a commentary section on the operation of the powers: [Unexplained wealth orders: 2022 to 2023 annual report - GOV.UK](#). The United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER) have also written a review on the impact of the measures introducing a Register of Overseas Entities: [UNU-WIDER : Working Paper : The end of Londongrad? The impact of beneficial ownership transparency on offshore investment in UK property](#).

### Edinburgh Airport: Air Traffic Control

Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick**

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Civil Aviation Authority, airline carriers and authorities of the main airports about the operation of the air traffic control system following technical failures at Edinburgh Airport on 15 December; and what assessment they have made of the operation of air traffic control technology. [HL3514]

**Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill:** Air Traffic Control tower operations at UK airports are commercial agreements between the Air Navigation Service Provider (ANSP) and the airport concerned. The Government, Civil Aviation Authority and airlines do not have any involvement in these agreements.

Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick**

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Civil Aviation Authority and NATS Holdings about the delays and cancellations at Edinburgh Airport on 15 December. [HL3517]

**Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill:** The Air Traffic Control tower at Edinburgh airport is operated by Air Navigation Solutions (ANSL). Air Traffic Control tower operations are commercial agreements between the Air Navigation Service Provider (ANSP) and the airport concerned. Neither the Government or the Civil Aviation Authority has any involvement in the awarding of these contracts.

### Educational Visits: France

Asked by **Baroness Coussins**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the decision by Border Force to deny a group of French schoolchildren entry into the UK due to an administrative error on the France-UK School Trip Travel Information Form. [HL3257]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** UK Border Force was not involved in the decision to refuse boarding to this group

and is in touch with the relevant carrier about this case and who did not grant them permission to travel.

Anyone wishing to travel to the UK on an ID card must submit accurate information in advance for approval and present the same identity documentation on the day to comply with UK immigration checks, and to ensure the safeguarding of children.

The UK will continue to work with partners in the UK and France to ensure this process is fully understood, and that travel between our countries for school groups can be as smooth as possible.

In addition, the government agreed that children aged 18 and under travelling as part of a French school group will be temporarily exempted from the Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) requirement until a group solution is developed. This will allow EU, EEA and Swiss children to continue to use their identity cards on organised French school trips to the UK as long as they meet the requirements of the Immigration Rules.

*Asked by **Baroness Coussins***

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made since the UK–France Joint Leaders' Declaration on 10 March 2023 regarding the simplification of travel arrangements for French schoolchildren visiting the UK. [HL3258]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** UK Border Force was not involved in the decision to refuse boarding to this group and is in touch with the relevant carrier about this case and who did not grant them permission to travel.

Anyone wishing to travel to the UK on an ID card must submit accurate information in advance for approval and present the same identity documentation on the day to comply with UK immigration checks, and to ensure the safeguarding of children.

The UK will continue to work with partners in the UK and France to ensure this process is fully understood, and that travel between our countries for school groups can be as smooth as possible.

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## **Elections and Political Parties: Finance**

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

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to restrict private and corporate funding for political parties and election campaigns and, in particular, whether they plan to limit either the amount or the proportion of total funding that a single source can contribute to a party or campaign. [HL3289]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** Effective regulation of political finance is crucial for maintaining public trust in our electoral systems. The Government is committed to strengthening our democracy and upholding the integrity of elections and, as stated in our manifesto, we intend to strengthen the rules around donations to political parties to protect our democracy. My department is developing proposals to give effect to these commitments and will make them public in due course.

## **Electric Bicycles: Sales**

*Asked by **Baroness Pidgeon***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the safety of e-bike batteries and conversion kits for sale in the UK produced in (1) the UK, (2) the EU, (3) North America, (4) China, and (5) the rest of the world. [HL3404]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** Our product safety laws require that all consumer products placed on the UK market, including e-bike batteries and conversion kits, must comply with legal safety requirements, regardless of their origin.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards works to detect and prevent unsafe or non-compliant goods entering the UK at ports and borders, alongside Local Authority Trading Standards and other Government partners. Information on products that present risks are published on gov.uk, including country of origin where known.

OPSS has commissioned technical research into lithium-ion battery safety to strengthen Government's evidence base on the safety of these products.

## **Electric Scooters**

*Asked by **Lord Truscott***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the finding in the report by Nottingham Trent University E-scooters: Still the new kid on the transport block. Assessing e-scooter legislation knowledge and illegal riding behaviour, published on 22 November 2023, that dangerous e-scooter use is linked to a lack of knowledge of the rules. [HL3484]

**Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill:** The Government assesses a broad range of evidence that can assist with informing our understanding of what legislation is appropriate for e-scooters, and we recognise there are risks around the safe use of e-scooters which is why we are running trials of rental e-scooters.

Their purpose is to assess the benefits of e-scooters including their wider impacts, and to inform options for future regulation. The Government's proposals for e-scooter regulations will take learning from the trials, academic research, stakeholder engagement and international evidence into consideration and we will

consult on any new regulations before they come into force.

The Government also tracks the public's attitudes, awareness and knowledge of e-scooters through the Transport Technology Tracker, with the most recent publication on 24 September 2024.

### Electric Scooters: Insurance and Regulation

*Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have (1) to regulate the operation of privately owned e-scooters in public spaces, and (2) to introduce mandatory insurance for them. [HL3685]

**Lord Henty of Richmond Hill:** The Government understands the need to resolve the longstanding question of regulating micromobility devices such as e-scooters. We are carefully considering next steps on this.

As part of policy development, we are working with local authorities and industry through our e-scooter trials to inform options for future regulation. Any option requiring users of private e-scooters to have insurance will require careful consideration. No decisions have been made on the future regulation of e-scooters and the Government will consult before any regulations come into force.

### Electric Vehicles: Batteries

*Asked by Baroness Pidgeon*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many investigations have been launched by the Office for Product Safety and Standards into manufacturers of batteries used in (1) e-bikes, and (2) e-scooters, in each of the last five years; and where the batteries used by those manufacturers were produced. [HL3407]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The Office for Product Safety and Standards is leading a programme of action to tackle the causes of fires in e-bikes and e-scooters. This includes targeted regulatory action, working with Local Authority Trading Standards at ports and borders, to identify non-compliant businesses and prevent unsafe products entering the market.

OPSS has published 21 product recalls and 28 product safety reports covering regulators' interventions on e-bikes and e-scooters, lithium-ion batteries and chargers, since 2022.

OPSS' enforcement actions are published on gov.uk quarterly. Information on products that present risks are published on the Product Recalls and Alerts site on gov.uk.

### Emily Damari

*Asked by Lord Turnberg*

To ask His Majesty's Government what efforts they are making to secure the release of British citizen Emily

Damari, held hostage by Hamas since 7 October 2023. [HL3177]

*Asked by Lord Turnberg*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether, in seeking to secure access to humanitarian aid for the citizens of Gaza, they are also working to ensure medical and other aid is provided for the hostages, such as British citizen Emily Damari, held by Hamas. [HL3178]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** Since day one of this government, we have prioritised working to end this conflict and secure the safe release of hostages, in co-ordination with international partners. The Prime Minister - along with other G7 Leaders - has fully endorsed efforts by the US and regional partners to reach a comprehensive deal in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2735. The UK continues to call for the International Red Cross to be given access to the hostages to provide urgent humanitarian support. The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have personally raised Emily Damari's case with the Israeli government, with partners in the region and with close allies like the United States.

### Employment

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development *Do Adults Have the Skills They Need to Thrive in a Changing World?*, published on 10 December; and of its statement that more than one in three employees aged over 25 in England is overqualified for their current role. [HL3463]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The department welcomes the report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and will continue to reflect on its findings. The report offers crucial insights into how adult skills have changed since 2012, when England last participated.

These insights will support the government in the change it wants to deliver for the skills system. Last week, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, set out the ambitious milestones the government aims to reach by the end of this Parliament. Pledges include growing the economy, building an NHS fit for the future, making streets safer, opportunities for all and making Britain a clean energy superpower.

A skilled workforce is a crucial enabler to achieving these changes, which is why the department has committed to bring forward a comprehensive strategy for post-16 education and skills to help deliver the department's Plan for Change. We are also establishing Skills England, to consider the system as a whole with greater coordination to stimulate growth. The Skills England report, which was published in September 2024, echoed similar findings to this OECD report, including

the substantial impacts skills mismatches have on individuals, businesses, and the economy. The Skills England report is attached and can also be accessed at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66ffd4fce84ae1fd8592ee37/Skills\\_England\\_Report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66ffd4fce84ae1fd8592ee37/Skills_England_Report.pdf).

The department wants to develop a culture of lifelong learning, and this report shows that we can and must do more to ensure everyone has the skills they need for life.

There are few skills more important to life chances than literacy and numeracy. Whilst England has improved, the number of adults with low literacy and numeracy skills remains far too high.

This government is committing to raising literacy and numeracy levels, including through the English and mathematics Condition of Funding policy, which enables all students on 16 to 19 study programmes or T Levels who have not yet attained grade 4+ GCSE, or equivalent, in English and mathematics to access support that leads to the best outcomes for them. Further measures include the essential skills legal entitlements, providing free study funded through the Adult Skills Fund for eligible adults who do not have essential literacy and numeracy skills up to level 2.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL3463 attachment [HL3463 attachment - Skills England Report.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-12-12/HL3463>

## Employment Schemes

*Asked by Lord Allen of Kensington*

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made on implementing the proposals outlined in the Get Britain Working White Paper. [HL3376]

**Baroness Sherlock:** We are progressing with the delivery of our proposals through:

- Transformation of jobcentres to support people into and on in work.
- Work with local areas to tackle economic inactivity.
- A Youth Guarantee for 18-21's in England to benefit from education, training or help to find work.

We have secured £240 million of funding which we will use to develop tests and trials for the digital aspect of the new national jobs and careers service, to introduce trailblazers to tackle economic inactivity in England and Wales and offer support for the development of local Get Britain Working plans.

## Employment: Arts

*Asked by Baroness Buscombe*

To ask His Majesty's Government, with regard to the Get Britain Working White Paper (CP 1191), what assessment they made of the value of partnering with

cultural and arts organisations, and in particular of the levels of pay and employment rights offered by such organisations. [HL3255]

**Baroness Sherlock:** The Government will work in partnership with organisations at the national and local level to join up, enhance and champion their efforts as part of our new Youth Guarantee. Our first partnerships will be developed with Channel 4, the Royal Shakespeare Company and leading sports organisations including the Premier League.

These sports, culture and arts organisations play a vital role in our economy, creating hundreds of thousands of jobs and contributing to growth. This work has become even more important since the Covid-19 pandemic, which harmed the chances and choices of so many young people.

We have partnered with these organisations on the basis that they already have a track record of building trusted relationships with young people from all walks of life, including those in schools and those from areas of socio-economic disadvantage. As well as being heavily involved with young people in schools they all have a particular interest in young people who are not earning or learning.

We plan to expand into other sectors and organisations who also play a vital role in youth education, employment and training.

DWP does not hold data on pay by individual organisations.

The Good Work Review, published in February 2023 by the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre, was co-funded by DCMS and is the first sectoral deep dive of its kind into job quality and working practice in the creative industries.

DCMS is working closely with the sector as it responds to these recommendations. The review set out a number of priorities, including driving improvements in workplace and management practices in the Creative Industries.

Statistics on median annual gross pay in the Creative Industries and subsectors (vs. UK as a whole) in [Economic Estimates: Earnings 2023 and Employment October 2022 to September 2023 for the DCMS Sectors and Digital Sector - GOV.UK](#)

## Employment: Disability

*Asked by Lord Godson*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the savings of one disabled person being in full time work, rather than out of work and fully reliant on benefits. [HL3665]

**Baroness Sherlock:** The department published an estimated saving for the Government of having one extra disabled person in full-time work, in July 2023. This can be found in the Consultation outcome [Occupational Health: Working Better](#).



For Government, having one extra disabled person in full-time work, rather than being out of work and fully reliant on benefits, would mean the Government could save an estimated £18,000 a year. It could give societal savings of £28,000 a year when considering increases in output, reductions in healthcare costs and increased travel. The societal savings could increase to £34,000 a year if including Quality Adjusted Life Year (QALY) impacts, or £36,000 a year if including subjective wellbeing impacts. For a disabled person working part-time, the equivalent figures could be a saving to the Government of £8,000 a year, and a societal saving of £15,000 a year, rising to £19,000 a year if including QALY impacts, or £20,000 a year if including subjective wellbeing impacts.

*Asked by Lord Godson*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many disabled people were employed by small, medium, or large businesses in the financial years (1) 2021–22, (2) 2022–23, and (3) 2023–24. [HL3667]

**Baroness Sherlock:** The department publishes a range of statistics from the Annual Population Survey (APS) on the employment of disabled people. This includes the number of disabled people who were employed by workplace size. Workplace size refers to the total number of employees at the respondent's workplace, not just the section/department or the whole organization. The APS does not collect information on the size of the whole organization, therefore only analysis on workplace size can be provided. A full time-series from 2013/14 can be found in [the employment of disabled people 2024 supplementary table EMP006](#).

*Number of disabled people in employment by workplace size, aged 16 to 64, UK*

Workplace size	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Small (less than 50 employees)	1,919,144	2,036,454	2,080,529
Medium (between 50 and 250 employees)	909,827	917,802	970,471
Large (more than 250 employees)	1,117,175	1,168,427	1,332,062
Don't know but between 50 and 500 employees	190,401	204,425	199,334

Source: The employment of disabled people 2024: Table EMP006.

## Empty Property

*Asked by Lord Spellar*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of empty dwellings in England. [HL3269]

*Asked by Lord Spellar*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to assist local authorities in taking action to bring empty dwellings back into occupation and to expedite the administrative and legal process. [HL3270]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** According to the latest published statistics, excluding second homes, there are 719,470 vacant dwellings in England. 265,061 of these dwellings are classed as Long-Term Empty Homes, meaning they have been empty for more than 6 months. These statistics are published annually and [accessible on gov.uk](#).

I refer the Noble Lord to the answer given to Question UIN 6686 on 14 October 2024 regarding the support government is providing to help local authorities tackle empty homes.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

UIN 6686 [UIN 6686.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-12-06/HL3269>

## English Language: GCE A-level

*Asked by Baroness Rebuck*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the cause of the downward trend in students in England taking A-level English since 2013; and what steps they are taking to reverse this trend. [HL3317]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** Young people are free to choose the A level subjects they take. While there have been declines in entries in recent years, English remains one of the most popular A level subjects. Entries for A level English Literature increased by 8% in 2024, and for English Literature and Language combined by 6% compared to 2023.

High and rising school standards are at the heart of the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and give every child the best life chances.

The government has established an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, covering ages 5 to 18, chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE, an expert in education policy. The review and its recommendations will be driven by evidence and a commitment to high standards for all our young people, irrespective of background.

The review group ran a call for evidence and held events over the autumn term to gather the views of education professionals and other experts, parents, children and young people, and other stakeholders. The feedback received will help the review group to consider its next steps and recommendations.

## Environment Protection: Employment

Asked by **Baroness Fookes**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will take account of the role played by environmental horticulture in their definition of green jobs. [HL3541]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** The ONS defines green jobs as: "*employment in an activity that contributes to protecting or restoring the environment, including those that mitigate or adapt to climate change*" (2024, ONS - [Experimental estimates of green jobs, UK - Office for National Statistics](#) [see attached]). Given the wide-reaching nature of this definition, any occupations or tasks within environmental horticulture that fall under the definition, including for example tasks related to nature conservation, will therefore be included.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Experimental estimates of green jobs [Experimental estimates of green jobs, UK 2024.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-12-17/HL3541>

Asked by **Lord Blunkett**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to align the work of the Office for Clean Energy Jobs with the work of Skills England, and what processes and structural framework they expect to be put in place to facilitate joint working between the two. [HL3641]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** The Office for Clean Energy Jobs was established to help ensure a skilled workforce is in place to deliver the Clean Energy Superpower Mission and that these jobs are 'good' jobs. The Office for Clean Energy Jobs and Skills England are already working together to develop a consistent understanding of the skills challenges through sharing data and insights, ensuring alignment on priority occupations, coordinating engagement with external stakeholders, and developing solutions, as highlighted in Skills England's report published in September 2024. This partnership will continue to strengthen next year to ensure effective workforce planning supports delivery of the energy transition.

## Ethiopia: Armed Conflict

Asked by **Baroness Helic**

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made regarding the implementation of the recommendations from the 2021 Ethiopia scoping mission by the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative. [HL3607]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The UK is committed to preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). We worked with partners on the recommendations of the 2021 PSVI Team of Experts

(ToE) scoping mission to Ethiopia. We enhanced domestic capacity to monitor and document CRSV cases, facilitated a PSVI ToE-led workshop for civil society, commissioned research into the dynamics of CRSV, collaborated with external partners to increase CRSV data analysis and coordination, and embedded longer-term gender expertise. We also provide financial support for gender-based violence services in Ethiopia, including psychosocial support to survivors and enhancing protection work.

## Exercise: Girls

Asked by **Lord Hampton**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase girls' participation in physical activity in schools. [HL3306]

Asked by **Lord Hampton**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to broaden the range of physical activities available to girls inside and outside schools. [HL3308]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The government is committed to creating the healthiest ever generation of children. Breaking down the barriers to accessing sport and physical activity will be critical to achieving the government's ambitions.

The department knows from the Active Lives Children and Young People survey results, covering the 2023/24 academic year, that only 45% of girls meet the Chief Medical Officers' 60 minutes of activity a day recommendation, compared with 51% of boys. The figures for both remaining largely stable over the last two years.

The School Games Mark, funded by the government and managed by the Youth Sport Trust (YST), has introduced mandatory equality criteria for PE, school sport and physical activity participation for the 2024/25 academic year. Schools aiming to achieve or maintain the award's status and recognition must now meet these criteria. The department is collaborating with the YST to identify and share best practice from the School Games Mark, with all schools on enhancing girls' equal access to PE, school sport, and physical activity.

The PE and sport premium for the 2024/25 academic year helps all eligible primary schools to make additional and sustainable improvements to their offer, and the guidance states that funding can be used to provide or improve equal access for boys and girls.

The department works in tandem with a wide range of sporting bodies to further support equal access to sport and physical activities.

The department has also launched an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, which will seek to deliver a broader curriculum so that children and young people do not miss out on subjects such as music, art, PE and drama, as well as vocational subjects.

## Exports: Xinjiang

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the UK's re-export of goods from Xinjiang that are made with Uyghur forced labour to Europe and North America. [HL3220]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** No UK business should be complicit in forced labour. Under Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, businesses who operate in the UK and have a turnover of £36m or more are required to report annually on the steps they have taken to prevent modern slavery in their supply chains.

This Government will stand firm on human rights in China, including the repression of people in Xinjiang and will continue to hold China to account. The Government continues to review how we can best tackle forced labour in supply chains and continues to consider measures that would improve supply chain transparency and traceability.

## Family Proceedings: Forms

Asked by *Lord Farmer*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many FM5 forms are registered on court files as having been filed before first hearing, in compliance with the Family Procedure Rules issued in April. [HL3436]

**Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede:** His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service does not currently hold data on how many FM5 forms are filed before the first hearing.

## Family Proceedings: Judges

Asked by *Lord Farmer*

To ask His Majesty's Government what training judges will receive to apply the new Family Procedure Rules and to ensure that parents are aware of and can access the full range of legal and non-legal non-court dispute resolution support services [HL3437]

Asked by *Lord Farmer*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the training provided to judges to apply the new Family Procedure Rules is delivered by judges or experts over the full range of legal and non-legal non-court dispute resolution support services [HL3438]

**Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede:** The Ministry of Justice is not responsible for judicial training. This is the responsibility of the Judicial College.

## Family Proceedings: Research

Asked by *Lord Farmer*

To ask His Majesty's Government what research they have funded or plan to fund to investigate the effectiveness of non-court dispute resolution support

services for families, including non-legal options such as separated parenting programmes and Voice of the Child, to promote evidence-led outcomes for the benefit of children. [HL3435]

**Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede:** The Government recognises the importance of supporting separating families, and where appropriate, helping them resolve their issues quickly and without the need to come to court.

The Family Mediation Voucher Scheme continues to provide £500 towards the cost of mediation. To date, over £16 million of vouchers have helped 33,000 separating parents to access mediation. Analysis of the first 7,200 completed under the scheme suggests that 69% of participants reached whole or partial agreement and did not need to go on to court.

The Department for Work and Pensions runs the Reducing Parental Conflict (RPC) programme which aims to address frequent, intense and poorly resolved conflict between parents and improve outcomes for children.

The programme, funds grants to Local Authorities in England who work in partnership with multi-agency stakeholders, commissioning relationship support for parents in conflict. Evidence of the impact of these innovative services to increase access for diverse families can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reducing-parental-conflict-programme-evaluation>.

