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

<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Baroness Evans of Bowes Park	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
Earl Howe	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
Lord Agnew of Oulton	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Lord Ashton of Hyde	Chief Whip
Baroness Barran	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
Baroness Berridge	Whip
Lord Bethell	Whip
Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care
Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist	Whip
Lord Callanan	Minister of State, Department for Exiting the European Union
Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen	Whip
Earl of Courtown	Deputy Chief Whip
Lord Duncan of Springbank	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Northern Ireland Office
Lord Gardiner of Kimble	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Baroness Goldie	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park	Minister of State, Department for International Development
Lord Keen of Elie	Advocate-General for Scotland and Ministry of Justice Spokesperson
Baroness Sater	Whip
Baroness Stedman-Scott	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
Baroness Sugg	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for International Development
Baroness Vere of Norbiton	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
Baroness Williams of Trafford	Minister of State, Home Office
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

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Written Statements

Monday, 13 January 2020

Department of Health and Social Care: Departmental Update

[HLWS27]

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: My Hon. Friend the Minister of State for Health (Ed Argar) has made the following written statement:

As set out clearly in our Manifesto, the NHS is this Government's number one domestic priority. We are supporting the NHS through our historic funding settlement, which will see the NHS budget increase by £33.9bn within the next five years. This will soon be enshrined into law.

I recently set out my priorities for the system^[1]. This statement highlights the work that has already begun to deliver on these priorities, including our major manifesto commitments of:

- 50,000 more nurses;
- 40 new hospitals over the next decade;
- Ending unfair hospital car parking charges
- and 50 million more GP appointments.

Infrastructure

Work has already begun to deliver our manifesto commitment on free hospital parking for those who need it. This government recently announced that from April 2020, disabled people, frequent outpatient attenders, parents of sick children staying overnight, and staff working night shifts will be able to access free hospital car parking. This change will benefit thousands of NHS patients and visitors in England and mean that across the country we have a consistent approach whereby those with the greatest need will no longer have to pay for parking. We will also consider car parking capacity across the country, and how improved technology will reduce burdens for hospitals, and take away stress for visitors.

Prevention

Community pharmacies play a crucial role in helping people stay healthy and prevent pressure on hospitals. In October 2019, as part of our 'pharmacy first approach', the community pharmacist consultation service was introduced. This means people with minor illnesses or who need medicine urgently have been referred to local pharmacies. More than 100,000 patients have had appointments with expert pharmacists in the last 10 weeks, relieving pressure on GPs and A&E departments.

People

As we begin 2020, the Year of the Nurse and the Midwife, we are embarking on the biggest nursing recruitment drive in decades, backed by a new universal support package. Nursing students on courses from September 2020 will now benefit from guaranteed, additional support of at least £5,000 a year to help with

living costs, some students could be eligible for up to £8,000 per year. It is expected to benefit more than 35,000 students every year. The funding will not have to be repaid by recipients.

The New Years Honours list for 2020 celebrated the incredible work taking place in the health and social care sector all around the UK. This included senior leaders Professor Dame Sally Davies (Chief Medical Officer between 2011 and 2019), Simon Stevens (NHS Chief Executive) and Lyn Romeo (Chief Social Worker).

Technology

We will use frontline technology to improve patients' experience, provide flexible working for clinicians, and help save lives.

This government has announced that it will provide £40 million to reduce NHS staff login times, tackling one of the main technology frustrations facing NHS staff. Currently, many NHS staff have to log in to multiple computer programmes when tending to a patient, with each programme requiring its own login details. Some staff may need to log in to as many as 15 different systems. This outdated technology slows down and frustrates staff and prevents them from giving patients their full attention and the care they deserve. Harnessing the best technology will improve care for patients and improve the burden on our staff.

To further improve the digital capability of NHS trusts, we will set up a new 'digital aspirant' programme. This will provide funding over several years to assist with digital transformation projects so that trusts can provide safe, high-quality and efficient care.

Additionally, this government has announced that a further £4.5 million will be given to local authorities to develop digital adult social care projects to support the most vulnerable in society to live independently for longer and improve information sharing across the NHS and social care.

[1] <https://policyexchange.org.uk/pxevents/keynote-speech-by-the-rt-hon-matt-hancock-mp/>

Local Housing Allowance

[HLWS26]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: My honourable Friend The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Welfare Delivery (Will Quince MP) has made the following Written Statement.

I am announcing that from April 2020 Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates will be increased in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI), ending the freeze to the Local Housing Allowance and delivering on the manifesto commitment to end the benefit freeze.

The Rent Officers Orders for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit, which provide for the increase, will be laid in the House later today and a corresponding provision will implement the changes for Northern Ireland.