## Financial Conduct Authority: Public Appointments

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to reform the process for appointing the Financial Conduct Authority's senior leadership and to introduce Parliamentary oversight of the appointment of its Chair. [HL3623]

**Lord Livermore:** The Government appoints the Chair, Chief Executive and Non-Executive Directors of the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), and has no plans to reform the process for appointing the FCA's senior leadership.

The Government and Parliament already have numerous mechanisms for holding the FCA to account and assessing its performance and effectiveness. This includes the requirement for the FCA to produce Annual Reports, and to notify relevant parliamentary committees of relevant consultations.

## Financial Services: Regulation

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Report on the Call for Evidence about the Financial Conduct Authority, published by the APPG for Investment Fraud and Fairer Financial Services, and what steps they are taking to implement its recommendations. [HL3621]

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the recommendation from the APPG for Investment Fraud and Fairer Financial Services to establish a Financial Regulators' Supervisory Council and to conduct periodic reviews of the operational effectiveness of the Financial Conduct Authority. [HL3622]

**Lord Livermore:** The Government has noted the APPG's report. Whilst the Government recognises the difficulties faced by those who have lost out, many of the issues explored in the report have already been reviewed, and the FCA has made significant changes as a result.

The Government agrees that the FCA must continue to learn from these experiences and ensure that it is securing an appropriate degree of consumer protection - building on the work delivered through its Transformation Programme.

The Government has no plans to establish a Financial Regulators Supervisory Council.

The Government and Parliament already have numerous mechanisms for holding the FCA to account and assessing its performance and effectiveness. This includes the requirement for the FCA to produce Annual Reports, and to notify relevant parliamentary committees of relevant consultations.

Senior representatives of the FCA also make regular appearances before parliamentary committees, where its performance and operational effectiveness are scrutinised.

**Financial Services: Education***Asked by Lord Cruddas*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to provide financial education to every child in every school by the end of this Parliament; and whether financial education is being considered in their ongoing review of the school curriculum. [HL3293]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** Financial education is currently taught through the national curriculum for mathematics (at key stages 1 to 4) and citizenship (at key stages 3 and 4) which together cover personal budgeting, saving for the future, managing credit and debt, and calculating interest. The national curriculum is compulsory for maintained schools. However, all schools are measured by Ofsted on having a broad and balanced curriculum which is comparable to the national curriculum.

High and rising school standards are at the heart of the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and give every child the best start in life. That is why the government announced a Curriculum and Assessment Review on 19 July 2024, chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE.

Following the independent review, the government will legislate to require all state schools teach the reformed

national curriculum. This will give parents certainty over the core of their children's education.

The review group will publish an interim report early in 2025, setting out their interim findings and confirming the key areas for further work. The final report, with recommendations, will be published in autumn 2025.

**Flats: Greater London***Asked by Lord Wigley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the number of flats in London which are (1) unoccupied, or (2) occupied by owners or other residents at less than 40 per cent of available capacity. [HL3422]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** While the Department publishes data through the English Housing Survey (EHS) on whether dwellings are underoccupied (according to the bedroom standard) or vacant, its sample size means it does not have reliable estimates for flats in London. The department also publishes statistics on vacant dwellings, as reported for the purposes of council tax, but does not disaggregate by type of property.

More information on the EHS can be found at [English Housing Survey - GOV.UK.](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/council-taxbase-statistics), while statistics on vacant dwellings can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/council-taxbase-statistics>.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

English Housing Survey [HL3422 English Housing Survey - GOV.UK.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-12-11/HL3422>

**Food Supply***Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase self-sufficiency in food; and what are the latest figures for self-sufficiency in (1) fruit, and (2) vegetables. [HL3099]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** The UK's self-sufficiency ratio has been stable for several decades, currently producing 62% of all the food we need, and 75% of food which we can grow or rear in the UK for all or part of the year. UK food security is built on supply from diverse sources: strong domestic production as well as imports through stable trade routes.

UK food security is high and strengthening it by supporting our farmers and food producers is a top priority for this Government. This government will protect farmers from being undercut in trade deals; lower energy bills; use the Government purchasing power to back British produce; introduce a land-use framework, the first ever Cross-Government Rural Crime Strategy; and set up a new British Infrastructure Council.



The latest figures for 2023, as set out in the government's official statistics, show that the UK is 53% self-sufficient for fresh vegetables and 16% self-sufficient for fruit.

### Food: Import Controls

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the comments by Professor Chris Elliott of Queen's University Belfast in June that a series of threats to food security are converging to create "chaos" because it is "now much easier to get food that is not of the same quality and standards into the UK"; and what steps they are taking to improve border checks and information-sharing to mitigate these threats. [HL3281]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** The Government published the [UK Food Security Report 2024](#) last week and remains committed to protecting our biosecurity and will maintain the appropriate level of controls to achieve this in accordance with the Border Target Operating Model. Please also see the Border Target Operating Model web page on gov.uk for detailed information on the rationale for border controls (at [Final\\_Border\\_Target\\_Operating\\_Model.pdf](#)).

### Food: Waste

*Asked by Baroness Redfern*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the proportion of food grown in the UK which is never eaten; and what steps they are taking significantly to reduce this figure with a particular emphasis on full contracts. [HL3106]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** We acknowledge that more can be done to reduce food waste in the primary production stage.

Conversations with industry have suggested that a potentially significant cause of food waste on farm are unfair business practices at the point of first sale, where the specification requirements can lead to produce being left unharvested or rotting in the field.

We have taken powers to clamp down on these kinds of unfair contractual practices through the 'fair dealings' powers contained in the Agriculture Act 2020 and intend to work with stakeholders to explore how these powers could be exercised to address such concerns.

Total UK food waste arisings are 10.7 million tonnes with approximately 1.6 million tonnes (15%) occurring on farm.

The amount of food we waste is a stain on our country. This Government will work with business to drive down food waste and make sure food is put on the plates of those in greatest need.

We continue to support WRAP and their work to drive down food surplus and waste in homes and businesses. This includes work to ensure surplus food is redistributed to charities and other organisations who can use it and on programmes to help citizens reduce their food waste.

We thank food producers, charities and retailers in the sector for tackling the problem of food waste.

*Asked by Baroness Boycott*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to introduce mandatory reporting of food waste within the supply chains of large food retailers. [HL3588]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** This Government is committed to setting a clear roadmap to a circular economy – a future where our resources are used as efficiently and productively as possible for as long as possible, and waste is reduced. We are reviewing policies to address the challenges associated with tackling food waste in the supply chain and will consider any mandatory food waste reporting requirements in due course.

*Asked by Baroness Boycott*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential merits of aligning subsidies paid out of public expenditure with the food waste hierarchy statutory guidance. [HL3589]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** The Government has not made any assessment of aligning subsidies with the food waste hierarchy guidance.

Our priority is to prevent food waste occurring in the first instance, this is in line with the food waste hierarchy. Where waste cannot be prevented, edible surplus food should be redistributed. For unavoidable food waste, the government's Simpler Recycling reforms will require all local authorities, businesses and relevant non-domestic premises in England to arrange for the separate collection of food waste for recycling. The Government's preference is that food waste is treated via anaerobic digestion (AD), the main route for producing biomethane, which is a low-carbon replacement for fossil fuel natural gas.

*Asked by Baroness Boycott*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have estimated what proportion of food being sent to anaerobic digestion plants that is edible and fit for human consumption. [HL3590]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** The Government does not collect data on the proportion of edible food waste sent to anaerobic digestion plants.

This Government will work with business to drive down food waste and make sure food is put on the plates of those in greatest need.

We continue to support the Waste and Resources Action Programme and its work to drive down food surplus and waste in homes and businesses. This includes

work to ensure surplus food is redistributed to charities and other organisations who can use it and on programmes to help citizens reduce their food waste.

*Asked by **Baroness Boycott***

To ask His Majesty's Government, for each of the most recent five years for which data are available, what was the total amount of public expenditure that has been allocated to companies or charities for the purposes of (1) anaerobic digestion and (2) redistributing surplus food for human consumption. [HL3592]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** Over the last 7 years, the department has spent approximately £13 million of funding on supported redistribution organisations across the country.

This year, under the new Government, Defra announced £15 million to ensure that farm produce that would often go to waste or be eaten by animals is provided to a network of food banks. This helps the department reach its zero waste targets and ensures that the country's most vulnerable people have a ready supply of healthy food that is grown by British farmers.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

WRAP Gate Fees Report [WRAP-Gate-Fees-Report-2023-24-V1.1.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-12-18/HL3592>

## Fractures: Health Services

*Asked by **Lord Black of Brentwood***

To ask His Majesty's Government when they intend to publish a roll-out plan for Fracture Liaison Services in England. [HL3526]

**Baroness Merron:** Fracture Liaison Services (FLS) are a globally recognised care model for secondary fracture prevention. The Government is committed to expanding access to these important preventative services.

FLS provision is ultimately a matter for integrated care boards, who are best placed to make commissioning decisions according to local need. The Department is continuing to work closely with NHS England to develop plans to ensure better quality and access to these important preventive services.

## France: Foreign Relations

*Asked by **Lord Kinnock***

To ask His Majesty's Government what arrangements they have made to commemorate the 85th anniversary of the 1940 proposal for the establishment of the Franco-British Union in 2025. [HL3310]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** 2024 has been a remarkable year for our bilateral relationship, with many

successful joint engagements commemorating 120 years of the Entente Cordiale. These include the joint ceremonial events at Buckingham Palace and the Élysée Palace on 8 April, the Prime Minister and President Macron marking Armistice Day, and the inaugural Entente Littéraire Prize. Minister Doughty celebrated Bastille Day with the French Ambassador and met his counterpart in Paris for the Olympics. The Foreign Secretary also welcomed his counterpart to Carlton Gardens, near the Free French Headquarters established after the proposal for a Franco-British Union. We have no plans to mark this but look forward to further strengthening ties with France in 2025, including through the next bilateral Summit.

## Gambling: Advertising

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

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have made an assessment of the impact that banning gambling advertising before 9pm would have on reducing gambling harms among under 18s. [HL3363]

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

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to implementing a similar policy for gambling advertising to the recently announced ban on junk food advertising before 9pm. [HL3364]

**Baroness Twycross:** As I set out in my speech at the GambleAware conference on 4 December, I want to see the gambling industry further raise standards to ensure that levels of gambling advertising does not exacerbate harm. This work will be monitored closely.

There are a range of robust rules in place to ensure that gambling adverts, wherever they appear, are socially responsible with provisions specifically designed to protect children. As part of the UK Advertising Codes, adverts must not be placed in children's media and advertisers must take all reasonable steps to ensure that under-18s are excluded from their targeted marketing. As the statutory regulator for gambling in Great Britain, the Gambling Commission requires all licensed operators to abide by the Advertising Codes. As part of the Industry Code for Socially Responsible Advertising, gambling adverts, with exception of bingo and lotteries, cannot be shown during pre-watershed hours. Gambling operators cannot allow their logos or any other promotional material to appear on any commercial merchandising designed for children, including on children's replica shirts.

The Government's steps to restrict the advertising of less healthy food and drink is part of the commitment to tackle the childhood obesity crisis. The Government is also committed to strengthening protections to ensure that people can reduce the risks that can ensue from harmful gambling. We are committed to reviewing the best available evidence on the impact of gambling advertising from a wide range of sources in order to ensure there are robust protections in place to protect those at risk.

## Gambling: Public Health

*Asked by Lord Foster of Bath*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the recommendation by the World Health Organization on 2 December to implement a public health approach to prevent gambling harm, including ending gambling advertising, promotion, and sponsorship of sports and other cultural activities. [HL3297]

**Baroness Twycross:** The Department has noted the World Health Organization's recommendations around gambling advertising. We are committed to reviewing the best available evidence on the impact of gambling advertising, including around sport, from a wide range of sources in order to ensure there are robust protections in place to protect those at risk.

As I set out in my speech at the GambleAware conference on 4 December, I want to see the gambling industry further raise standards to ensure that levels of gambling advertising does not exacerbate harm. We will be monitoring this work closely.

## Gambling: Taxation

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to their response to the consultation on the structure, distribution and governance of the statutory levy on gambling operators, updated on 27 November, what plans they have to ban gambling advertising. [HL3324]

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the appropriate frequency for the review of the structure of the statutory levy on the gambling industry to ensure the levy delivers its objectives. [HL3325]

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government on what basis they decided to set the statutory levy on gambling operators for land-based adult gaming centres at a different rate to that for casinos and other comparable land-based operators. [HL3326]

**Baroness Twycross:** As set out in the Government's response to the consultation on the statutory levy, we want to ensure levy rates are charged fairly, proportionately, and in a way which accounts for the higher fixed operating costs, levels of harm associated with some products compared to others, and the licensing regime.

We will conduct a formal review of the levy system within 5 years, where the structure and health of the levy system will be assessed. We also recognise that the needs, demands and priorities of the system may change over time, and are committed to regularly monitoring the system to ensure it is delivering on its objectives. Should

we see evidence of issues in the system, we will take appropriate action.

As I set out in my speech at the GambleAware conference on 4 December, I want to see the gambling industry further raise standards to ensure that levels of gambling advertising does not exacerbate harm. This work will be monitored closely. We are also committed to reviewing the best available evidence on the impact of gambling advertising from a wide range of sources in order to ensure there are robust protections in place to protect those at risk.

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan for the £30 million allocated to prevention for the gambling statutory levy to be administered by a statutory body. [HL3522]

**Baroness Twycross:** As set out in the Government's [response](#) to the consultation on the statutory levy, further consideration of the evidence is needed in order to appoint an appropriate body to lead the prevention strand of the levy system. We will confirm our decisions in due course. Prevention is a critical part of the government's approach to tackling gambling-related harm and we need to take the time to get the policy right whilst ensuring that necessary legislation is passed to meet our commitment to having the levy in place by April 2025.

## Gambling: Video Games

*Asked by Lord Foster of Bath*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the video games industry's self-regulation on loot boxes; and what plans they have, if any, to ensure mobile games disclose that they contain loot boxes and make available parental controls to prevent children from acquiring loot boxes without permission. [HL3347]

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

The previous Government convened a Technical Working Group (TWG) of video game developers, which produced new industry-led guidance on consumer protections, published in July 2023. The TWG has prepared a report on industry implementation of the measures, which we urge all video games companies to adopt in full. In addition, we have commissioned independent academic research to assess the effectiveness of the new guidance and will consider whether further action is required when this research is complete.

The Advertising Standards Authority and the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) are responsible for setting and enforcing the UK Advertising Codes and

are independent of the government. The Department meets regularly with representatives of the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) on a range of matters. The ASA's rulings on breaches of loot box advertising code requirements are available at: <https://www.asa.org.uk/codes-and-rulings/rulings.html>.

### Gender and Sex: Research

*Asked by Lord Lucas*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they expect to publish the report of the review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender, led by Professor Alice Sullivan. [HL3189]

**Lord Vallance of Balham:** The review, led by Professor Alice Sullivan, is an independent review into data and statistics on sex and gender. Ministers are currently considering next steps on the review and will make decisions, including on publication, in due course.

### General Practitioners: Employers' Contributions

*Asked by Lord Kamall*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the rise in employer National Insurance contributions on the ability of GP surgeries to prepare for winter pressures. [HL3676]

**Baroness Merron:** We have made necessary decisions to fix the foundations of the public finances in the Autumn Budget. Resource spending for the Department will be £22.6 billion more in 2025/26 than in 2023/24, as part of the Spending Review settlement. The employers' National Insurance rise will be implemented in April 2025. We will set out further details on allocation of funding for next year in due course.

We recently announced a proposed funding uplift for general practice for 2025/26 of £889 million, representing a 7.2% cash growth, estimated at approximately 4.8% real terms growth. This is the largest uplift to general practice (GP) funding since the beginning of the five-year framework and means we are reversing the recent trend with a rising share of total National Health Service resources going to GPs.

We committed to restoring the front door of the NHS by shifting the focus of the NHS out of hospitals into the community. We know when patients are not able to get a GP appointment, they end up in accident and emergency, which is worse for the patient, and more expensive for the taxpayer. That is why it is key that we increase the capacity of appointments for GPs. We have already committed to recruiting over 1,000 newly qualified GPs from this October through an £82 million boost to the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme which will increase the number of appointments delivered in general practice.

Primary care providers, including GPs, are valued independent contractors that provide almost £20 billion

worth of services in the NHS. Every year we consult with each contracted sector about the services it provides, and the money providers are entitled to in return. As in previous years, this issue will be dealt with as part of that process. We have recently begun discussions on the annual GP contract.

### Geneva Conventions

*Asked by Baroness Helic*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support the efforts of the government of Switzerland in convening a meeting of the parties to the Geneva Conventions. [HL3259]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** We continue to call for International Humanitarian Law, including the Geneva Conventions of 1949, to be respected around the world. 196 States have ratified the Conventions and have obligations to respect and adhere to their provisions. Our Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva met Swiss Government officials in December to discuss their plans to convene a meeting of High Contracting Parties. We are considering how to engage in preparations for the meeting, and await further information on its scope, objectives and timing.

### Georgia: Russia

*Asked by Lord Banner*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the risk of increased (1) interference in, and (2) incursion into Georgia, by Russia; and what is their strategy to respond to such activity. [HL3338]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** On 16 December Minister Doughty discussed Russian interference in Georgia with Georgian Foreign Minister Botcharishvili. Georgia remains at the forefront of Russian hybrid aggression with Russian military units stationed only 30 minutes from the capital Tbilisi. The UK has been consistently vocal at the UN and OSCE in our support of Georgian territorial integrity and sovereignty over the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, where Russia regularly exerts pressure. We continue to call on the Russian Federation to cease 'borderisation' activities and withdraw their troops from Georgian sovereign territory. We have consistently supported Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, which would support a more secure and stable future for the country.

### GP Connect: Medical Records

*Asked by Lord Kamall*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will place in the Library of the House a copy of any findings or outcomes of the exploratory work completed by



NHS England that is described in the National Data Guardian's Annual Report for 2023–2024 on the topic of adding a patient-facing function to GP Connect to enable people to see who has accessed their health records. [HL3613]

**Baroness Merron:** Following the initial discussion with the National Data Guardian, NHS England decided not to pursue the topic of adding a patient-facing function to GP Connect. It would have had a limited application and been technically and legally complex to implement, as noted in section 6.7.4 of the National Data Guardian 2023-2024 report, and would not have provided sufficient benefit, additional to the existing function of Subject Access Requests. There was, therefore, no exploratory work completed on this subject.

There are multiple ways for a patient's record to be accessed. Any patient-facing feature needs to take all these different routes into account and, as noted by the National Data Guardian, NHS England is considering whether this functionality might be possible in the Government's plans for a single care record.

### Great British Energy: Job Creation

*Asked by Lord Allen of Kensington*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential impact of Great British Energy on job creation in industrial communities. [HL3377]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** Great British Energy has potential to support the creation of high quality, well-paid jobs, and help to rebuild UK's industrial heartlands. It can promote employment opportunities through the projects it supports, domestic supply chain opportunities it creates, and within the company itself.

More widely, jobs will be at the heart of our modern Industrial Strategy, supporting growth sectors to create high-quality, well-paid jobs across the country. We have also set up the Office for Clean Energy Jobs which will support developing the skilled workforce to deliver the Clean Energy Superpower Mission.

### Greenhouse Gas Emissions

*Asked by Lord Foster of Bath*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath on 26 November (HL2661), whether they intend to make their 2030 Nationally Determined Contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions legally binding in UK law, in the same way as they have made carbon budgets legally binding under the Climate Change Act 2008. [HL3494]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** The UK's 2030 nationally determined contribution - to reduce economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions by at least 68% on 1990s levels - is a fair and ambitious contribution to global action on climate change and is in line with the Paris agreement temperature goal. The 2030 NDC was aligned with the advice of the independent Climate Change Committee

(CCC) and built on the foundations of well-established UK analysis and policy development for domestic climate change mitigation. We do not consider it necessary to implement new legislation to bring the UK's 2030 NDC into domestic law because of its alignment with the existing, legally binding carbon budgets framework.

### Hazara: Women

*Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they last undertook a Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS); when they will they undertake a JACS update; and whether there will be a focus on particularly vulnerable groups, including consideration of atrocities against women and girls and members of the Hazara community. [HL3394]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The Government conducted a Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS) for Afghanistan in 2019. Given the sensitive context, this document has not been made public. An internal review of the 2019 JACS undertaken in July 2022 judged that the underlying conflict drivers had not changed. We continue to monitor the situation in Afghanistan closely, with a focus on the impact on the most vulnerable, drawing on internal assessments and external expert analysis. The decision to publicly release UK-commissioned reports and assessments is made on a case-by-case basis.

### Health Professions: Public Sector

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to keep healthcare workers in the public sector, and in particular what consideration they have given to increasing their pay. [HL3418]

**Baroness Merron:** Over 1.5 million hard-working people make up the National Health Service workforce, and supporting them is at the core of delivering on our mission to build an NHS fit for the future. That is why the Government accepted all the 2024/25 pay review bodies' recommendations for NHS staff in England.

Furthermore, we have already remitted the pay review bodies and submitted written evidence for 2025/26. This is the earliest written evidence that has been published for many years, meaning the pay setting process is on track this year. This paves the way for pay settlements to be agreed earlier.

NHS England continues to lead on a range of initiatives to boost retention of existing staff and ensure that the NHS remains an attractive career choice for new recruits.

### Health Services: Artificial Intelligence

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to regulate the use of artificial intelligence in the healthcare system. [HL3519]

**Baroness Merron:** The Department has invested £9.3 million to bolster the safety of artificial intelligence (AI) in health and care, and to ensure the regulatory pathway is clear for both developers and adopters. Ensuring technologies are safe is a top priority and, through this funding, the Department has supported the launch of regulatory projects such as the AI and Digital Regulation Service (AIDRS) and the AI Airlock.

The AIDRS collaborates between the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulation Agency (MHRA), the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, the Health Research Authority, and the Care Quality Commission. The service, by providing a collaborative one stop shop of information, advice, and guidance, allows adopters and developers of AI to easily understand what regulatory and evaluation pathways need to be followed before an AI tool can be safely deployed across health and care.

The AI Airlock is an MHRA-led initiative, supported by the NHS AI Lab, designed to create a controlled testing environment where developers can rigorously validate AI tools in real-world clinical settings before full-scale deployment, ensuring they meet National Health Service standards for safety, efficacy, and integration into existing healthcare workflows. The AI Airlock fosters collaboration between developers, regulators, and healthcare providers, and reduces the risks associated with early-stage implementation while providing valuable feedback for developers to refine their products.

### Health Services: Languages

*Asked by Baroness Coussins*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to amend the Accessible Information Standard so that it is aligned with the recommendation of Healthwatch England to cover the needs of those who speak little or no English. [HL3427]

**Baroness Merron:** We have no current plans to make such a change to the Accessible Information Standard (AIS). The AIS aims to make sure that people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss get information that they can access and understand. NHS England is responsible for the AIS and has completed a review as part of the revision of the standard.

Spoken and community languages are specifically excluded from the AIS and have not been included as part of its review due to the legislative basis of the AIS and its focus on meeting the needs of disabled people.

The General Medical Council's guidance states that all possible efforts must be made to ensure effective communication with patients. This includes arrangements to meet patients' communication needs in languages other than English. Where language is a problem in discussing health matters, NHS England and NHS Scotland's guidance states that a professional interpreter should always be offered.

NHS England is aware of safety investigations and other issues relating to translation services and has completed a strategic review and options appraisal to identify if and how NHS England can support improvements in the commissioning and delivery of community language translation and interpretation services.

### Health Services: Migrant Workers

*Asked by Lord Oates*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the financial savings to the UK when a fully trained healthcare worker is recruited from overseas to work in the NHS. [HL3315]

**Baroness Merron:** There has been no estimate made of the financial savings to the United Kingdom when a fully trained healthcare worker is recruited from overseas to work in the National Health Service.

### Heat Pumps

*Asked by Viscount Waverley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the number of heat pump installers; and what measures they are taking to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of them to meet the targets contained in the Government's heat pump strategy. [HL3464]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** The Government is working closely with industry to ensure that sufficient installers are available to install heat pumps. The Heat Pump Association (HPA) estimate that as of 2023, the heat pump installer workforce is made up of between 4,000 and 10,000 trained and active installers. Nearly 8,000 individuals completed training in 2023, so we are well in line with current workforce training needs.

To meet future demand, the Government is supporting trainees in England taking training relevant to heat pumps and heat networks under the £5 million Heat Training Grant. Industry is also investing in upskilling the existing workforce. Octopus Energy has invested £10 million in a new training centre in Slough, Ideal Heating have announced a multi-million-pound training centre in Bridgehead near Hull, and Aira is investing £300m in the UK heat pump market, including setting up training academies.

### High Speed 2 Line: Costs

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the estimated costs of HS2 remain manageable and within the planned budget. [HL3565]

**Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill:** With delivery now well underway, this government's current focus is the safe delivery of HS2 between Birmingham and London Euston at the lowest reasonable cost. On 20 October we set out

the urgent action that we are taking to bring HS2 back under control, get a grip on costs, and ensure taxpayers' money is put to good use.

We have reinstated ministerial oversight of the project to ensure greater accountability and have commissioned an independent review of the oversight of major transport infrastructure projects, which will investigate the effectiveness of forecasting and reporting of cost, schedule and benefits, as well as actions to deliver cost efficiencies. The recommendations from this review will inform our decisions on what further action may need to be taken.

The government is also tasking the new CEO of HS2 Ltd, Mark Wild, with producing an action plan to reset the programme and deliver the remaining work as cost effectively as possible.

## High Speed 2 Line: Tunnels

Asked by *Lord Berkeley*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill on 18 December (HL3382), whether they will publish a cost estimate for the construction of HS2 tunnels from Old Oak Common to Euston before construction work starts; and before its destination and design is published and approved, as required by government procurement rules. [HL3585]

**Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill:** The Euston tunnels' scope is being delivered as part of the SCS Main Works Civils contract, and there are no plans for a new procurement process for this work. Due to commercial sensitivities, the department is unable to provide a specific cost breakdown for the Euston tunnels.

Previously published cost ranges for HS2 Phase One included the costs associated with the Euston tunnels. The Department is currently working with HS2 Ltd to review the Estimate at Completion (EAC) for HS2 Phase One. The results of this review, which include considerations of the Euston tunnels, will report to Parliament in due course.

## Holyhead Port: Freight

Asked by *Lord Wigley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the change in the volume of freight shipped through Holyhead between 2015 and 2023. [HL3574]

**Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill:** The Department for Transport publishes maritime freight statistics for all of UK's major and minor ports, including the Port of Holyhead, as part of the annual Port Freight Statistics Publication.

Table 1 shows the maritime freight volume through the Port of Holyhead across the period 2015 to 2023. The freight volume has increased by 7% across this period.

*Table 1: Maritime freight volume through the Port of Holyhead from 2015 until 2023*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Tonnage (million tonnes)</i>
2015	4.45
2016	4.94
2017	5.24
2018	5.22
2019	5.33
2020	5.86
2021	3.76
2022	4.10
2023	4.78

## Home Education

Asked by *Baroness Morgan of Huyton*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many children deemed to be at risk of abuse or neglect are home schooled. [HL3452]

Asked by *Baroness Morgan of Huyton*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce a register of children schooled at home. [HL3454]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** All parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child receives a suitable, full-time education. While the vast majority of parents send their children to school, they have the right to choose to educate their child at home. While home education is not a safeguarding risk in itself, school can be a protective factor for children who are at risk of harm.

From October 2022, the department has collected termly data from local authorities on their home education cohorts. The most recent data was published on 12 December and records 111,700 children as home educated as of the autumn 2024 census day. 1% of elective home education children were recorded as a child in need, while 0.5% were recorded as having a child protection plan and under 0.5% were a looked after child. This compares with 3% children in need, 0.4% having a child protection plan and 0.7% looked after children amongst the overall child population. The department's latest data is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/elective-home-education>.

Every child deserves to grow up in a safe and loving home. As part of the Children's Wellbeing and School Bill, introduced in Parliament on 17 December, the government will introduce compulsory Children Not in School registers in every local authority in England. These measures will help local authorities to identify all children not in school in their areas, including those at risk of harm, and to take action where this is the case.

As part of that Bill, we are also taking steps to require parents of some of our most vulnerable children to obtain local authority consent before they can move to home education. This will apply to children who are subject to ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 2004, children who have a child protection plan, and children who are attending a special school. Where those children are already being educated at home, local authorities will be able to consider whether that is in their best interests and to assess the suitability of their home learning environment. If that leads to a determination that home education is not in the child's best interests, the local authority will be able to issue a school attendance order.

### Honours: Public Appointments

*Asked by Baroness Finn*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Twycross on 15 November (HL1929), whether the Prime Minister approved the proposal from HD Committee to transfer the responsibility for honours committees' appointments from the Prime Minister to the Head of the Civil Service; and, what was the policy reason for such a change. [HL3652]

**Baroness Twycross:** The Prime Minister was consulted on the proposal to transfer the responsibility for honours committee appointments from the Prime Minister to the Head of the Civil Service.

As noted in our answer to HL1929, this policy change was made to ensure political independence of process.

### Houseboats

*Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to take steps to ensure that boat dwellers without a mooring are not subject to disproportionate enforcement action by navigation authorities such as the Canal & River Trust. [HL3400]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** All navigation authorities in England and Wales are responsible for operational matters on their waterways, including setting fees and charges for those using them and the use of corresponding enforcement powers, under the relevant statutory provisions. The Government does not have a role in that but recognises that boaters using navigable waterways require a valid licence from the relevant navigation authority and are expected to comply with the terms of their licences for the benefit of all waterway users. The Canal and River Trust has provided assurances that appropriate enforcement action on its waterways is only used as a last resort in response to persistent non-compliance, to ensure fairness to all boaters who do comply.

*Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask His Majesty's Government, what discussions they have had with the Canal & River Trust regarding concerns raised by the community of boaters without a permanent mooring. [HL3447]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** Defra officials meet formally with the Canal and River Trust senior management three times a year, at which a range of issues are discussed. The minutes of those meetings are published on the Trust's website.

### Houseboats: Licensing

*Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to review the navigation licence surcharge applied to continuous cruiser licences. [HL3401]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** The Government has no such plans. Navigation authorities are responsible for operational matters on their waterways, including setting the terms and conditions of their boat licencing regimes.

### Housing: Construction

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support local councils in achieving their target for 1.5 million new homes. [HL3520]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** The government is committed to delivering 1.5 million homes over this parliament, and we have already taken decisive action to support councils to play their part in delivering a generational increase in social and affordable housing.

On 30 July, we confirmed a range of new flexibilities for councils and housing associations, both within the Affordable Homes Programme and in relation to how councils can use their Right to Buy receipts, and a further £450 million for councils through the Local Authority Housing Fund enabling councils to grow their housing stock.

At the Budget on 30 October, the Chancellor set out details of an immediate one-year cash injection of £500 million to top up the existing Affordable Homes Programme which will deliver up to 5,000 new social and affordable homes, with bidding open to councils and other social landlords. This comes ahead of the multi-year Spending Review next spring, where the Government will set out details of new investment to succeed the 2021-26 Affordable Homes Programme.

The Chancellor also confirmed that we will reduce Right to Buy discounts to their pre-2012 regional levels and allow councils to retain 100% of the receipts generated by Right to Buy sales to better protect council stock and accelerate the replacement of those homes sold. The government is consulting on wider reforms to the Right to Buy and also on a new 5-year social housing rent



settlement to provide councils and all providers with the certainty they need to invest in new social housing.

We consulted on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system from 30 July until 24 September 2024. We have now reviewed the available evidence and feedback from the consultation and published our formal response. This response outlines a number of changes in planning policy designed to support the delivery of affordable homes, including more for Social Rent, and implementing golden rules to ensure development in the Green Belt is in the public interest.

We will work in partnership with councils and providers to build capacity and ensure we build the homes people need.

### **Housing: Flood Control**

*Asked by Lord Allen of Kensington*

To ask His Majesty's Government what action they are taking to ensure housing stock built in areas susceptible to flooding is adequately protected from flooding risks. [HL3375]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** The government recognises the devastating impact flooding can have on communities. National Planning Policy is clear that development should be directed to areas with the lowest risk of flooding. Where no alternative sites are available, permission should only be granted where it can be demonstrated that it will be safe for its lifetime taking account of the vulnerability of its users, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and, where possible, will reduce flood risk overall.

### **Immigration: Detainees**

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Chelmsford*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hanson of Flint on 25 November (HL2389), in which he says that the Home Office review into immigration detention will not assess all areas of the Brook House Inquiry, whether they intend to review the recommendations in another review or assessment, and what would the timescale be for this work. [HL3593]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** The previous government published a command paper on 19 March 2024 in response to the Brook House Inquiry report. Positive progress continues to be made in addressing the Inquiry's findings.

A cross departmental working group chaired by the SCS Deputy Director for Detention Services has been meeting since September 2023. The working group continues to meet monthly to consider and monitor delivery of the Inquiry's recommendations, providing oversight and overarching governance to monitor Inquiry recommendations. Home Office Ministers are fully sighted on progress.

30 out of the 33 recommendations made have been accepted or partially accepted, with 12 recommendations met and closed as of October 2024. The remaining recommendations remain on track for closure by summer 2025.

### **Inter Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government when the communique for the Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs held on 18 November will be published on GOV.UK, given their commitment to publish communiques within two weeks of the Inter-Ministerial Group taking place. [HL3620]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** The four Governments have committed to jointly agreeing a communique for the Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs within two weeks of the meeting taking place. Each government will then take the necessary steps to arrange for publication on respective websites as soon as possible. Some governments published the communique on their relevant websites earlier this month and it has now been published on GOV.UK (attached).

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL3620 attachment [HL3620 attachment.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-12-18/HL3620>

### **Internet: Disinformation**

*Asked by Lord Strathcarron*

To ask His Majesty's Government how they intend online intermediaries to combat misinformation and disinformation on their websites, as set out in their Draft Statement of Strategic Priorities for online safety, published on 20 November, when this is not explicitly referenced in the Online Safety Act 2023. [HL3560]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The Online Safety Act requires companies to take action against mis/disinformation where it constitutes illegal content or content harmful to children. The Act will also ensure platforms are transparent and accountable to their users about what legal content they allow on their services and are consistent in its treatment.

The draft Statement of Strategic Priorities calls for Ofcom to enhance its media literacy initiatives, empowering users to critically assess potentially misleading online content. If Parliament approves the final statement, Ofcom must then set out how it will have regard to the priorities, including those relating to mis/disinformation, when exercising its functions.

## Irish Language Broadcast Fund and Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund: Finance

*Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask His Majesty's Government how much money they have allocated to the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund in each year since each of these funds was established. [HL3344]

*Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have provided funds to support trainee schemes operated by the Irish Language Broadcast Fund; if so, what trainee schemes are being operated; and how many people have received training through those schemes. [HL3346]

**Baroness Twycross:** The Irish Language Broadcast Fund was set up in 2004/5 with funding provided to Northern Ireland Screen from the UK Government via the Northern Ireland Executive's Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. Since 2011/12, Northern Ireland Screen has received UK Government funding via the British Film Institute.

The Ulster Scots Broadcast Fund was set up in 2011/12 and also receives UK Government funding via the British Film Institute.

The table below sets out the amount of money allocated to both funds since they were established.

<i>Year</i>	<i>ILBF (£000s)</i>	<i>USBF (£000s)</i>	<i>Total (£000s)</i>
2022/23	3,116	1,038	4,154
2021/22	3,930	1,893	5,823
2020/21	3,180	1,143	4,323
2019/20	3,000	1,000	4,000
2018/19	3,000	1,000	4,000
2017/18	3,000	1,000	4,000
2016/17	3,000	1,000	4,000
2015/16	3,000	1,000	4,000
2014/15	3,000	1,000	4,000
2013/14	3,000	1,000	4,000
2012/13	3,000	1,000	4,000
2011/12	3,000	1,000	4,000
2010/11	3,000	N/A	3,000
2009/10	3,000	N/A	3,000
2008/09	3,000	N/A	3,000
2007/08	3,000	N/A	3,000
2006/07	3,000	N/A	3,000
2005/06	3,000	N/A	3,000
2004/05	3,000	N/A	3,000
Total	61,404	14,133	75,537

Figures for 2004/05 to 2010/11 have been provided by Northern Ireland Screen. Figures for 2011/12 onwards are

set out in the British Film Institute's [annual reports and accounts](#).

As part of the allocations set out above, in May 2021 the Northern Ireland Office announced an extra £2 million in funding to mark the fulfilment of a UK Government commitment in the New Decade, New Approach agreement that was agreed in January 2020 and saw the restoration of the Northern Ireland Executive. The extra funding was provided through DCMS and the British Film Institute and was split equally between both funds.

The 2023/24 and 2024/25 figures for Northern Ireland Screen's funding for the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and Ulster Scots Broadcast Fund will be published via the British Film Institute's annual report and accounts. The British Film Institute's 2023/24 annual report and accounts will be published in due course.

The Irish Language Broadcast Fund offers several training opportunities for Irish speakers working or aspiring to work in the independent production sector in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland Screen is responsible for the allocation of funding to such schemes, and how they are operated.

## Israel: Gaza

*Asked by Lord Swire*

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel concerning the reports that northern Gaza has been compulsorily cleared. [HL3245]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** We are deeply concerned about the situation in northern Gaza. That is why we, alongside France and Algeria, co-convoked an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council on 16 October, where we underlined that northern Gaza must not be cut off from the south and there must be no forcible transfer of Gazans from or within Gaza contrary to International Humanitarian Law (IHL), nor any reduction in the territory of Gaza. Israel must comply fully with IHL and ensure sufficient aid reaches all parts of Gaza. As the Prime Minister said in Berlin on 18 October, the world will not tolerate any more excuses from Israel on humanitarian assistance. The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary continue to press Israeli leaders to take all steps to avoid civilian casualties and we continue to work with our international partners including at the UN to put pressure on Israel to show the world it is complying with IHL.

## Laboratory for AI Security Research

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential the Laboratory for AI Security Research could offer for both the public and private sector. [HL3627]

**Lord Vallance of Balham:** We are committed to building an AI sector that can scale globally and boosting responsible AI adoption across the economy.

We are aware that AI provides an increased threat to national security. DSIT is working closely with partners to understand those risks, and are using that knowledge to shape policy-making. AISI's collaboration with the Laboratory for AI Security Research and the National Cyber Security Centre aims to understand the interplay of cybersecurity and AI security - coordinating where there are shared objectives.

This collaboration enables progress towards ensuring effective global AI governance whilst capitalising on the benefits of AI.

### Languages: Teachers

*Asked by Baroness Coussins*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to increase the cap of 175 recipients of the Languages Teacher Training Scholarship administered by the British Council to help meet their language teacher recruitment targets. [HL3428]

*Asked by Baroness Coussins*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have (1) to issue guidance to schools on sponsoring visa applications for teachers of modern foreign languages from other countries, and (2) to better support those international recruits in England. [HL3429]

*Asked by Baroness Coussins*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce a visa waiver for teachers of modern foreign languages from other countries who have received a job offer from a school in England. [HL3430]

*Asked by Baroness Coussins*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to reinstate the £10,000 relocation grant for teachers of modern foreign languages who have received a job offer from a school in England. [HL3431]

*Asked by Baroness Coussins*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to amend the eligibility rules for trainee language teachers so that graduates whose degree was only partially in the taught language can apply. [HL3432]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** This government wants to ensure that there are excellent teachers where we need them most, and international teachers and teacher trainees make an important contribution to this, particularly in the teaching of languages.

There is no cap in place for recipients of the Languages Teacher Training Scholarship. 175 is a notional target which enables the British Council to adequately plan recruitment and resourcing to meet the target. We closely

monitor recruitment throughout the year and, should it look as though the target will be exceeded, we will engage with the British Council to discuss their capacity to meet any increase in demand.

The department produces guidance for schools on recruiting teachers from overseas, which is accessible here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/recruit-teachers-from-overseas>. This includes an overview on how to sponsor skilled worker visas and links to the appropriate Home Office (HO) guidance.

The government has no plans to introduce a visa waiver for language teachers. Language teachers are free to use the immigration system and should be able to obtain a skilled worker visa if they have a job offer from a school that has been approved by the HO, are able to speak, read, write and understand English, and are paid at least the minimum of the relevant teacher pay range.

Overseas nationals who relocate to England this academic year to take up a language, or physics, teaching job in a state-funded school, will still be eligible for the £10,000 International relocation payment (IRP), provided they meet the eligibility requirements. The 2024/25 academic year is the last year of a two-year pilot for the IRP. The department is currently evaluating the first year of the pilot and will make decisions on whether to offer the payment in future years in due course.

All qualified teachers in England are required to have a UK first degree or equivalent qualification. Legislation does not specify that teachers must have a degree in a particular subject or discipline and there are no statutory requirements for secondary trainee teachers to have a degree in a specified subject as long as they meet the teachers' standards, including those that relate to subject and curriculum knowledge, by the end of their training.