This increase will mean the majority of people in receipt of housing support in the Private Rented Sector will see their housing support increase, on average benefiting by around £10 per month.

This Government continues to spend around £95 billion a year on working age benefits, including around £23 billion to help people with their housing costs.

Ending the freeze to LHA rates ensures we are continuing to support the most vulnerable in society. And, as announced at the Spending Round in September 2019

there will be an additional £40 million in Discretionary Housing Payments for 2020/21, to help affordability in the private rented sector.

My Department will continue to work with colleagues across government on housing, including working closely with MHCLG to find ways to reduce homelessness and meet the cost of living in rented accommodation through good housing supply and a welfare system that supports the vulnerable.

Written Answers

Monday, 13 January 2020

Constituencies

Asked by *Lord Greaves*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, and if so when, they intend to lay orders for new parliamentary constituency boundaries before Parliament; and if not, what other proposals they intend to make on constituency boundaries. [HL119]

Earl Howe: The final reports of the four Boundary Commissions in the 2018 Boundary Review were submitted to the Government and laid before Parliament in September 2018.

The Government will continue to monitor closely the current legal proceedings in relation to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland's final report.

As we set out in our manifesto, the Government will ensure we have updated and equal parliamentary boundaries, making sure every vote counts the same.

Equal Pay

Asked by *Lord Shinkwin*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what evaluation has been made of the decision to implement mandatory gender pay gap reporting. [HL169]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: We have had two successful years of gender pay gap reporting so far, with over 10,000 employers publishing their data both years. Reporting provides an unprecedented level of transparency whilst driving board level discussions and pushing employers to take real action to close the gap.

We are keeping a close eye on progress to ensure that the legislation delivers on its aims, but it is important that we give the new regulations sufficient time to embed, to see how employers are responding and what actions they are taking, before considering any changes.

Gay Conversion Therapy

Asked by *Lord Black of Brentwood*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to hold a consultation on their proposal to outlaw gay conversion therapy; and if so, when. [HL247]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Attempts to 'cure' somebody of their sexual orientation or gender identity, otherwise known as conversion therapies, are wrong. This Government will deliver on the LGBT Action Plan, including the commitment to end conversion therapy and we have commissioned research into the experiences of those who have been subjected to this abhorrent practice.

These are complex issues that we are approaching sensitively. We are engaging widely before bringing forward proposals, and we will set out our next steps in the coming months to ensure that the actions we take are proportionate and effective.

India: Nationality

Asked by *Lord Singh of Wimbledon*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they intend to make to the government of India about the proposed National Register of Citizens; and in particular reports (1) that the Register may leave more than two million Muslims in Assam without citizenship and stateless, and (2) that detention camps are being constructed for such stateless persons. [HL172]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The British High Commission in New Delhi and our network of Deputy High Commissions across India are following reports on the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens, as well as the Government of India's response. We raise our concerns with the Government of India where appropriate. I discussed the Government of India's intent with, and popular response to, the CAA with India's Minister of State for External Affairs on 19 December 2019. The British High Commissioner in New Delhi also raised this issue with the Indian Government on 6 January.

Iraq: Armed Forces

Asked by *Lord Allen of Kensington*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to enhance protection of UK service personnel currently based in Iraq. [HL193]

Baroness Goldie: The Coalition and NATO Mission Iraq have relocated non-essential personnel from Baghdad. The safety and security of personnel is of paramount importance and force protection measures are under constant review.

Qassem Soleimani

Asked by *The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made as to whether the government of the United States' drone strike on 3 January constituted defensive action under international law. [HL143]

Baroness Goldie: Article 51 of the UN Charter recognises that all States have an inherent right of self-defence. It is for the United States to say how the criteria for self-defence are met. The Government of the United States has now set out its case for self-defence in a letter to the UN Security Council dated 8 January.

Universal Credit

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many claimants have been moved on to Universal Credit under the managed migration pilot being undertaken in Harrogate. [HL56]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The Universal Credit (Managed Migration Pilot and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2019 allow the Department to pilot moving no more than 10,000 claimants across to Universal Credit from legacy benefits and is expected to last until November 2020.

The Move to Universal Credit pilot commenced, as scheduled, in the area served by Harrogate Jobcentre in

July 2019. The goal of the pilot is to learn as much as possible about how to safely move people from legacy benefits onto Universal Credit. As a result, we will increase numbers as slowly and gradually as necessary.

We are adapting the design of this service and its processes frequently to ensure we provide the best possible support to those claimants who move to Universal Credit from their legacy benefit claims.

The Department has already committed to updating Parliament and stakeholders on progress. We expect to provide our first update in the Spring. We will also set out an evaluation strategy, developed in consultation with stakeholders, before coming to Parliament in the Autumn with the findings and our proposals for the next phase of the delivery of Universal Credit.

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