Decisions relating to degree entry criteria ultimately lie with the accredited Initial Teacher Training provider to determine whether an applicant's qualification meets the requirements. Candidates may also be eligible for subject knowledge enhancement courses to equip them with the subject knowledge required to teach languages in schools.

### Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024

*Asked by Lord Black of Brentwood*

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the outstanding issues delaying full implementation of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024. [HL3524]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** I refer the Noble Lord to the answer given to Question UIN 18875 on 16 December 2024.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

UIN 18875 [UIN 18875.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-12-17/HL3524>

## Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme

*Asked by Lord Moylan*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to continue or replace the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme beyond its expiry date in March 2025. [HL3615]

**Baroness Twycross:** Departmental settlements have been set following the Budget announcement on October 30. Individual programmes will now be assessed during the departmental Business Planning process.

## Litter

*Asked by Lord Swire*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to combat littering. [HL2179]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** Littering is a crime that blights communities and the environment. Local authorities already have a range of powers to tackle littering including the ability to issue fixed penalty notices of up to £500. They must spend the income from these penalties on enforcement or clean up.

This Government is committed to delivering the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for drinks containers in October 2027, as agreed with the devolved Governments of the UK, and in accordance with the Joint Policy Statement published in April 2024. It is estimated that DRS could lead to an 85% reduction in litter of in-scope items.

## Local Government

*Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have considered alternative proposals to local government unitarisation put forward by district councils. [HL3611]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** The Local Government Minister wrote to all councils on the 16 December in two tier areas to set out the arrangements for local government reorganisation, including inviting council leaders to develop unitary proposals that are in the best interests of the whole area, rather than developing competing proposals.

Unitary councils can lead to better outcomes for residents, save significant money which can be reinvested in public services, and improve accountability with fewer politicians who are more able to focus on delivering for residents. The Government's policy is to facilitate a programme of local government reorganisation.

## Local Government Finance

*Asked by Lord Bailey of Paddington*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will issue local authorities multi-year settlements to enable

them to plan more efficiently and secure their long-term future. [HL3336]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** We are committed to providing a multi-year funding settlement starting in 2026-27. This will be the first multi-year settlement since 2016 and will provide local authorities with the certainty they need to focus on their priorities.

## Loneliness

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Newcastle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address loneliness and social isolation as a root cause of foodbank usage following a recent report published by the Centre for Social Justice which found that over twice as many people who use foodbanks feel lonely most of the time compared to other adults. [HL3617]

**Baroness Sherlock:** The government's current work to tackle loneliness includes the Know Your Neighbourhood Fund, a grant fund designed to widen participation in volunteering and tackle loneliness in 27 disadvantaged areas across England.

Jobcentres carry out an important role in identifying people at risk of loneliness by directing people to tailored support such as social prescribing, volunteering opportunities, befriending schemes and other local community opportunities and helping them to return to or prepare to return to the labour market. Good work is also a key element in our approach to tackle poverty and reduce mass dependence on emergency food parcels.

## Mandarin Language: Education

*Asked by Baroness Coussins*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the case for building Mandarin language skills within the workforce to meet the needs of the United Kingdom in (1) security, (2) diplomacy, and (3) trade. [HL3647]

*Asked by Baroness Coussins*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will continue to fund the Mandarin Excellence Programme after its current funding expires in August 2025. [HL3648]

*Asked by Baroness Coussins*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Department for Education will consult the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the security services before it makes a decision on the funding of the Mandarin Excellence Programme beyond August 2025. [HL3649]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The government appreciates the benefits that studying Mandarin can bring to the workforce needs of the United Kingdom.



The government has recently confirmed funding for the Mandarin Excellence Programme until the end of this academic year, when the current contract ends. The department will work with all interested parties across government to consider the future approach to supporting Mandarin language learning beyond August 2025, to meet the UK's varied needs for a pipeline of Mandarin language speakers.

### Mathematics and Music: Higher Education

*Asked by Lord Wigley*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many higher education institutions in England offer courses in (1) mathematics, (2) music and (3) both. [HL3572]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), now part of the Joint Information Systems Committee (Jisc), collects and publishes data on student enrolments across all UK higher education (HE) providers. This includes data on full person equivalents enrolled in different subject areas, categorised using the HE coding of subjects system. Counts of enrolments across all subjects from 2019/20 to 2022/23 are published in Table 49 of HESA's Student Data, which can be found here: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-49>.

Table 49 can be used to determine that in the 2022/23 academic year, there were 31,030 HE enrolments in 'mathematics' across 75 English HE providers and 31,405 HE enrolments in 'music' across 106 English HE providers. There were 58 HE providers in England that had enrolments in both 'mathematics' and 'music' in 2022/23.

### Matrimonial Proceedings and Separation

*Asked by Baroness Deech*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to give consideration to the options for reform set out by the Law Commission in its scoping report Financial remedies on divorce and dissolution (HC 460), published on 17 December. [HL3596]

**Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede:** The Government is grateful to the Law Commission for its work on this important and complex area. We will carefully consider the details and will provide a response in due course.

### Mauritius: Chagossians

*Asked by Lord Lancaster of Kimbolton*

To ask His Majesty's Government which external consultants or advisors, if any, have been involved in the negotiations with Mauritius over the Chagos Islands. [HL3268]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** Jonathan Powell was appointed as the PM's Envoy for the BIOT sovereignty negotiations on 6 September 2024. He started

his role as the UK's National Security Adviser on 2 December. However, he will continue to engage on matters related to BIOT. The Government has also received external legal advice in relation to the negotiations with Mauritius over BIOT/the Chagos Archipelago over the course of several years.

### Meat Products: Smuggling

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government on how many occasions since 2019 (1) illegal bush meat products and (2) other illegal, non-compliant or contaminated meat products have been confiscated at ports of entry to the UK; where and when these confiscations occurred; from which countries these confiscated products originated; and which species were confiscated. [HL3278]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** This information requested is not available.

We cannot provide any data on the species of animal any meat seized is from, or on the countries from which the meat originated. The data does not distinguish between 'meat' and 'bush meat', and it does not specify why the meat was seized.

We also do not release details of the location as this information could risk undermining border security by providing intelligence in our resource deployment and targeting to smuggling networks.

### Meat: Smuggling

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the risk of diseases being spread into the UK from illegal imports of (1) bush meat from Africa, and (2) meat from eastern Europe; and what steps they have taken to mitigate those risks. [HL3332]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** Defra monitors animal disease outbreaks worldwide and assesses the risk that they might enter the United Kingdom (UK) through legal or illegal trade in animal products. Its team of veterinary and risk experts provide rapid outbreak assessments to inform import decisions and enforcement action and undertake full qualitative risk assessments in certain cases. These assessments are published on gov.uk at [www.gov.uk/government/collections/animal-diseases-international-monitoring](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/animal-diseases-international-monitoring).

Meat imported commercially via Border Control Posts is subject to local authority-led official controls to ensure that it complies with UK import conditions. The Home Office's Border Force has lead responsibility for identifying and seizing meat imported illegally other than via Border Control Posts.

To further mitigate the risks, it is illegal in the UK to feed catering or domestic food waste to livestock, including pigs.

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

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the level of funding for the Dover Port Health Authority in conjunction with UK Border Force to carry out checks for illegal personal imports of meat; and whether funding is adequate at other border points for arrivals by air and sea. [HL3583]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** The Home Office does not hold this information in an easily accessible format; budget information is available only at overall directorate level and not at individual unit levels.

However, previous published financial figures for Border Force from 2023 to 2024 can be found at Home Office annual report and accounts: 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK.

### **Mental Illness: Ketamine**

*Asked by **Lord Lebedev***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the evidence-base for the use of ketamine to treat trauma-related mental health conditions, and whether they plan to provide such treatments through NHS mental health services. [HL3312]

**Baroness Merron:** Ketamine does not have a marketing authorisation in the United Kingdom for use in the treatment of any mental health conditions. Esketamine nasal spray, an isomer of ketamine, is licensed for treatment-resistant depression that has not responded to at least two different antidepressants in the current moderate to severe depressive episode in adults, and for the treatment of adults with a moderate to severe episode of major depressive disorder, as acute short-term treatment for the rapid reduction of depressive symptoms, which, according to clinical judgement, constitutes a psychiatric emergency.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is the independent body responsible for developing authoritative, evidence-based recommendations for the National Health Service on whether new, licenced medicines represent a clinically and cost-effective use of resources.

The NICE has been unable to recommend esketamine for treatment-resistant depression due to uncertainties in its clinical and cost-effectiveness. It is not therefore routinely funded by the NHS in England for any indication.

The NICE was unable to make recommendations on the use of esketamine nasal spray for the treatment of major depressive disorder because the marketing authorisation holder did not provide an evidence submission.

### **Migrants: Republic of Ireland**

*Asked by **Lord Elliott of Ballinamallard***

To ask His Majesty's Government how many migrants in 2024 were (1) returned from the Republic of Ireland to the UK, and (2) returned from the UK to the Republic of Ireland. [HL3534]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** The Home Office does not hold data on returns to the UK.

Data on returns from the UK are published in the 'Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release'. Data on returns to the Republic of Ireland are published in table Ret\_D02 of the Returns detailed datasets accompanying the release. Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates to the end of September 2024. Data up to the end of December 2024 will be released in February 2025.

### **Ministers**

*Asked by **Baroness Finn***

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their policy on the length of time that (1) Cabinet Ministers, and (2) the Foreign Secretary, should remain in office. [HL3606]

**Baroness Twycross:** The Prime Minister is responsible for the overall organisation of the Executive.

All ministers serve at the discretion of the Prime Minister.

### **Ministry of Defence: Procurement**

*Asked by **Baroness Goldie***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Ministry of Defence has entered into any procurement contracts valued in excess of £1 million since 1 July. [HL3391]

**Lord Coaker:** The Ministry of Defence has entered into 281 procurement contracts valued in excess of £1 million since 1 July 2024.

### **Music: GCE A-level**

*Asked by **Lord Wigley***

To ask His Majesty's Government how many pupils sat A level examinations in music in 2015 and 2023. [HL3573]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

The numbers of entries in A level music in the 2014/15 and 2022/23 academic years are published by the department in the 'A level and other 16 to 18 results' statistical release. There were 6,709 A level music entries in 2014/15 and 4,911 A level music entries in 2022/23

These numbers include all A level entries by students aged 16 to 18 in England in that academic year.

### Music: Teachers

Asked by *Lord Wigley*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to extend the £10,000 tax free bursary available to trainee art and design teachers, so that it is also available to trainee music teachers. [HL3706]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

Earlier this year, the department announced an initial teacher training financial incentives package for the 2025/26 recruitment cycle worth £233 million, which is a £37 million increase on the last cycle. This includes a £10,000 tax free bursary to encourage trainees to teach music.

### Muslims

Asked by *Lord Pearson of Rannoch*

To ask His Majesty's Government what proportion of the population was Muslim at the time of the last census, and what is their projection for the next 10 years. [HL3696]

**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 Lord Pearson of Rannoch

House of Lords

London

SW1A 0PW

23 December 2024

Dear Lord Pearson,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking what proportion of the population was Muslim at the time of the last census, and what is their projection for the next 10 years (HL3696).

Please see Table 1 which includes the data on the proportion of the population that identified as Muslim in the 2021 Census. Please note that this is a voluntary question which had a 94% response rate to the question.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) does not currently produce projections on religion or any other

characteristic that might indicate the size of the Muslim population in the future.

Table 1: 2021 Census dataset for England and Wales, including total usual residents, Muslims, and not answered[1].

Religion	England and Wales		England		Wales	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
Total: All usual residents	59,597,540	100	56,490,048	100	3,107,494	100
Muslim	3,868,133	6.5	3,801,186	6.7	66,947	2.2
Not answered	3,595,589	6	3,400,548	6	195,041	6.3

Source: Office for National Statistics

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

[1]In order to protect against disclosure of personal information, records have been swapped between different geographic areas and counts perturbed by small amounts. Small counts at the lowest geographies will be most affected.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

UKSA Letter [PQHL3696 (1).pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-12-19/HL3696>

### National Citizen Service Trust: Costs

Asked by *Baroness Redfern*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the costs of ending the National Citizen Service. [HL3352]

**Baroness Twycross:** This Government is committed to delivering an orderly transition following the decision to wind down the NCS programme from March 2025 and close the NCS Trust when parliamentary time allows.

DCMS is currently working closely with the NCS Trust to agree the full costs of winding down the programme, and closing the NCS Trust.

### National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Asked by *Baroness Deech*

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the Chancellor of the Exchequer's request to departments to identify 5 per cent efficiency savings, what consideration has been given to economies in the cost of constructing a planned underground Holocaust Learning Centre in Victoria Tower Gardens. [HL3595]

**Lord Khan of Burnley:** The Government is seeking Parliament's approval of the Holocaust Memorial Bill with a view to constructing the UK national Holocaust

Memorial and Learning Centre as quickly and efficiently as possible.

### National Shipbuilding Office

*Asked by Baroness Goldie*

To ask His Majesty's Government what major projects the National Shipbuilding Office has engaged in since 1 July. [HL3389]

*Asked by Baroness Goldie*

To ask His Majesty's Government what major projects the National Shipbuilding Office expects to be engaged in between now and July 2025. [HL3390]

**Lord Coaker:** The National Shipbuilding Office (NSO) engages extensively in a wide range of shipbuilding pipeline programmes both formally and informally.

Regarding the cross-Government shipbuilding pipeline, the NSO regularly participates in programme boards and decision-making panels to ensure coherence and promote best practice. NSO officials also work directly with programme, commercial and legal teams, and the shipbuilding sector to support the strategic delivery of all these major projects.

On an ongoing basis, the NSO has engaged in some capacity in the following programmes since 1 July 2024, and expects to remain engaged in some capacity between now and July 2025:

Programme	Department
Defence Programmes (by programme maturity)	
Type 26 Build	Ministry of Defence; Royal Navy
Type 31 Build	Ministry of Defence; Royal Navy
Ministry of Defence Police Launches	Ministry of Defence; Ministry of Defence Police
Fleet Solid Support	Ministry of Defence; Royal Navy
Defence Marine Services – Next Generation	Ministry of Defence; Royal Navy
Type 31 Support	Ministry of Defence; Royal Navy
Boats In-Service Support 2026	Ministry of Defence; Royal Navy; Army; Strategic Command
Naval Support Integrated Global Network	Ministry of Defence; Royal Navy
Programme Euston	Ministry of Defence; Royal Navy
Multi-Role Strike Ship	Ministry of Defence; Royal Navy
Future Air Dominance System	Ministry of Defence; Royal Navy
Commando Force – Surface Manoeuvre	Ministry of Defence; Royal Navy
Future Military Data Gathering	Ministry of Defence; Royal Navy
Mine Hunting Capability	Ministry of Defence; Royal Navy
Strategic Sealift – Future	Ministry of Defence; Royal Navy
Submarine Delivery Agency Roll-	Ministry of Defence; Submarine

on, Roll-off	Delivery Agency
Project Powerful	Ministry of Defence; Royal Navy
Other Government Department Programmes (by programme maturity)	
Northern Lighthouse Vessel Pole Star	Northern Lighthouse Board (Department for Transport)
Northeastern Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority vessel	Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs
Sussex Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority vessel	Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs
Kent & Essex Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority vessel	Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs
Border Force Cutters Ship Life Extension Programme	Home Office
Border Force Coastal Patrol Vessels Ship Life Extension Programme	Home Office
Fair Isle Ferry Replacement	Shetland Islands Council (Department for Transport part-funded)
Maritime Capability Replacement Programme	Home Office
Futures Afloat	Trinity House (Department for Transport)
Research Vessel Endeavour	Centre for Environment, Fisheries, and Aquaculture Sciences
Nuclear Transport Solutions Roll-on, Roll-off	Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
Local and Devolved Government Programmes (by programme maturity)	
Motor Vessel Jura: Offboard Boat	Scottish Government
Scottish small ferries replacement programme	Scottish Government
Devon & Cornwall Constabulary Diving Vessel	Devon & Cornwall Constabulary
Marine Scotland vessel replacement	Scottish Government
Corran Ferry Replacement	Highland Council (Scottish and UK Governments)
Lower Dart Ferry Replacement	Devon County Council

The NSO also expects to be engaged in some capacity in the following programmes between now and July 2025:

Programme	Department
Defence Programmes (by programme maturity)	
Ice Patrol	Ministry of Defence; Royal Navy
Local and Devolved Government Programmes (by programme maturity)	
Further Scottish Ferry Replacements	Scottish Government
Windermere Ferry Replacement	Westmorland & Furness Council



## Nature Conservation

*Asked by Lord Teverson*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to their policy paper 30by30 on land in England: confirmed criteria and next steps, published on 29 October, what role they intend Local Nature Recovery Strategies to have in achieving their '30 by 30' targets. [HL3628]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** Delivering the UK's 30by30 target on land in England will require a strategic approach, to address the scale of action needed, and ensure a diverse and well-connected network of 30by30 areas. Over the coming months, we will be developing a delivery strategy for 30by30, to ensure we make good on this important commitment. This will confirm the key levers that will help us to achieve this target and set out the pathway to 2030. We hope to finalise and publish this strategy next year.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs) are currently being prepared across England. Each LNRS will agree priorities and propose practical actions in the best locations for nature recovery and wider environmental benefits, such as water quality, flood risk management and climate mitigation. Where appropriate action is then taken, some of these areas could go on to contribute towards 30by30 where landowners/land managers are willing.

## Neonicotinoids: Inland Waterways

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to introduce a scheme to permit or require the surrender of neonicotinoid pesticides for destruction to prevent them from entering waterways. [HL3284]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** The Government does not have any such plan. For all pesticides, including neonicotinoids, there are legal requirements to store the product securely, use it according to its authorisation (which will include conditions considered appropriate to protect people and the environment) and dispose safely of any surplus.

Recent emergency authorisations for Cruiser SB as a seed treatment on sugar beet seed have carried very specific conditions. These include a requirement to dispose of unused stock by the end of the emergency authorisation period at the beginning of June. There should not, therefore, be any current stocks of the product.

Furthermore, we would not expect there to have been any significant surplus. Cruiser SB is applied in centralised facilities as a treatment to pre-ordered seed. The quantity required is therefore known in advance and there is no reason for additional stocks to have been acquired.

## Nigeria: Christianity

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Winchester*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to provide aid to Christian communities in Nigeria facing persecution and violence. [HL3636]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The UK is committed to supporting Nigeria to address ongoing security challenges, including intercommunal violence and violent extremism. It is important to remember that the perpetrators of this violence do not come from any one ethnic or religious group, and the devastating effects are felt by communities of different faiths and ethnicities. The UK is providing £38 million in programming to Strengthening Peace and Resilience in Nigeria supporting locally led solutions in Northern Nigeria to tackle the root causes of intercommunal violence.

## Nigeria: Religious Freedom

*Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the ongoing violence against Christians in Nigeria, including the actions of Fulani militant groups; and what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of the government of Nigeria's efforts to protect religious minorities from persecution. [HL3532]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** Terrorist groups like Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa have sought to undermine the right to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) by attacking those who do not subscribe to their extremist views, including both Christians and Muslims. These incidents are distinct from the ongoing intercommunal violence across Nigeria. The root causes of this intercommunal violence are complex, and whilst religious identity can play a role, so can loss of economic opportunity, competition over land and natural resources. The UK is providing £38 million in programming to Strengthening Peace and Resilience in Nigeria supporting locally led solutions in Northern Nigeria to tackle the root causes of this violence.

## Non-crime Hate Incidents

*Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hanson of Flint on 11 December (HL2985), why they do not currently hold data on the cost to individual police forces of collecting and collating data on non-crime hate incidents. [HL3399]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** Data relating to non-crime hate incidents (NCHIs) is held by individual police forces.

Previous Conservative governments have made the decision to not centrally collate this data in order to minimise the burden on police forces.

### Nurses: Training

Asked by *Lord Willis of Knaresborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many student nurses completed their training as a registered nurse in each year from 2018 to 2023. [HL3467]

**Baroness Merron:** The Higher Education Statistics Agency publishes data on the number of students qualifying from higher education courses in the United Kingdom, and this includes information on a broad range of undergraduate nursing courses. The published data is not detailed enough to allow for the reliable identification of all students completing courses which specifically lead to registered nursing status.

As a proxy for the number of students completing nursing courses each year, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) publishes information on the number of UK trained nurses joining their register for the first time, who are resident in England. The following table shows the number of UK trained nurses joining the NMC register in England for the first time, each financial year from 2018/19 to 2023/24:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of UK qualified registered nurses joining the NMC register for the first time</i>
2018/19	16,726
2019/20	17,503
2020/21	15,083
2021/22	15,132
2022/23	16,420
2023/24	18,478

Source: Nursing and Midwifery Council, March 2024 Annual Data Report

Asked by *Lord Willis of Knaresborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many nursing associates completed their training to become registered nurses in each year from 2018 to 2023. [HL3468]

**Baroness Merron:** The Department does not hold the information requested. Whilst the Higher Education Statistics Agency publishes data on the number of students completing higher education courses in the United Kingdom, it does not publish data in a detailed enough way to allow for the identification of nursing associates completing subsequent registered nursing training.

The Nursing and Midwifery Council publishes information on their register, including the number of nursing associates across the UK who have added nursing or midwifery registration status. The following table

shows the number of nursing associates adding nursing or midwifery register status, in each of the last five financial years:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Nursing associates adding nursing or midwifery registration</i>
2019/20	0
2020/21	52
2021/22	120
2022/23	585
2023/24	1,571

Source: Nursing and Midwifery Council, March 2024 Annual Data Report.

### Nursing Associates: Training

Asked by *Lord Willis of Knaresborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many student nursing associates completed their training in each year from 2018 to 2023. [HL3466]

**Baroness Merron:** The Department does not hold the information requested. The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) publishes the number of United Kingdom trained nursing associates joining their register for the first time in England, which will be a close proxy for the number completing training. The following table shows the number of UK trained nursing associates joining the NMC register in England for the first time, in each of the last six financial years:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of UK trained nursing associates joining the NMC register for the first time</i>
2018/19	485
2019/20	1,182
2020/21	2,708
2021/22	2,743
2022/23	3,166
2023/24	3,343

Source: Nursing and Midwifery Council, March 2024 Annual Data Report.

### Official Residences: Government Art Collection

Asked by *Baroness Finn*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Minister of State for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on 4 December (HC16604), whether they will place in the Library of the House a list of the reference numbers of Government Art Collection works that have been removed from 10 and 12 Downing Street since the

general election; and a list of the reference numbers of works that are scheduled to be removed. [HL3604]

**Baroness Twycross:** It is standard practice, as followed by the previous government, for new ministers to select works from the Government Art Collection for their ministerial offices. All such changes of displays of works from the Government Art Collection constitute 'business as usual' for the Collection. All artworks in the Government Art Collection are on the website where anyone can readily establish their present locations. The Collection does not publish the history of the locations of artworks.

### Outdoor Education: Finance

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the campaign to introduce a "nature premium", modelled on the existing sports premium, to support school children's access to nature. [HL3285]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The department recognises that access to green space has been shown to have a positive impact on the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of young people, but children from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to spend time regularly outside than those from more affluent backgrounds. That is why we are inviting all nurseries, schools and colleges to register with the National Education Nature Park and offering grants to support participation from eligible settings.

Participating in Nature Park activities will support and encourage all children, and young people will benefit from spending time in nature. It will also support teachers to build confidence to deliver effective outdoor learning.

### Overseas Trade: Argentina

*Asked by Lord Wigley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase the volume and value of trade between the UK and Argentina. [HL3577]

**Baroness Gustafsson:** Trade between the UK and Argentina was worth £2 billion in the 12 months to June 2024 with our top goods exports including beverages, pharmaceuticals and manufactured goods. In October, the Secretary of State met his Argentine counterpart, the first trade-related bilateral ministerial meeting between both governments since 2019. They agreed to work together to strengthen our trade relationship further including in areas such as services, customs, and education. This will build on our existing cooperation this year which saw the largest delegation from Argentina in 20 years to London's Metal Exchange Week in September.

### Overseas Trade: Japan

*Asked by Lord Booth*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to promote trade with Japan, as a fellow member of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. [HL3530]

**Baroness Gustafsson:** The Department for Business and Trade has an active programme of FTA Utilisation to promote the benefits of the UK's Free Trade Agreements with Japan, including CPTPP and the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). This includes running Export Academy webinars on our FTAs, training sessions for UK business delegations visiting Japan, podcasts on our FTAs with Japan, and an ambitious programme of business engagement on CPTPP which included over 50 DBT-led events across October and November. On the 15<sup>th</sup> December, the department published 11 new CPTPP guides with Japan-specific content on [great.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/great), designed to support UK exporters.

### Palace of Westminster: Repairs and Maintenance

*Asked by Lord Colgrain*

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker what has been the cost of the work on the Restoration and Renewal programme since 2012 in respect of (1) the salaries, recruitment fees, and redundancy payments for non-parliamentary staff, such as those working for the Sponsor Body and Delivery Authority, (2) the costs of contractors to undertake surveys and preparatory work, and (3) the work assessing and preparing decant locations. [HL3594]

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble:** The Parliamentary Works Sponsor Body and Restoration and Renewal (R&R) Delivery Authority were established in April and May 2020 respectively. The Sponsor Body was abolished on 1 January 2023 and its functions transferred to the R&R Client Team in Parliament. Prior to this, work related to the restoration and renewal of the Palace was funded and managed by the House Administrations. Both the R&R Client Team and Delivery Authority routinely publish information on costs, for instance in quarterly reports, annual reports, and memoranda provided to the Parliamentary Works Estimates Commission, as did the Sponsor Body prior to its abolition.

Staff costs for the Sponsor Body for its full two years of operation (2020-21 and 2021-22) are set out in its Annual Reports and Accounts (available at <https://www.restorationandrenewal.uk/sponsor-body-archive>), and amount to approximately £8.4 million. In 2022-23 the Sponsor Body was abolished and its costs merged into the R&R Client Team, which is a joint department of both Houses.

It is not possible to disaggregate recruitment fees for the Sponsor Body as this falls within other elements of expenditure. Approximately £540,000, excluding employer's pensions and national insurance contributions, was paid in settlement payments to senior staff of the Sponsor Body (three Executive Directors and the Accounting Officer) which they were entitled to under their contracts, rather than seeking to transfer to the new Client Team. These settlement payments were approved by the Sponsor Body Nominations and Remunerations Committee and audited by the National Audit Office.

Staff costs for the R&R Delivery Authority from 2020-21 to 2023-24 are set out in its Annual Report and Financial Statements (available at <https://www.restorationandrenewal.uk/about-us/corporate-publications>), and amount to approximately £59.1 million. Recruitment fees in the Delivery Authority over this period amount to approximately £710,000.

Under the R&R Programme, tens of thousands of hours of complex building surveys and investigations to develop ever more detailed records of the Palace of Westminster have been carried out. These records are being used to inform design and planning, and future decisions on the essential restoration work required. Since its establishment in 2020 up to the end of 2023-24, the R&R Delivery Authority has spent approximately £28 million on surveys to the Palace.

The estimated costs incurred by the R&R Delivery Authority in respect of developing and assessing the QEII Conference Centre as the preferred decant location of the House of Lords from 2020-21 to 2023-24 is £12m. These figures do not include Sponsor Body, R&R Client Team, or House of Lords staff costs and do cover some other work related to temporary accommodation, where it is not possible to disaggregate work carried out by contractors to cover multiple activities. The work to assess and prepare for House of Commons decant location options, including the expenditure for that work, is the responsibility of the governance bodies in the House of Commons.

### **Palestinians: Medical Treatments**

*Asked by Baroness Hussein-Ece*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the meeting between the Prime Minister and British Palestinian families on 22 October, what consideration they have given to implementing a pilot Child Evacuation Scheme to provide medical treatment for children from Gaza, as proposed by the families and the International Centre of Justice for Palestinians. [HL3261]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** Israel must engage with its partners urgently to establish sustained, safe and timely passage for patients who need medical or surgical interventions not available in Gaza. We recently announced £1m for the Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population, delivered through WHO Egypt, to support medically evacuated Palestinians from Gaza. The UK is

also supporting the provision of essential healthcare to civilians in Gaza, including support to UK-MED for operating their field hospitals. The Government is keeping existing policies on medical evacuations and visa pathways under review in response to events in Gaza.

### **Parish and Town Councils: Employers' Contributions**

*Asked by Baroness Eaton*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the increase in employer national insurance contributions on town and parish councils. [HL3294]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** The government has no direct role in funding parish and town councils - and therefore does not intend to provide compensation, consistent with the approach taken by the previous government.

### **Parking: Pedestrian Areas**

*Asked by Lord Robathan*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many prosecutions of vehicles illegally in cycle boxes (advanced stop lines) there have been in (1) the UK, and (2) the Metropolitan Police jurisdiction. [HL3361]

**Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede:** The Ministry of Justice publishes data on the number of prosecutions at criminal courts in England and Wales between 2010 and June 2024 in the Outcomes by Offences data tool, that can be downloaded from the Criminal Justice Statistics landing page here: [Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: June 2024](#).

However, prosecutions for vehicles illegally in cycle boxes (advanced stop lines) cannot be separately identified from the broader offence of 'failing to comply with traffic lights, signals or signs' in the Court Proceedings database.

### **Pension Credit: Publicity**

*Asked by Baroness Neville-Rolfe*

To ask His Majesty's Government what has been the total cost of the Department for Work and Pensions' pension credit advertising campaigns since 5 July. [HL3552]

**Baroness Sherlock:** Paid marketing activity to promote Pension Credit across Great Britain began on 16 September and has included TV and video on demand; radio; national and regional press; paid social media and website adverts; GP and Post Office screens; train panels; digital street displays; podcasts; and a partnership with ITV regional weather. The most recent phase of the activity is aimed at friends and family who can encourage and support older relatives and friends to apply.



Since 5 July, the total spent on the Pension Credit campaign is £3.3m.

This activity is alongside our continuing work with key stakeholders such as voluntary organisations, energy companies, pension providers, the Money and Pensions Service, other UK Government departments, the Devolved Governments, local councils, housing associations, community groups, local libraries, and influencers.

### Permanent Secretaries

Asked by *Baroness Finn*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many and which Permanent Secretaries have left office since the general election; and how many and which Permanent Secretaries have given notice that they intend to stand down in the next six months. [HL3538]

**Baroness Twycross:** Since the general election on 4 July 2024 three Permanent Secretaries have announced they will stand down: Sir Jim Harra (HMRC), Sir Philip Barton (FCDO) and Sir Crawford Falconer (DBT).

### Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations

Asked by *Lord Godson*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many and what proportion of Personal Independence Payment assessments were carried out (1) face-to-face, (2) remotely and (3) on paper in each month since March 2020. [HL3669]

**Baroness Sherlock:** The number and proportion of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments carried out (a) face-to-face (b) remotely (this includes telephone and video) and (c) paper-based can be found in the tables below.

March 2020 to December 2020

Month	Face-to-Face		Remote		Paper-Based		Unspecified	
	Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion
Mar-20	0	0%	13,610	46%	15,980	54%	0	0%
Apr-20	0	0%	38,090	73%	13,970	27%	0	0%
May-20	0	0%	42,830	82%	9,460	18%	0	0%
Jun-20	0	0%	47,000	86%	7,760	14%	0	0%
Jul-20	0	0%	52,440	87%	7,950	13%	0	0%
Aug-20	0	0%	48,370	87%	7,500	13%	0	0%
Sep-20	0	0%	53,690	83%	11,120	17%	0	0%
Oct-20	0	0%	59,110	81%	14,000	19%	0	0%
Nov-20	0	0%	53,740	82%	11,860	18%	0	0%
Dec-20	0	0%	46,120	82%	10,010	18%	0	0%

2021

Month	Face-to-Face		Remote		Paper-Based		Unspecified	
	Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion
Jan-21	0	0%	53,730	83%	10,970	17%	0	0%
Feb-21	0	0%	52,860	83%	10,480	17%	0	0%
Mar-21	0	0%	60,160	85%	10,800	15%	0	0%
Apr-21	0	0%	48,670	83%	9,760	17%	0	0%
May-21	0	0%	46,280	82%	9,840	18%	0	0%
Jun-21	10	0%	51,140	83%	10,490	17%	0	0%
Jul-21	50	0%	52,000	83%	10,810	17%	0	0%
Aug-21	2,430	4%	46,240	79%	9,930	17%	0	0%
Sep-21	5,340	8%	50,290	76%	10,590	16%	0	0%

<i>Month</i>	<i>Face-to-Face</i>		<i>Remote</i>		<i>Paper-Based</i>		<i>Unspecified</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Proportion</i>
Oct-21	5,190	8%	50,510	76%	10,520	16%	0	0%
Nov-21	5,640	8%	55,470	76%	11,500	16%	0	0%
Dec-21	3,730	6%	44,180	77%	9,440	16%	0	0%

## 2022

<i>Month</i>	<i>Face-to-Face</i>		<i>Remote</i>		<i>Paper-Based</i>		<i>Unspecified</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Proportion</i>
Jan-22	90	0%	61,300	83%	12,170	17%	0	0%
Feb-22	3,150	4%	58,070	78%	13,170	18%	0	0%
Mar-22	6,390	8%	63,230	75%	15,050	18%	0	0%
Apr-22	5,100	7%	53,580	75%	12,950	18%	0	0%
May-22	5,690	7%	63,750	77%	13,710	16%	0	0%
Jun-22	5,480	7%	58,730	75%	13,790	18%	0	0%
Jul-22	5,350	7%	59,420	75%	14,380	18%	0	0%
Aug-22	5,950	7%	60,870	73%	14,910	18%	1,990	2%
Sep-22	6,450	8%	60,050	71%	15,540	18%	2,480	3%
Oct-22	7,080	8%	63,190	71%	15,990	18%	2,190	2%
Nov-22	7,540	8%	68,890	71%	18,340	19%	2,260	2%
Dec-22	5,260	7%	50,500	71%	13,810	19%	2,030	3%

## 2023

<i>Month</i>	<i>Face-to-Face</i>		<i>Remote</i>		<i>Paper-Based</i>		<i>Unspecified</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Proportion</i>
Jan-23	6,150	6%	70,490	73%	17,750	18%	2,310	2%
Feb-23	6,880	8%	63,600	71%	17,420	19%	2,210	2%
Mar-23	7,210	7%	75,650	72%	20,200	19%	2,480	2%
Apr-23	6,610	8%	57,590	70%	16,260	20%	2,080	3%
May-23	7,290	8%	66,110	70%	18,600	20%	2,340	2%
Jun-23	7,400	7%	71,570	71%	19,800	20%	2,450	2%
Jul-23	7,480	8%	68,910	71%	18,270	19%	2,530	3%
Aug-23	7,950	8%	68,420	69%	20,440	21%	2,420	2%
Sep-23	7,440	8%	68,990	70%	19,690	20%	2,540	3%
Oct-23	7,700	7%	73,240	70%	21,110	20%	2,790	3%
Nov-23	7,400	7%	76,030	70%	22,250	20%	2,850	3%
Dec-23	5,430	7%	52,740	70%	14,810	20%	2,420	3%

January 2024 to November 2024

Month	Face-to-Face		Remote		Paper-Based		Unspecified	
	Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion
Jan-24	6,650	6%	74,750	72%	20,030	19%	2,680	3%
Feb-24	7,260	7%	75,730	73%	17,750	17%	3,110	3%
Mar-24	6,460	7%	69,570	73%	17,010	18%	2,370	2%
Apr-24	5,910	6%	73,580	74%	17,210	17%	2,210	2%
May-24	5,630	6%	74,400	74%	18,210	18%	2,010	2%
Jun-24	5,330	6%	71,410	74%	17,450	18%	1,940	2%
Jul-24	5,650	5%	78,000	74%	19,260	18%	2,150	2%
Aug-24	3,430	4%	72,040	77%	16,980	18%	1,180	1%
Sep-24	1,270	2%	59,780	81%	12,660	17%	180	0%
Oct-24	2,580	2%	82,890	79%	18,430	18%	400	0%
Nov-24	3,620	4%	70,810	77%	16,410	18%	1,350	1%

#### Please Note

- All volumes have been rounded to the nearest 10.
- Percentages and volumes may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
- Remote assessments include telephone and video assessments.
- There are a proportion of assessments where the channel is unspecified. We have included these assessments for completion.
- All the above data is derived from contractual management information produced by the assessment suppliers
- The above data is derived from unpublished management information which is collected for internal departmental use only and has not been quality assured to Official Statistics Publication standards.

### Physical Education: Training

*Asked by Lord Hampton*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of teacher training in preparing teachers to deliver physical education to girls in (1) primary, and (2) secondary, schools. [HL3307]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The department recognises there are number of issues that affect girls' experience of, and engagement with PE lessons, including body image and negative stereotypes. It is for Initial Teacher Training (ITT) providers to design a curriculum for primary teacher training and specialist secondary PE teaching, in line with the ITT core content framework and early career framework, that is relevant to subject or phase they will be teaching and provides the opportunity for all pupils to experience success.

Decisions relating to teachers' professional development rest with schools, headteachers and teachers themselves, as they are in the best position to judge the development and training that teachers in their schools need to support their pupils. The PE and sport premium can be used by primary schools to make additional and sustainable improvements to their offer including continuing professional development and training where needed as well as support for equal access for boys and girls.

### Physician and Anaesthesia Associate Professions Independent Review

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the independent review of physician associate and anaesthesia associate professions, led by Professor Gillian Leng CBE, will consider the impact of physician and anaesthetist associates on the availability of training places for junior doctors, the nature and structure of junior doctor training programmes, and the levels of remuneration for junior doctors. [HL3287]

**Baroness Merron:** As set out in the published Terms of Reference, the Leng review will be an end-to-end review of the Physician Associate and Anaesthesia Associate professions, covering selection and recruitment, training, day to day work, scope of practice, oversight, supervision, and professional regulation.

As part of the deal agreed between the Government and the British Medical Association (BMA) Resident Doctors Committee, the Government has committed to work in partnership with the BMA and other health organisations to review the current system of training and rotational placements for resident doctors. This work is being taken forward outside the Leng Review.

The levels of remuneration for resident doctors are not in scope of the review, as the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration advises the Government on rates of pay for doctors and dentists.

### Pigs and Wild Boar

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce a national monitoring system for wild boars and feral pigs to support environmental goals, manage social conflicts, and increase preparedness in the event of an outbreak of African swine fever. [HL3581]

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to update the Feral Wild Boar Action Plan published in 2008. [HL3582]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** While we have never had an outbreak of African swine fever (ASF) in the UK, the overall risk of an incursion of ASF is currently assessed to be medium (the event occurs regularly) and we continue to prepare for a possible outbreak. Defra's approach to ASF is set out in the [Disease control strategy for African and Classical Swine Fever in Great Britain](#) (copy attached) and considers the latest scientific evidence and veterinary advice, including the role of feral pigs and wild boar.

Preventing an outbreak of ASF in the UK is one of Defra's key biosecurity priorities. Current policy reflects our experience of responding to past outbreaks of exotic animal disease and is in line with international standards of best practice for disease control. To ensure this approach is reflected in our control and mitigation strategies, Defra are undertaking a review of both the England Wildlife Health Strategy, which provides a policy framework within which Defra is able to develop and make policy decisions in relation to wildlife disease management supported by the Contingency plan for exotic notifiable diseases of animals in England, and the feral wild boar action plan in relation to exotic disease control.

Defra works closely with Forestry England to actively monitor and control the population of feral wild boar in the Forest of Dean and prevent the establishment of populations in other areas managed by Forestry England. Annual assessments of the size and structure of the Forest of Dean wild boar population and progress to control the population are available on the Forestry England website. Outside of these areas primary responsibility for wild boar management lies with local communities and individual landowners. Defra work closely with stakeholder organisations to ensure communities, local authorities and landowners have access to guidance and information where needed to control populations and mitigate the impact of feral wild boar in their areas. Advice and further information on licensing and legislation relating

wildlife management is available on [GOV.UK](#) (copy attached).

Defra encourages all pig keepers and members of the public to be vigilant and help protect our pig sector and wildlife from the threat of ASF. Found dead feral wild boar in England should be reported to the [Animal and Plant Health Agency](#) (see attachment), and sightings of live wild boar can be made through the Mammal Societies Mammal Tracker app or directly through the National Biodiversity Network.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Spotting/ reporting ASF [African swine fever\_ how to spot and report the disease - GOV.UK.pdf]

disease control strategy [disease-control-strategy-csf-2020a.pdf]

wildlife licencing [Wildlife licences\_ when you need to apply - GOV.UK.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-12-18/HL3581>

### Planning Permission: Appeals

Asked by *Lord Banner*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure the Planning Inspectorate is sufficiently resourced to handle planning appeals swiftly and without any dilution in scrutiny before the new National Planning Policy Framework causes any increase in its caseload; and what consideration they have given to introducing planning appeal fees to help with that resourcing. [HL3472]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** The government is committed to handling planning appeals more quickly, including ensuring there is sufficient resourcing in the Planning Inspectorate to support such activity. We currently have no plans to introduce appeal fees but we will continue to keep the issue under review.

### Police: Transgender People

Asked by *Lord Jackson of Peterborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have had with the National Police Chiefs' Council regarding their review of guidance of trans identified police offers conducting strip searches; and when it will be published. [HL3476]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** Ministers and officials meet with representatives of the NPCC on a regular basis and discuss a wide range of topics.

The National Police Chiefs' Council is currently reviewing its national guidance on searching by transgender officers, and we anticipate this will be issued to forces in 2025.



## Pornography Review

Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick**

To ask His Majesty's Government when they will publish their Independent Pornography Review. [HL3319]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The work of the Independent Pornography Review is ongoing and is an important area of interest to this government.

The Review is expected to finalise by early 2025, with publication of the report following shortly after this.

## Ports: Great Yarmouth

Asked by **Lord Berkeley**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill on 31 October (HL Deb col 1217), whether they will place in the Library of the House a copy of any information or advice received from the Health and Safety Executive. [HL3474]

**Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill:** HSE's advice on the risks associated with the MV Ruby contained information relevant to national security. It is currently preparing a redacted version of the advice. As soon as it is available I will ensure a copy is placed in the Library of the House.

## Postal Services: Candidates

Asked by **Lord Rennard**

To ask His Majesty's Government what was the cost of providing Royal Mail deliveries for candidates in the general elections in (1) 2024, and (2) 2019. [HL3318]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** The total cost incurred for the delivery of candidate mailings at the 2019 General Election was £41,161,302. Detailed information on the costs of the 2019 general election is available on Gov.UK (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/costs-of-the-2019-uk-parliamentary-general-election/costs-of-the-2019-uk-parliamentary-general-election>).

The total cost incurred for the delivery of candidate mailing at the 2024 General Election was £60,422,724.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Cost of general election [HL3318 Costs of the 2019 UK Parliamentary General Election - GOV.UK.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-12-09/HL3318>

## Prime Minister: Corporate Hospitality

Asked by **Baroness Finn**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Baroness Twycross on 1 November (HL1767) and by the Parliamentary

Secretary to the Cabinet Office on 7 November (HC9001), on what dates before the Taylor Swift concert did representatives of the Prime Minister speak to representatives of Taylor Swift in relation to the provision of a police escort for Taylor Swift. [HL3605]

**Baroness Twycross:** I refer the Noble Lady to the Minister for the Cabinet Office's response of 7 November, Official Report, PQ 9001.

## Prison Sentences: Women

Asked by **Lord Wigley**

To ask His Majesty's Government what advice they are giving to prosecuting authorities, and via court sentencing guidelines, to minimise the number of women sentenced to imprisonment for any reason other than the protection of the public. [HL3423]

**Lord Timpson:** Charging decisions, and guidance are made by the Crown Prosecution Service, and sentencing is determined by independent courts. The Sentencing Council for England and Wales issues guidelines for sentencing that apply to all offenders and operates independently from Government.

It is right that we have a gender-neutral sentencing framework that recognises the specific circumstances of individual offenders.

Whilst there will always be women who do need to be in custody, we must ensure they are given the best chance possible to tackle the drivers of their offending and to contribute meaningfully to society.

This Government has delivered on a manifesto commitment by launching an Independent Review of Sentencing, chaired by former Lord Chancellor, David Gauke. The Review will assess whether the sentencing framework appropriately considers the specific needs or vulnerabilities of women. Additionally, we will establish a Women's Justice Board with a clear ambition to reduce the number of women in prison and address their distinct needs within the Criminal Justice System.

## Prisons: Telephone Services

Asked by **Lord Bradley**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to restore the Campaign Against Living Miserably telephone helpline piloted at HMP Birmingham and to roll out this service to every prison in England. [HL3491]

**Lord Timpson:** Work on the introduction of the helpline at HMP Birmingham was interrupted owing to the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and an interim measure was put in place. This enables prisoners to make calls to the general helpline provided by CALM, using the prison PIN service. Possible extension of the service to other prisons remains under consideration.

## Private Rented Housing: Databases

*Asked by Lord Truscott*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether landlords will have to pay a fee (1) to use the proposed Private Rented Sector Database, and (2) for the purposes of enforcement of the Decent Homes Standard, under the Renters (Reform) Bill. [HL3276]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** The Renters' Rights Bill includes provisions for the Private Rented Sector Database to be funded through fees charged to private landlords when they register. Further details on fees will be set out in secondary legislation. We will take steps to make sure costs remain reasonable, proportionate and sustainable.

The new service will bring substantial benefits to landlords – providing a single source of information about their legal responsibilities, helping them showcase their compliance. It will also support local councils to enforce against unscrupulous landlords who undercut the responsible majority.

The Bill also provides local councils with the ability to prosecute or issue civil penalties for offences linked to Decent Homes Standard failures. Income generated from civil penalties can be used to fund further housing enforcement.

In accordance with the New Burdens Doctrine, we will ensure that, where necessary, the net additional costs that may fall on local councils as a result of our proposed reforms are fully funded.

## Private Rented Housing: Greater London

*Asked by Lord Bailey of Paddington*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of landlords leaving the private rental market on the rate of homelessness across London. [HL3335]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** The most recent English Housing Survey results, published on 28 November 2024, show that proportion of private rented sector (PRS) households in London which are part of the private rental market has increased from 27.4% in 2018-19 to 31.8% in 2023-24. Over the past 5 years data on dwelling stock shows that there has been an increase in the number of PRS properties in London. [Live tables on dwelling stock \(including vacants\) - GOV.UK](#)

Our Renters' Rights Bill will deliver our manifesto commitment to transform the experience of private renting, including by ending Section 21 'no fault' evictions. The most recent homelessness statistics release reported between April and June 2024, 1,100 Londoners were put at risk of homelessness because they received a Section 21 eviction notice. By implementing the long overdue abolition of Section 21 evictions, this government will give renters much greater security and stability so they can stay in their homes for longer, build

lives in their communities, and avoid the risk of homelessness.

However, homelessness levels in London and across the country remain far too high. This is why the government has committed to developing a new cross government strategy, working with mayors and councils across the country to get us back on track to ending homelessness once and for all. This includes a dedicated Inter-Ministerial Group, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, bringing together ministers from across government.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Live table on dwelling stock [HL3335 Live tables on dwelling stock (including vacants).pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-12-10/HL3335>

## Private Rented Housing: Licensing

*Asked by Lord Bailey of Paddington*

To ask His Majesty's Government what support is available to landlords who are subject to additional costs imposed by councils under the selective licensing schemes. [HL3333]

*Asked by Lord Bailey of Paddington*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of introducing selective licensing on the cost of renting. [HL3334]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** Local authorities are responsible for assessing the impact of a selective licensing scheme on their area. This may include the impact of licence fees on local rents.

Local authorities have discretion to charge fees which cover the cost of running selective licensing schemes. They may also offer discounts on fees to reduce costs for landlords. The government expects local authorities to make details of these fees, along with the rationale behind their determination, transparent and readily accessible.

## Prosecutions: Imports

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many successful prosecutions there have been in respect of the importation of (1) bushmeat and (2) other illegal, non-compliant or contaminated meat products since 2019. [HL3279]

**Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede:** The Ministry of Justice publishes data on the number of prosecutions at criminal courts in England and Wales between 2018 and June 2024 in the Outcomes by Offences data tool, that can be downloaded from the Criminal Justice Statistics landing page here: [Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: June 2024](#).

However, offences relating to the importation of bushmeat or other illegal, non-compliant or contaminated meat products cannot be specifically identified from the Court Proceedings database. This information may be held on court records but to examine individual court records would incur disproportionate costs.

### Public Expenditure: Wales

*Asked by Lord Wigley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have received since 4 July requesting a review of the funding formula which finances the Senedd's current and capital expenditure. [HL3465]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** The Secretary of State for Wales regularly meets with the First Minister to discuss a variety of issues. We have recognised that Wales's Fiscal Framework is out of date and will be working with Welsh Government to update it. We remain committed to working in partnership to ensure the smooth delivery of the funding settlement.

Autumn Budget delivered the largest settlement for Wales in real terms since devolution at £21 billion. This includes an additional £1.7 billion through the Barnett Formula.

Since 4 July, we have received one piece of correspondence asking for a review of the Barnett Formula.

### Pupils: Carers

*Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to help local authorities and schools regularly to monitor and support the attendance of young carers. [HL3703]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** This government is committed to breaking down the barriers to opportunity for all young people. This includes young carers, who provide a critical role caring for their loved ones but are all too often hidden from view.

The department's expectations of local authorities and schools are set out in the 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance, which was made statutory on 19 August 2024. The 'support first' ethos of the attendance guidance is that pupils and families, including young carers, should, where appropriate, receive holistic, whole-family support to help them overcome any barriers to attendance they are facing. This includes holding regular meetings with the families of pupils whom the school, and/or local authority, consider to be vulnerable.

Young carers are also now part of the school census, which will improve their visibility in the school system, allowing schools to better identify and support them.

Furthermore, Ofsted has committed to developing and consulting upon a revised schools' inspection framework

for the next academic year. This will support the new school report card. A consultation on the framework and report card is scheduled to launch early in the new year, and the department and Ofsted are engaging closely to take this forward. The consultation will set out proposals for how Ofsted will evaluate how schools are approaching the twin issues of attendance and inclusion in order to support the government's mission to ensure that all children, including young carers, can achieve and thrive at school.

The children's social care national framework, issued in December 2023, is statutory guidance for local authorities. It provides clarity on the outcomes that leaders and practitioners should achieve when supporting children, young people, and families, including in the identification and assessment of support for young carers.

### Qatar: Foreign Relations

*Asked by Lord Turnberg*

To ask His Majesty's Government what conversations took place with the Emir of Qatar, during his recent visit to the UK, with a view to seeking his assistance in securing the release of British hostage Emily Damari, held by Hamas. [HL3179]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** Qatar plays a vital role in negotiations towards a ceasefire deal to secure the release of all those being held hostage by Hamas, and bring the conflict in Gaza to an end. We thank Qatar, Egypt, the US, and all international partners, for their coordinating efforts. Securing an immediate ceasefire and the safe release of all hostages, including Emily Damari and three other hostages with strong UK links, remains the UK's top priority. During the State Visit of His Highness the Emir of Qatar to London, the Foreign Secretary thanked Qatar for its leadership in ceasefire negotiations and made clear what an absolute priority Emily and the hostages are for us. He raised the importance of ongoing efforts to secure a ceasefire in Gaza to enable their safe release, protect civilians and deliver a surge of aid.

### Railway Stations

*Asked by Baroness Randerson*

To ask His Majesty's Government what measures they plan to take in response to the recent report by the Office of Rail and Road which showed that a quarter of stations in England had Help Points that were not working. [HL3508]

**Lord Henty of Richmond Hill:** All Train Operators are required to regularly report on customer experience as part of their contracts, including the availability and condition of assets such as Help Points, and it is disappointing if station help points are not working.

We want to make sure passengers get the information they need when they need it, and we welcome the report and support the Office of Rail and Road's challenge for the industry to improve.

We will continue to monitor and discuss performance with train operators, including through the targets we set for customer experience.

### Railways: Public Holidays

Asked by **Baroness Pidgeon**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have for future years to ensure train operators provide services on Boxing Day. [HL3697]

**Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill:** The Department requires its operators to plan services and rail timetables that are designed to meet expected passenger demand. These should be resilient and provide value for money for the taxpayer.

Typically, demand for services on Boxing Day is low and much of the network is closed to provide opportunity for essential maintenance. We expect operators and in future, Great British Railways, to continue to consider the case for Boxing Day services where there is demand and they do not further increase the burden on taxpayers.

### Renewable Energy: Northern Ireland

Asked by **Lord Elliott of Ballinamallard**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to assist in the introduction of a renewable energy support scheme in Northern Ireland. [HL3533]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** Energy policy is devolved to Northern Ireland. The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero is engaging closely with the Northern Ireland Department for the Economy (DfE) in the development of a renewable electricity support scheme. Officials and I engage regularly with ministerial counterparts from the DfE. The DfE published information last year on the scheme's high-level design considerations<sup>[1]</sup>.

<sup>[1]</sup><https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/design-considerations-renewable-electricity-support-scheme-northern-ireland-response>

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Aurora report - Accelerating renewables in NI: hig [Aurora-accelerating-renewables-support-scheme-HLD.pdf]

Design considerations for a renewable electricity [Renewable-Electricity-Support-Scheme-response.pdf]

Equality screening - response to design considerat [Equality-Screening-Renewable-Electricity-Support-Scheme.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-12-17/HL3533>

### Respiratory Syncytial Virus: Vaccination

Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Merron on 6 August (HL443), what assessment they have made of the uptake of the maternal respiratory syncytial virus vaccination programme in relation to other year-round maternal vaccination programmes so far. [HL3555]

**Baroness Merron:** Coverage of the respiratory syncytial virus maternal vaccine programme will be measured in women who were at least 28 weeks gestation at the time of the start of the programme, and after they give birth. The first coverage data for this cohort will be published in January, when uptake can be compared to uptake in other maternal programmes like pertussis.

Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will publish the latest data on uptake for the maternal respiratory syncytial virus vaccination programme, broken down by (1) region, and (2) integrated care system. [HL3556]

**Baroness Merron:** Coverage of the respiratory syncytial virus maternal vaccine programme will be measured in women who were at least 28 weeks gestation at the time of the start of the programme, and after they give birth. The first coverage data for this cohort will be published in January and will be broken down by region and integrated care system.

Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick**

To ask His Majesty's Government how they are monitoring the impact of the maternal respiratory syncytial virus vaccination programme on paediatric hospitalisations; and what steps they are taking to assess and improve the programme. [HL3557]

**Baroness Merron:** Through the Severe Acute Respiratory Infection Watch programme, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) undertakes surveillance of hospitalisations due to confirmed respiratory syncytial virus (RSV).

The UKHSA also undertakes monitoring and evaluation of immunisation programmes, including the effectiveness of vaccines in preventing hospital admissions. Such an analysis is being developed for the maternal vaccination programme for infant RSV prevention.

The UKHSA also provided analysis on RSV prevention considerations for very and extremely premature babies as part of the October 2024 meeting of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.



## Road Traffic Offences: Cycling and Electric Vehicles

Asked by **Baroness McIntosh of Pickering**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to put road traffic offences for bikes, e-bikes and e-scooters on an equivalent basis to other vehicles. [HL3686]

**Lord Henty of Richmond Hill:** This Government takes road safety seriously, and we are committed to reducing the numbers of those killed and injured on our roads. We are currently considering policy options in this area.

## Roads: Investment

Asked by **Baroness Finlay of Llandaff**

To ask His Majesty's Government when they intend to launch their new Road Investment Strategy; and whether lowering the drink-drive limit will be included as part of the strategy. [HL3493]

**Lord Henty of Richmond Hill:** DfT is committed to long term strategies for road investment. As announced in the October Budget, a decision was taken to postpone the start of the third Road Investment Strategy (RIS3), to allow Ministers time to make an assessment of priorities for roads. DfT will provide funding through an Interim Settlement to National Highways covering 2025-26, to allow for important maintenance and enhancement activities to continue. The planned start of RIS3 is April 2026 and the drink-drive limit will not form part of the RIS.

This Government takes road safety seriously, and we are committed to reducing the numbers of those killed and injured on our roads. Since the general election, the Department has begun work on a new Road Safety Strategy, the first in over a decade. The Department will share more details in due course.

## Roads: Safety

Asked by **Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to make it simpler and quicker for communities to request changes to speed limits and implement road danger reduction measures. [HL3608]

**Lord Henty of Richmond Hill:** Decisions on making local speed limits and implementing road danger reduction measures on roads in England rest with the transport authorities who have responsibility for roads in local areas. The Department for Transport issues best practice guidance on setting local speed limits designed to make sure that speed limits are appropriately and consistently set while allowing for flexibility to deal with local circumstances.

## Russia: Ukraine

Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to continue to support the establishment of a special tribunal on the crimes of aggression following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which could consider the criminal accountability of senior leaders of Russia and Belarus. [HL3378]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** Those responsible for the hideous atrocities we have seen in Ukraine must be held to account for their actions. As we made clear in our manifesto, the Government supports work towards establishing a Special Tribunal on the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. The UK is working with partners in the Core Group, established and led by Ukraine, to explore all options and models of tribunal.

Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that any special tribunal on the crime of aggression following Russia's invasion of Ukraine is international in character, and has sufficient legitimacy and support. [HL3379]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** The UK is working with partners in the Core Group, established and led by Ukraine, to explore all options and models of tribunal. The UK is also considering how to encourage the broad international support that will be crucial to any tribunal's legitimacy.

Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether, in considering the establishment of a special tribunal on the crime of aggression following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it is their policy that the issue of personal immunities should be decided by judges in line with international law. [HL3380]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** Those responsible for the hideous atrocities we have seen in Ukraine must be held to account for their actions. The UK is working with partners in the Core Group, established and led by Ukraine, to consider the complex issues involved in establishing a Special Tribunal. The issue of personal immunities remains under discussion in the Core Group and will form part of any agreement on the wider package of issues relating to the establishment of a Special Tribunal.

## Schools: Academic Year

Asked by **Lord Watson of Invergowrie**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many sessions each local authority-maintained school and each Academy school provided education in the 2022-23 school year; and what was the proportion of Academies that provided fewer than 380 sessions in that year. [HL3569]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The information requested is not held centrally.

Under the Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999, local authority-maintained schools are required to meet for at least 380 sessions or 190 days in each school year.

Academies are not bound by these regulations. The length of the school year is the responsibility of the academy trust.

### Schools: Food

*Asked by Baroness Boycott*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to revise the school food standards guide so as to maximise the nutritional value of food served through the school breakfast programme. [HL3587]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** This government is committed to delivering on our pledge to provide free breakfast clubs in every state-funded school with primary aged children. We have made early progress towards this, announcing that up to 750 early adopter schools will be delivering these new breakfast clubs from April 2025.

Schools will be expected to provide a healthy, nutritious and varied breakfast offer to pupils which will set them up for the school day ahead. The school food standards regulate the food and drink provided throughout the school day, including at breakfast clubs. The school food standards restrict foods high in fat, salt and sugar, as well as low quality reformed or reconstituted foods. They ensure that pupils always have healthy options.

The school food standards practical guide provides useful advice for headteachers and governors to ensure that food offered at breakfast clubs is compliant with the school food standards, and is accessible here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-food-standards-resources-for-schools/school-food-standards-practical-guide>.

As with all policies, we will keep our approach to school food under continued review.

### School Libraries

*Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many school libraries and school librarians there are in England; and how those figures compare with the figures for 2010. [HL3570]

*Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie*

To ask His Majesty's Government what investment has been made in secondary school libraries in England over the past fifteen years. [HL3571]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** School libraries complement public libraries by giving pupils access to a range of books and other kinds of texts, both in and out of school.

It is for individual schools to decide how best to provide and maintain a library service for their pupils, including whether to employ a qualified librarian, and the department gives headteachers autonomy to decide how best to spend the core schools funding that is allocated to them by the department. Given this autonomy, the department does not collect information on the number of school libraries or school librarians.

The government's reading framework offers non-statutory guidance for teachers and school leaders, including helpful guidance for schools on how to organise their school library, book corner or book stock to make reading accessible and attractive to readers.

### Schools: Transport

*Asked by Baroness Randerson*

To ask His Majesty's Government what advice, support and guidelines are given to local authorities regarding home to school transport, and whether they are given guidance on the restrictions they can impose in cutting transport costs. [HL3510]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The department's home-to-school travel policy aims to make sure no child is prevented from accessing education by a lack of transport. My hon. Friend, the Minister for School Standards is keen to understand how well home-to-school transport supports all children to access educational opportunity and she is working with departmental officials on this. The department is aware of the challenges currently faced by local authorities in arranging home-to-school travel for all eligible children, and knows that the cost of doing so has increased in recent years. We are grateful for their considerable efforts in ensuring eligible children can continue to get to school.

Local authorities are required to arrange free home-to-school travel for all eligible children, but it is for them to decide what travel arrangements to make, for example, providing a bus pass, a school bus or a taxi.

The department publishes statutory guidance to assist local authorities in meeting their home-to-school travel duties, which is attached and is also accessible at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance>. Departmental officials also host bi-monthly online meetings, to which all local authority school travel officers are invited to share good practice and seek advice from one another and the department.

Most of the increase in the cost of home-to-school travel can be attributed to transport for children with special educational needs. This is largely due to an increase in the number of children with education, health and care plans, and the number of those children who travel long distances to a school that can meet their needs. The department is committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools so fewer children need to travel long distances to schools that meet their needs. This

will reduce home-to-school travel costs for local authorities over time.

Most central government funding for home-to-school travel is provided through the local government finance settlement, which is administered by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The government recognises the challenges local authorities are facing. At the Autumn Budget 2024, we announced £1.3 billion of new grant funding in the 2025/26 financial year for local government to deliver core services. Together with local income from council tax and business rates, this will provide a real terms increase in core spending power of around 3.2%.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL3510 attachment [Travel to school for children of compulsory school age - statutory guidance.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-12-16/HL3510>

*Asked by **Baroness Randerson***

To ask His Majesty's Government, with reference to the statutory guidance Travel to school for children of compulsory school age published in January, whether parents are entitled to an explanation of why their child has been allocated a school placement in another education authority, whether such a decision can be made on the basis of transport costs alone, whether route risk assessments are required, and what account is taken of safety and accessibility of transport routes when allocating children to schools. [HL3511]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** School places are not allocated on the basis of transport costs, route risk assessments or the safety and accessibility of transport routes. The statutory school admissions code sets out how school places should be allocated and exists to ensure that school places are allocated in a fair and transparent way.

Parents express a preference as to the school they would like their child to attend. Schools must publish the criteria they will use to allocate places if they are over-subscribed, so that parents have as much idea as possible of their chance of securing a place at each school they are considering applying for. A school that has places available must admit all children who apply. If a school receives more applications than it has places available, it must allocate the available places in accordance with its admissions criteria. If a parent cannot be offered a place for their child at any of the schools for which they have applied, the local authority should offer a place at an alternative school. Parents refused a place at a school for which they have applied can appeal to an independent appeal panel.

Home-to-school travel is an integral part of the school system and seeks to ensure that no child of compulsory school age is prevented from accessing education by a lack of transport, but it plays no part in the allocation of school places. Local authorities are required to arrange

free home-to-school travel for children of compulsory school age who attend their nearest school if they live more than the statutory walking distance from it (2 miles for children under 8 and 3 miles for children aged 8 and over), or live within the walking distance but would not be able to walk there because of their special educational needs, disability or mobility problem, or because the nature of the route means it would be unsafe for them to do so.

Where a child's nearest school is full and unable to offer them a place, the nearest school with a place available becomes their nearest school for home-to-school travel purposes. The school to which a child is eligible for free travel may be in a different local authority area to the one in which they live.

**Sean Brown**

*Asked by **Lord Empey***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the decision of the High Court in Northern Ireland that a public inquiry must be established into the murder of Sean Brown in 1997. [HL3599]

*Asked by **Lord Empey***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to appeal the judgment of the High Court in Northern Ireland that the Government must establish a public inquiry into the murder of Sean Brown in 1997. [HL3600]

*Asked by **Lord Empey***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the cost implications of the judgment of the High Court in Northern Ireland that the Government must establish a public inquiry into the 1997 murder of Sean Brown. [HL3601]

*Asked by **Lord Empey***

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the implications of the judgment of the High Court in Northern Ireland that the Government must hold a public inquiry into the death of Sean Brown in 1997 for other such inquiries, particularly in light of the Government's decision not to establish an inquiry into the Patrick Finucane case. [HL3602]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** The murder of Sean Brown was an appalling act, and the Government has enormous sympathy for the Brown family and the wider community, for what they have had to endure. The Government has confidence in the ICRIR's ability to investigate the killing of Sean Brown which is why the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has encouraged Mrs Brown and her family to meet with Sir Declan Morgan and the ICRIR to hear how the Independent Commission would approach such an investigation.

The recent judgment by the High Court, however, raises a number of important issues, including matters of

constitutional significance that go beyond this individual case. The Government has, therefore, lodged a notice of appeal to the Court of Appeal and is seeking expedition.

The matter will now be considered by the Court of Appeal and as such it would not be appropriate to further comment on the appeal, or matters related to it.

This will in no way delay our commitment to repeal and replace the Legacy Act, including reforming the ICRIR, to strengthen its capacity to find answers for victims and families.

## Separation

*Asked by Lord Farmer*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether prevention will be included in early advice for separating couples, before court and other legal proceedings, including in family hubs; and whether relevant professionals will be appropriately curious about whether couples have considered mending their relationship and help them access support to stay together if that is what both parties want. [HL3440]

**Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede:** The Government recognises the importance of supporting separating families, and where appropriate, helping them resolve their issues quickly and without the need to come to court.

We know that early access to information for separating families is essential and we are working to improve the information, both online through GOV.UK, and offline via sources such as family hubs, to help inform separating families of their options before applying to court.

We also continue to work with the Department for Education to ensure that Family Hubs connect families going through parental separation to services and support locally, to ensure outcomes for their children are front and centre when agreeing child arrangements.

## Separation: Family Hubs

*Asked by Lord Farmer*

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they are making in placing early advice for separating couples, before court and other legal proceedings, in family hubs. [HL3439]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** Family hubs, where appropriate, should connect families going through parental separation to services and support locally to ensure outcomes for their children are front and centre when agreeing child arrangements. This is to help avoid the cost and potential trauma associated with going through the court process.

In areas with a developed family hub model, local authorities may provide hub-based mediation or other services in support of separating parents, such as shared parenting programmes. This is not a requirement of the programme but is strongly encouraged for areas seeking to enhance their offer.

## Sick Pay

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the rate of statutory sick pay on (1) employee retention, (2) economic activity, and (3) growth. [HL3516]

**Baroness Sherlock:** The Department has not made an assessment of the impact of the rate of Statutory Sick Pay on employee retention, economic activity and growth.

The Department has undertaken a Regulatory Impact Assessment and an Equality Impact Assessment of the Statutory Sick Pay changes to remove the Lower Earnings Limit and remove the 3-day waiting period. Our RIA demonstrates that businesses may stand to benefit from the changes through increased employee productivity, lower staff turnover and reduced recruitment costs. Both impact assessments can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6715f848386bf0964853d848/Impact\\_assessment\\_improve\\_access\\_statutory\\_sick\\_pay\\_removing\\_lower\\_earnings\\_limit\\_removing\\_waiting\\_period.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6715f848386bf0964853d848/Impact_assessment_improve_access_statutory_sick_pay_removing_lower_earnings_limit_removing_waiting_period.pdf)

[https://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2024-0716/Statutory\\_Sick\\_Pay\\_EA.pdf](https://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2024-0716/Statutory_Sick_Pay_EA.pdf)

## Sleeping Rough

*Asked by Lord Wigley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken since 4 July to reduce the number of people sleeping rough in cities in England. [HL3421]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** The government recognises that homelessness levels are far too high and this can have a devastating impact on those affected. We will consider all these issues as we develop our long-term cross-government strategy, working with mayors and councils across the country, to get us back on track to ending homelessness.

We are already taking the first steps to get back on track to ending homelessness. As announced at the Budget, funding for homelessness services is increasing next year by £233 million compared to this year (2024/25). This increased spending will help to prevent rises in the number of families in temporary accommodation and help to prevent rough sleeping. This brings total spend to nearly £1 billion in 2025/26.

This is on top of a £10 million fund announced in November to protect people sleeping rough from cold weather this winter.

## Smart Devices: Data Protection

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure consumers' data is protected from smart devices collecting more information than their function requires. [HL3625]



**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** All organisations in the UK that process personal data already have to comply with the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA).

In addition, Regulation 6 of the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003 (PECR) sets specific rules in relation to the placement of cookies (and similar technologies) on people's devices.

The data protection legislation requires any company processing personal data to design their products and services with privacy in mind from the start. Providers of smart devices have to consider how their product implements the data protection principles effectively and bakes in necessary safeguards to protect people's rights. For example, they must be transparent with consumers about the data they collect and how they use it, only processing data where there are legitimate grounds to do so, only using what is necessary for their purposes, and ensuring that the data is not used or shared in ways that people would not expect.

People also have rights under the data protection legislation to access their personal data, object to its processing and rights to rectification and erasure.

The legislation is monitored and enforced independently of government by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The ICO has published a range of guidance for organisations to help them comply with their obligations, including guidance on [how to design their products and services in a privacy-friendly way](https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/uk-gdpr-guidance-and-resources/designing-products-that-protect-privacy/privacy-in-the-product-design-lifecycle/), available at: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/uk-gdpr-guidance-and-resources/designing-products-that-protect-privacy/privacy-in-the-product-design-lifecycle/>.

The ICO has also published advice for the public on protecting themselves from security risks when using smart products here: <https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/online/smart-products/>.

Anyone concerned about the handling of their personal data by any organisation can contact the ICO further advice or to make a complaint. The ICO can be contacted by telephone on 0303 123 1113. Further contact details are on the ICO website: <https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/>. The ICO has a number of tools to take action against those who breach the data protection legislation, including criminal prosecution, non-criminal enforcement and the power to impose civil monetary penalties.

## Social Security Benefits: Children

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Lincoln*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the two-child limit on child poverty levels since it was introduced in 2017; and what steps the Child Poverty Taskforce is taking to address this impact. [HL3313]

**Baroness Sherlock:** We published the framework 'Tackling Child Poverty: Developing Our Strategy' on 23 October and will explore all available levers to deliver an

enduring reduction in child poverty in this parliament, as part of a 10-year strategy for lasting change.

The Child Poverty Strategy will look at levers across four key themes of increasing incomes, which includes considering social security reforms, reducing essential costs, increasing financial resilience, and better local support especially in the early years. This will build on the reform plans underway across government and work underway in Devolved Governments.

The Child Poverty Taskforce continues its urgent work to publish the Strategy in Spring 2025.

## Social Security Benefits: Overpayments

*Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask His Majesty's Government what were the levels of overpayments in benefit expenditure by the Department for Work and Pensions in (1) 2022–23, and (2) 2023–24; and what is that as a percentage of overall benefit expenditure. [HL3597]

*Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask His Majesty's Government what was the level of fraud and error in relation to benefits payments by the Department for Work and Pensions in each of the past two years. [HL3598]

**Baroness Sherlock:** Levels of fraud and error in relation to benefit payments, as well as levels of overpayments, are outlined here [Fraud and error in the benefit system, Financial Year Ending \(FYE\) 2024 - GOV.UK](#) for 2023/24, and here for the previous year 2022/23: [Fraud and error in the benefit system Financial Year Ending \(FYE\) 2023 - GOV.UK](#)

Please see the requested information in the attached document.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Attachment [Attachment.docx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-12-18/HL3597>

## Social Services: Employers' Contributions

*Asked by Lord Kamall*

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to providing local authorities with specific additional funding to pass onto commissioned care providers to compensate them for the increased National Insurance contributions they face. [HL3477]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** Raising the revenue required to fund public services and restore economic stability requires difficult decisions on tax, which is why the government is asking employers to contribute more. The government is providing over £515 million of new funding to support councils with the costs associated with the increase in employer National Insurance Contributions (NICs).

Local authorities will also have multiple funding sources available which can be used to address the range of pressures facing the adult social care sector and we will make available up to £3.7 billion of additional funding for social care authorities in 2025-26.

### South Wales Main Line: Standards

*Asked by Lord Wigley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to maintain the frequency, reliability and journey times of passenger trains between Cardiff and London during the construction of HS2. [HL3575]

**Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill:** Old Oak Common is a crucial enabler for the Government's growth mission. During construction there will be periods of full line closures and some periods – generally weekends – when the closure of some lines means fewer services will operate. During full closures, some services from Cardiff to London are expected to divert into London Euston, maintaining direct access into Central London. Government is working with industry to ensure disruption for passengers is kept to a minimum.

### Special Educational Needs

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Norwich*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the safety valve agreement, and of its impact in the local authorities where such agreements have been made. [HL3553]

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Norwich*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on the most vulnerable pupils with special educational needs in local authorities where a safety valve agreement has been made; and how they propose to minimise this impact. [HL3554]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** Safety Valve agreements were only entered into if the local authority and the department's expert advisers agreed that the proposals would improve services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) whilst enabling local authorities to meet their statutory obligations. Safety Valve agreements do not in any way release local authorities from their obligation to fulfil their statutory duties to children and young people with SEND.

The department is also conducting a research project into the impact of Safety Valves in local areas. This will help us further understand the experience of children, parents, carers and schools.

The department has confirmed that it will not enter into any more Safety Valve agreements for councils that have financial deficits, pending wider reform of the whole system to prioritise early intervention, properly supporting councils to bring their finances under control. We will continue to work with local authorities that

have Safety Valve agreements with the department, to deliver their plans.

### Special Educational Needs: Employers' Contributions

*Asked by Lord Wigley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the lowering of the threshold for employers' national insurance payments in the Autumn budget on the provision of daily school transport for children with special educational needs, and whether they will make an exception to ensure the continuation of those services. [HL3705]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** I refer the noble Lord to the answer of 16 December 2024 to Question 19397.

### Squirrels

*Asked by The Earl of Caithness*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to publish the update to the grey squirrel action plan; and if so, when. [HL3645]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** We are considering how to go further to reduce the impacts of grey squirrels on our woodlands and will have an update in due course.

### Stormont House Agreement

*Asked by Lord Caine*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will deliver the £250 million of legacy funding that they had allocated in the Stormont House Agreement 2014 and New Decade, New Approach 2020 in full. [HL3386]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** As the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland set out in his statement in the House of Commons on 4 December, this Government is committed to addressing the legacy of the Troubles so that society in Northern Ireland can heal from the terrible wounds of the past and look to a better future. This commitment includes delivering on the funding agreed with HM Treasury for the legacy programme, with a total envelope of £250 million. This funding derived from £150 million allocated to implement the Stormont House Agreement and £100 million allocated through the New Decade, New Approach agreement.

### Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation

*Asked by Baroness Falkner of Margravine*

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to introducing legislation to curtail the use of strategic lawsuits against public participation. [HL3434]

**Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede:** Behaviour that makes use of SLAPPs is intolerable and we will tackle it to

protect investigative journalism and free speech, while also ensuring access to justice. The Government is focusing on implementing the SLAPPs measures in the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023. Our future approach to SLAPPs reform will be informed by monitoring how these new procedural rules operate when they come into effect in 2025. The work of the SLAPPs taskforce is ongoing and we continue to build our evidence base in considering options for reform in the longer term, taking into account the diversity of views expressed by stakeholders and those targeted by these abhorrent actions.

### Students: Cost of Living

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support students living in London, particularly in regard to (1) high housing costs, and (2) the rising cost of living. [HL3371]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The government recognises the cost-of-living pressures experienced by many students, and that those pressures may be more acute for students living in London, due in particular to higher housing costs.

To help break down barriers to opportunity for young people who want to attend university, the department is increasing maximum loans for living costs for the 2025/26 academic year by 3.1%, in line with the forecast rate of inflation, so that more support is targeted at students from the lowest income families. This will give full-time undergraduate students from the lowest income homes, who are living away from home and studying in London, an additional £414 per year in support through the higher London rate of loan for living costs.

Since universities and student landlords are autonomous and independent from government, the department has no remit to intervene directly in the student housing market. However, since 2006, the Student Accommodation Codes of Practice have protected the interests of students to ensure standards are maintained and disputes are resolved promptly. The Code sets out clearly what information relating to fees and deposits should be made available to students and offers a route for students to raise complaints about accommodation providers. Information on the Codes can be found here: <https://www.thesac.org.uk/the-code>.

The most sustainable long-term method to improve housing affordability is to increase housing supply, which is why the government is committing to building 1.5 million homes this Parliament. The Renters' Rights Bill also works to strengthen tenants' rights as a whole. Stronger powers to challenge excessive rent hikes complement the practical steps taken to help renters by ending unfair bidding wars and tackling rental discrimination.

### Sudan: Armed Conflict

*Asked by Baroness Helic*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission's report Findings of the investigations conducted by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan into violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and related crimes, committed in the Sudan in the context of the conflict that erupted in mid-April 2023, published on 23 October, documenting the sexual violence committed by the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces during the Sudanese civil war. [HL3542]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** In October 2023, the UK led efforts at the UN Human Rights Council to establish the independent Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) to gather and preserve evidence of credible human rights violations and abuses in Sudan. We further lobbied for the FFM's renewal in October 2024. The UK uses its position as penholder at the UN Security Council and as leader of the Sudan Core Group at the Human Rights Council to highlight human rights abuses and to call on both warring parties to adhere to their commitments in the Jeddah Declaration to adhere to international law as well as to their commitments under the Jeddah Declaration to protect civilians. During a UN Security Council meeting on 19 December, we condemned RSF attacks in North Darfur and called on both warring parties to adhere to international humanitarian law. The UK also supports the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and wider UN agencies and efforts to investigate and restrain Conflict-related Sexual Violence (CRSV) cases. We will continue to use findings from the FFM to raise awareness of human rights violations in Sudan.

*Asked by Baroness Helic*

To ask His Majesty's Government what support they are providing to the government of Sudan to prevent atrocities in that country; and whether they plan to deploy any members of the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict team of experts to Sudan or neighbouring countries. [HL3543]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is widespread and underreported in Sudan. Cases have increased significantly since the start of the conflict. As part of the UK's Official Development Assistance to Sudan and neighbouring countries, which now stands at £226.5 million, we provide support to survivors of SGBV through the Sudan Humanitarian Fund. On 26 September, the UK convened an event at the UN General Assembly with Dutch and Swiss partners to address SGBV in Sudan, drawing international attention to the plight of women and girls. We have also pivoted our existing programmes to focus more on prevention, protection and care for rape survivors, including the provision of clinical treatment, dignity kits and psycho-

social services. While there is no plan to deploy members from the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict team of experts at this time, we continually keep all available levers to prevent and respond to SGBV in Sudan under review.

### Sudan: Humanitarian Aid

*Asked by Baroness Helic*

To ask His Majesty's Government what proportion of the £113 million aid package for Sudan announced in November will be committed to addressing conflict-related sexual violence. [HL3544]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is widespread and underreported in Sudan. Cases have increased significantly since the start of the conflict, particularly in Khartoum, Darfur and Kordofan. As part of the recent £113 million uplift, we will continue to support the Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SHF) which provides flexible, multi-sector support to NGOs, including the Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs). We have pivoted our existing programmes to focus more on prevention, protection and care for rape survivors, including the provision of clinical treatment, dignity kits and psycho-social services. While there is no plan to deploy members from the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict team of experts at this time, we continually keep all available levers to prevent and respond to SGBV in Sudan under review.

### Suicide: Farmers

*Asked by Lord Roborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to keep and publish detailed records of farmer, landowner, and family business owner suicides in the months leading up to the reduction of agricultural and business property reliefs for inheritance tax, for the purpose of public interest. [HL3558]

**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.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond | National Statistician

The Lord Roborough

House of Lords

London

SW1A 0PW

19 December 2024

Dear Lord Roborough,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking whether we plan to keep and publish detailed records of farmer, landowner, and family business owner suicides in the months leading up

to the reduction of agricultural and business property reliefs for inheritance tax, for the purpose of public interest (HL3558).

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) mortality statistics are compiled from information supplied when deaths are certified and registered as part of civil registration, which is a legal requirement. This data enables the ONS to produce detailed statistics on suicides that are registered in England and Wales and we publish regular annual[1] and quarterly[2] statistics. All these are based on date of registration, rather than occurrence.

In England and Wales, all deaths by suicide are certified by a coroner and cannot be registered until an inquest is completed. This results in a delay between the date the death occurred and the date of registration. Due to these registration delays, it will not be possible to produce accurate statistics on suicides occurring in 2026 until 2028. The ONS will continue its quarterly publication of suicide statistics and analysis of suicide deaths by occupation based on registration date. However, a more regular presentation of suicide deaths by occupation is not planned.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

[1]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/suicidesintheunitedkingdom/previousreleases>

[2]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/quarterlysuicideathregistrationsinengland/previousreleases>

The Answer includes the following attached material:

UKSA Letter [PQHL3558.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-12-17/HL3558>

### Syria: Chemical Weapons

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the (1) human health and (2) environmental impacts in (a) the immediate vicinity, (b) Syria as a whole, and (c) the Middle East, of reported Israeli airstrikes on chemical weapons depots in the lead up to the fall of the Assad regime. [HL3340]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** We are monitoring the situation closely following reports of airstrikes in Syria. We continue to call on Israel, and all actors, to uphold their obligations to peace, stability, and security under international law. We are engaging with regional partners and with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We continue to urge Syria and all parties to create the conditions in which the Syrian authorities can secure chemical weapons sites, and to



enable the OPCW to deploy to Syria to verify and oversee the destruction of Syria's remaining chemical weapons.

### Syria: Politics and Government

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to assist in the rebuilding of civil society in Syria, including the judiciary and the police. [HL3320]

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask His Majesty's Government what work the Mass Atrocity Prevention Hub will undertake in Syria in supporting the development of civil society. [HL3322]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The UK has long supported the voices of Syrian civil society, a community that has stood ready to support a Syrian political process, accountability efforts and humanitarian work for years. During its Presidency of the UN Security Council, the UK invited a Syrian civil society briefer to share their views and experiences with the Council.

We support a Syrian-led process to bring stability and peace to the country, based on the principles set out in UN Security Council Resolution 2254. That includes compliance with international law, the protection of civilians, including minorities, access to humanitarian aid, a nationwide ceasefire, action against terrorism and disposal of chemical weapons - among other measures.

### Syria: Prisoners' Release

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask His Majesty's Government what work the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative will undertake in Syria, especially in relation to recently released prisoners. [HL3321]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** We unequivocally condemn the use of sexual violence, including in detention, and are resolute in our determination to prevent and respond to it. Through the Global Survivors Fund - which works with governments and local organisations to provide redress for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence - the UK has provided medical, psychosocial, legal and financial support to over 800 Syrian survivors of sexual violence in Turkey. We have also designated 3 perpetrators of sexual violence in Syria since 2023.

The UK has emphasised the importance of protecting civilians as part of Syria's political transition and will continue to engage closely with Syrian contacts, international and regional partners to support a peaceful transfer of power.

### Syria: Small Businesses

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they are considering the use of alternative financing mechanisms

to assist small and medium-sized enterprises in Syria. [HL3323]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The UK is committed to increasing sustainable interventions to help Syrians support themselves, and build futures through education, jobs and food production. In 2023, over 40% of the UK's aid budget for Syria was allocated to early recovery (an approach to humanitarian assistance that uses sustainable solutions to meet needs), livelihoods and providing long term opportunities for Syrians.

### Taliban: Sanctions

*Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many members of the Taliban they have sanctioned so far and how this compares with the sanctions imposed by other NATO member countries. [HL3475]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** We have repeatedly condemned the Taliban's human rights abuses, both bilaterally and internationally. The UK imposes UN sanctions on the Taliban, which lists 135 individuals and five organisations. The Government has not introduced sanctions on the Taliban since they took power in 2021, but we keep all evidence and potential designations under close review. It would not be appropriate to speculate about future sanctions designations as to do so could reduce their impact. The EU and the US have imposed human rights sanctions on members of the Taliban since 2021, and we remain in close contact on this and other ways to hold the Taliban accountable.

### Taliban: Travel

*Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many members of the Taliban have been allowed to travel to the UK since the takeover in August 2021, and what was the reason for their travel. [HL3395]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** We hold no record of any delegation of Taliban members travelling to the UK since August 2021.

### Trade Unions: Finance

*Asked by Baroness Finn*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have further plans to re-introduce the Union Learning Fund, the Union Modernisation Fund, or similar schemes for state funding of trade unions. [HL3539]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The government does not currently have plans to re-introduce the Union Learning Fund or the Union Modernisation Fund. The government is currently updating trade union legislation, so it is fit for a modern economy. We will always

consider suggestions on further steps we could take to improve industrial relations.

### Transgender People: Children

*Asked by Lord Cashman*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care plans to meet with parents of trans children, as requested in correspondence from Lord Cashman to his office since July. [HL3425]

**Baroness Merron:** My Rt. Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has held constructive roundtable discussions with a group of children and young people, and their parents, with lived experience of gender dysphoria and incongruence.

The Government remains committed to listening to the LGBT+ community. Department officials will write to you on how best to take forward your request.

### UK Asset Resolution: Mortgages

*Asked by The Earl of Lytton*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many residential mortgages were handled by or on behalf of UK Asset Resolution in each 12-month period beginning with 1 July 2017; for each period what were (1) the number of compulsory repossession and sales of underlying security; (2) the average surplus or shortfall realised upon sale of a security as a percentage of the stated mortgage acquisition cost; (3) the number of mortgagors against whom action was initiated after a sale to recover a shortfall in proceeds; and (4) the average administrative costs charged to mortgagors in respect of the combined property repossession, forced sale, and debt recovery processes. [HL3614]

**Lord Livermore:** UK Asset Resolution (UKAR) sold its former subsidiaries (Bradford and Bingley and NRAM, formerly part of Northern Rock) and the remaining mortgage assets of those subsidiaries in 2021. As a result neither UKAR nor HM Treasury can directly access the relevant account level data that is required to answer these questions. This data is owned by UKAR's former subsidiaries.

### UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

*Asked by Lord Caine*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent on 27 November (HL Deb cols 681–2), when the Minister will answer the question on the schedule for publishing papers set out in Annex B of the Safeguarding the Union Command Paper (CP 1021). [HL3343]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** This Government is committed to implementing the Windsor Framework in good faith and to protecting Northern Ireland's place in the UK internal market. We are currently considering the best way to take forward the approach referred to in Annex B of the Safeguarding the Union command paper.

*Asked by Baroness Hoey*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effect on trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland of the European Union's new General Product Safety Regulation. [HL3495]

**Baroness Gustafsson:** The updated GPSR largely formalises how many businesses are already operating in the UK and the measures are therefore likely to have limited impact. However, we understand that, for some businesses, changes will be required.

Government continues to support businesses in adapting to these changes to ensure a smooth flow of goods between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK. We have published guidance on GPSR in Northern Ireland, which we will keep under review, and we are continuing to engage directly with businesses.

### UK Shared Prosperity Fund

*Asked by Baroness Smith of Llanfaes*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to calculate UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocations from 2026 using a needs-based formula or a population-based formula. [HL3370]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** The Government will set out its long-term vision for local growth beyond 2025–26 at the multi-year spending review in the Spring. This will end the approach of local authorities and MCAs being forced to compete against each other for growth funds; target funding where it is most needed; and empower local leaders to create jobs, improve wages and get Britain building.

### UK Trade with EU: Import Controls

*Asked by Lord Frost*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Hayman of Ullock on 5 December (HL2822), whether they have any plans to negotiate a sanitary and phytosanitary agreement which would require the UK to mirror, align with, or otherwise accept EU law in this area. [HL3299]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** The Government has been clear that a veterinary / sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) agreement could boost trade and deliver significant benefits on both sides. It is also clear that we will not be re-entering the single market or customs union and will

not return to freedom of movement. The terms of any SPS agreement with the EU are subject to negotiation.

### UK Trade with EU: Windsor Framework

*Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask His Majesty's Government what working groups or committees which include experts from outside the Civil Service they have set up to consider the trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland under the Windsor Framework; how many times each group or committee has met; and what is the membership of each. [HL3387]

**Baroness Twycross:** This Government is committed to implementing the Windsor Framework and protecting the UK internal market. In furtherance of these commitments and those made in the Safeguarding the Union command paper, the following bodies that include external sector experts have been established:

- Independent Monitoring Panel: Anna Jerzewska, Aidan Reilly and Alastair Hamilton were appointed on 19 September. The Panel has met once under this Government.

- Intertrade UK: Baroness Foster of Aghadrumsee was appointed as Chair on 19 September. Since that time, work has continued on other preparatory activity necessary to establish the body. It is expected that Intertrade UK will meet for the first time early in the New Year.

- Horticulture Working Group: Members include a range of trade associations and other industry representatives. The Group has met twice under this Government.

- Veterinary Medicines Working Group: Members include a range of industry representatives and technical experts. The Group has met twice under this Government.

The Government has separately indicated its intention to commission an Independent Review of the operation of Articles 5-10 of the Windsor Framework, in accordance with its duties under the law, and will update Parliament in due course.

### Ukraine: Politics and Government

*Asked by Lord Richards of Herstmonceux*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they support the recovery of all of Ukraine's pre-2014 territory including Crimea; and, if not, what they are seeking to achieve through its assistance to Ukraine. [HL3411]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** We will continue supporting Ukraine for as long as it takes to defend itself and secure a just and lasting peace. The clearest path to peace is for Russia to withdraw its troops from Ukraine tomorrow. It is for Ukraine to determine its position on its long-term future. A strong, sovereign, and secure Ukraine

that is able to defend against and deter future aggression is in the UK's interest.

### UN Commission on the Status of Women

*Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to consult with a range of civil society organisations representing a diversity of women's voices for their National Statement at the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2025. [HL3545]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The UK's National Statement will highlight our commitment to reaffirming the principles of the Beijing Declaration and putting women and girls at the heart of everything we do. It will also highlight the UK's commitment to promoting the rights and freedoms of all women and girls in all their diversity, including those of all ages. We support a strong and active civil society voice at CSW. The FCDO and OEO will consult with a range of civil society organisations, including women's rights organisations before and during CSW itself.

*Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to include specific references to older women and widows in their National Statement for the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2025. [HL3546]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The UK's National Statement will highlight our commitment to reaffirming the principles of the Beijing Declaration and putting women and girls at the heart of everything we do. It will also highlight the UK's commitment to promoting the rights and freedoms of all women and girls in all their diversity, including those of all ages. We support a strong and active civil society voice at CSW. The FCDO and OEO will consult with a range of civil society organisations, including women's rights organisations before and during CSW itself.

### Unitary Councils

*Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask His Majesty's Government what criteria they will apply to "small unitary authorities" when assessing whether they will be expected to merge with other authorities. [HL3612]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** The Minister for Local Government wrote to all councils in two-tier areas and neighbouring small unitaries on publication of the English Devolution White Paper on 16<sup>th</sup> December to set out his ambitions and expectations in greater detail. In this letter the Minister set out his intention to formally invite unitary proposals in January 2025, and this invitation will set out further detail on the criteria that will be considered when taking decisions on proposals that are submitted to Government.

## Universal Credit: Uprating

Asked by *Baroness Boycott*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have assessed the impact on the living standards of different groups of people in receipt of Universal Credit resulting from the difference between the benefit uprating of 1.7 per cent from April 2025 and a higher inflation forecast for 2025–26. [HL3591]

**Baroness Sherlock:** The Secretary of State undertakes an annual review of benefits and pensions. The latest figure that the Secretary of State can use is the Consumer Price Index in the year to September to allow sufficient time for the required legislative and operational changes before new rates can be introduced at the start of the new financial year.

All benefit up-rating since April 1987 has been based on the increase in the relevant price inflation index in the 12 months to the previous September. Given the volumes involved (over 20 million customers), the technical and legislative requirements and the interdependencies across Government, it is not currently possible to undertake the up-rating exercise any later. There are no current plans for the Secretary of State to revisit these decisions.

At present, no estimate has been made of the impact on the living standards of different groups of people in receipt of Universal Credit resulting from the difference between the benefit uprating of 1.7 per cent from April 2025 and the inflation forecast for 2025–26.

The estimated number of individuals in families benefitting from the uprating of benefits in the financial year 2025/26 in each region of the UK and the UK overall can be found here [Benefit uprating: estimated number and type of families and individuals in families benefitting from the uprating of benefits in financial year 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

## Veterinary Services: UK trade with EU

Asked by *Baroness Gale*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that any veterinary agreement concluded with the European Union will not undermine the United Kingdom's existing animal welfare protections or limit the ability of the United Kingdom to introduce new animal welfare protections, including on imports, in the future. [HL3142]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** This Government is committed to resetting relations between the United Kingdom (UK) and the European Union (EU). As part of this, the government is seeking to negotiate a veterinary/sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) agreement to boost trade and deliver benefits to businesses and consumers on both sides. The UK and EU are like-minded partners with similarly high standards.

This Government was elected on a mandate to introduce the most ambitious plans to improve animal welfare in a generation. That is exactly what the

Government will do, and we will be outlining more detail in due course.

## Victims and Prisoners Act 2024

Asked by *Baroness Morgan of Cotes*

To ask His Majesty's Government when section 31 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 will come into force. [HL3481]

**Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede:** Appropriate protections for victims of harassment or stalking are vital. We are carefully considering implementation of section 31 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 to ensure data and safeguarding protections are built into the process. As part of this consideration, we have included a provision in the Data (Use and Access) Bill to ensure that section 31 extends UK-wide, given the nature of the UK's data protection framework.

## Visas: National Security

Asked by *Lord Jackson of Peterborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hanson of Flint on 11 December (HL2987), what estimate they have made of the monetary cost of the collation and verification of data relating to individuals who have had their UK visas revoked on the grounds of (1) national security, and (2) being non-conducive to the public good. [HL3397]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** It has been established that the time it would take to individually review each case that has been considered for curtailment during the time frame requested would exceed the relevant cost limit.

## Welsh Government: Employers' Contributions

Asked by *Lord Wigley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to discuss with the Welsh Government the full implications of the proposed rises to National Insurance contributions which the Welsh Government will be responsible for implementing in the financial year 2025–26 and the timeframe; and what proportion of the additional payments which the Welsh Government as an employer will be required to make will be covered by additional funding from the Treasury. [HL3635]

**Lord Livermore:** HM Treasury continues to engage closely with finance counterparts in the Welsh Government.

At Autumn Budget 2024, the Chancellor provided funding to the public sector to support them with the additional cost associated with changes to Employer National Insurance Contributions.

The Welsh Government will receive funding through the Barnett Formula in 2025–26 for any changes to UK



Government department budgets, including support for Employer National Insurance Contributions. This is the normal operation of the funding arrangements as set out in the Statement of Funding Policy.

This funding will be in addition to the Welsh Government's record Spending Review settlement for 2025-26, which is the largest in real terms of any settlements since devolution.

### Windsor Framework

Asked by *Baroness Hoey*

To ask His Majesty's Government when the independent review of the Windsor Framework will be established. [HL3548]

**Baroness Twycross:** The Government will announce details of the Independent Review in due course, and in line with its obligations under Schedule 6A of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

### Young Futures Hubs

Asked by *Baroness Anelay of St Johns*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of 'Guiding principles for youth-led social action' published by Youth Access; and whether they plan to support and build on existing early support hubs through the Young Futures programme. [HL3250]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The new Young Futures Hubs will support the delivery of the government's safer streets, health and opportunity missions by bringing together support services for children and young people. In doing so, the hubs will promote children and young people's development, improve their mental health and wellbeing, and prevent them from being drawn into crime. They will be staffed by professionals including youth workers, mental health support workers and career advisors.

The department will engage with national and local partners, local communities, and children and young people to work together on design and delivery, including considering relevant reports.

### Young People: Surveys

Asked by *Baroness Wolf of Dulwich*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have received any formal reports on the findings of the second longitudinal study of young people in England from the contractors who carried it out, or commissioned any research using the data from it; and, if so, where the relevant reports and output can be found. [HL3471]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The department has commissioned or supported the production of 22 research reports based on analysis of the second Longitudinal

Study of Young People in England (LSYPE2). Of these, three are being finalised and will be published in early 2025 and 19 have been published on GOV.UK or elsewhere. The relevant links are provided below:

- Understanding key stage 4 attainment and progress: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/understanding-ks4-attainment-and-progress-evidence-from-lsype2>.
- Multiple disadvantage and key stage 4 attainment: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multiple-disadvantage-and-ks4-attainment-evidence-from-lsype2>.
- Ethnic, socio-economic and sex inequalities in educational achievement at age 16: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-report-of-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities-supporting-research/ethnic-socio-economic-and-sex-inequalities-in-educational-achievement-at-age-16-by-professor-steve-strand>.
- Examining the London advantage in attainment: evidence from LSYPE: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/examinin-g-the-london-advantage-in-attainment-evidence-from-lsype>.
- Attitudes to STEM subjects by gender: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/attitudes-to-stem-subjects-by-gender-at-key-stage-4>.
- Experiences of relationships and sex education (RSE): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/experiences-of-relationships-and-sex-education-rse>.
- State of the nation 2019: children and young people's wellbeing: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-nation-2019-children-and-young-peoples-wellbeing>.
- State of the nation 2021: the pandemic and young people's mental health: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-nation-2021-children-and-young-peoples-wellbeing>.
- Bullying: Evidence from LSYPE2, wave 3: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/715469/Bullying-Evidence\\_from\\_LSYPE2\\_\\_wave\\_3.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/715469/Bullying-Evidence_from_LSYPE2__wave_3.pdf).
- Extra-curricular provision and outcomes: <https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/EC-and-outcomes-final-1.pdf>.
- Young people's experiences of careers information: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/young-peoples-experiences-of-careers-information-advice-and-guidance>.
- Higher education (HE) and mental health: analyses of the LSYPE cohort: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-and-mental-health-analyses-of-the-lsype-cohorts>.
- Experiences and attitudes of young people and parents during year 9: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/longitudi>

[nal-study-of-young-people-in-england-cohort-2-wave-2.](#)

- Health and wellbeing of 15-year-olds: [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/longitudinal-study-of-young-people-in-england-cohort-2-wave-2.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/longitudinal-study-of-young-people-in-england-cohort-2-wave-2)
- Post-16 aspirations and outcomes: comparison of the LSYPE cohorts: [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-aspirations-and-outcomes-comparison-of-the-lsype-cohorts--2.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-aspirations-and-outcomes-comparison-of-the-lsype-cohorts--2)
- Occupational pathways of technical qualifications: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/933604/Ad\\_hoc\\_1\\_Occupational\\_pathways\\_Nov\\_2020\\_.pdf.](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/933604/Ad_hoc_1_Occupational_pathways_Nov_2020_.pdf)
- Ethnic disproportionality in special educational needs: [https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:a28b7858-994a-4474-9c4b-6962d1f6da41/download\\_file?file\\_format=application%2Fpdf&safe\\_filename=Strand%2B%26%2BLindorff\\_2018\\_Ethnic%2Bdisproportionality%2B%26%2BSEN\\_Report.pdf&type\\_of\\_work=Report.](https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:a28b7858-994a-4474-9c4b-6962d1f6da41/download_file?file_format=application%2Fpdf&safe_filename=Strand%2B%26%2BLindorff_2018_Ethnic%2Bdisproportionality%2B%26%2BSEN_Report.pdf&type_of_work=Report)
- Roles of cyberbullying, sleep, and physical activity in social media and mental health: [https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2352464219301865.](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2352464219301865)
- The association between HE attendance and mental health problems: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667\(23\)00188-3/fulltext.](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(23)00188-3/fulltext)

### Youth Mobility Scheme: EU Countries

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential benefits of a youth mobility agreement between the United Kingdom and the European Union. [HL3354]

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have had discussions with the European Union about a youth mobility agreement; and if so, when. [HL3355]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** The UK has a range of cultural exchange schemes that offer young people from the UK and partner countries the chance to experience life in another country and to make lifelong ties and friendships overseas.

Regarding a youth mobility arrangement with the EU, the EU has not approached the UK with a formal proposal. The Government routinely discusses a range of issues with European counterparts, but we are clear that there will be no return to free movement, and that we must reduce the UK's levels of net migration after the record highs reached under the last government.

### Youth Services: Education and Employment

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Sheffield*

To ask His Majesty's Government what partnerships they plan to establish with local government to deliver the new Youth Guarantee outlined in the Get Britain Working White Paper (CP 1191). [HL3365]

**Baroness Sherlock:** The Get Britain Working White Paper identified a lack of accountability for support that joins up the various education, training and employment opportunities available to 18-21 year olds.

As a first step, the Get Britain Working White paper announced £45m funding for eight Youth Guarantee Trailblazers in England. Our partnerships with local government will test one of the key objectives of the Youth Guarantee that ensures better connections through local systems, of knowledge and awareness of resource and services in local areas, to ensure all 18-21 year olds have easy access to a wide range of education, training or employment opportunities.

By working closely on the detail of the design and delivery of the Youth Guarantee with the eight trailblazer areas, we will be able to maximise the difference it makes to young people's lives locally. The findings of the trailblazers will inform future approach.

We will also work in partnership with organisations at the national and local level to join up, enhance and champion their efforts as part of our new Youth Guarantee. Our first partnerships will be developed with Channel 4, the Royal Shakespeare Company and leading sports organisations including the Premier League.

### Youth Services: Finance

Asked by *Baroness Redfern*

To ask His Majesty's Government how long they estimate it will be before money for both existing and new youth projects is made available as part of the National Youth Strategy; and what are the timescales projected for new youth projects to be up and running. [HL3351]

**Baroness Twycross:** The Government will publish the National Youth Strategy in 2025. In the interim, in 2025/26 we are increasing the total funding for other DCMS youth programmes, excluding the National Citizen Service programmes which we will be winding down from March 2025. Funding allocations for specific programmes will be communicated in due course.

This will include allocating over £85m of capital funding to create fit-for-purpose, welcoming spaces for young people, with the new Better Youth Spaces fund allocating at least £26m for youth clubs to buy new equipment and do renovations. This capital funding also allows for the completion of the Youth Investment Fund programme.

We will also launch the Local Youth Transformation pilot, which will test a new way of working and supporting local authorities, providing a package of support to assess, improve and invest in impactful local youth offers to build back lost capacity and sow the seeds for a much-needed rejuvenation of local youth services.

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