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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**  
**(HANSARD)**

# **HOUSE OF LORDS**

## **WRITTEN ANSWERS**

**Written Answers.....1**

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<b>Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon</b>	Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development
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<b>Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park</b>	Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development
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# Written Answers

Wednesday, 6 May 2020

## Agriculture: Migrant Workers

Asked by *Lord Berkeley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what arrangements they have agreed with the government of Romania about Romanian agricultural workers coming to the UK; what checks for COVID-19 were required on such workers before they joined outbound flights; what social distancing arrangements were required on the flights in terms of the number of (1) passengers, and (2) seats; whether such workers in the UK have access to health services in the same way as UK workers; whether those workers are covered by national minimum wage rules; whether such Romanian workers will be required to leave the UK at the end of the summer harvest period; and if so, who will fund their return travel costs. [HL3005]

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble:** Workers are able to continue to come to the UK under the key worker category "Food and other necessary goods". All flights coming to the UK must follow the current UK policy relating to the delay phase of the current COVID-19 outbreak. All passengers on entry to UK must follow the government's social distancing guidance as per GOV.UK website available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others>

Various airlines and airports have implemented social distancing measures, by making reasonable adjustments. For example the following social distance adjustments are in the process of implementation at many airports, wherever possible: opening additional staff search areas; altering security lane opening plan to leave space between lanes; ensuring only one passenger at a time waiting to go into the body scanners; floor markings placed at bag search areas to ensure people maintain a safe distance whilst their bag is being searched; more colleague parking to reduce the number of people on public transport.

Any individual who is ill and showing signs of COVID-19 should not be allowed to board a flight to the UK.

All flights to the UK are required to provide health announcements to passengers relating to the current COVID-19 outbreak. In the event that there is a seriously unwell passenger, information must be reported to the relevant airport in line with standard operating procedure, and to the PHE (Public Health England) Health Control Unit at London Heathrow (LHR). If the unwell passenger has COVID-19 like symptoms then on arrival they will be advised to self-isolate for 7 days and if symptoms worsen to call NHS 111. All passengers will be provided with information leaflets on arrival in the UK about following government's social distancing guidance.

Employers of those travelling on flights are applying additional measures for workers prior to and following arrival into the UK, including isolation, temperature checks and social distancing during travel.

In accordance with transition arrangements with other EU countries on healthcare, workers are able to access medical assistance during their time in the UK should this be required. If migrant workers from EU countries fall ill with coronavirus (COVID-19) while in the UK they will not have to pay for diagnosis or treatment, this includes if they are tested and the result is negative.

Businesses must comply with current UK employment law, including pay for workers in line with National Minimum Wage rules.

Any individuals working in the UK will be able to return home at any time, subject to the home country border restrictions. Flight costs will be paid for by the worker and in line with Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) regulations.

## Asylum: Coronavirus

Asked by *Baroness Lister of Burtersett*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure the level of subsistence support given to asylum seekers during the COVID-19 pandemic is sufficient to ensure they are able to meet their essential living needs. [HL3036]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** We are currently reviewing the level of the cash allowances, as we do each year, to ensure that they remain capable of meeting the essential living needs of asylum seekers.

## Aviation: Coronavirus

Asked by *Lord Berkeley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what precautions are in place to check whether passengers on (1) private, (2) charter, and (3) scheduled, incoming flights may carry COVID-19; and what are the criteria for requiring the passengers of any such flights be quarantined in the UK. [HL3006]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** Targeted screening measures were carried out at UK airports for inbound passengers during the containment phase of the pandemic when the aim was to prevent the virus coming in to the UK. Whilst there is community transmission within the UK, the role played by imported cases is less significant and so our focus in the current delay phase has not been on screening measures at the border. However, as you would expect our approach is being kept under review as the pandemic develops. This may mean that measures and procedures change as we control the spread of, and understand more about, the virus. Any changes to our approach will be led by advice from SAGE and the Chief Medical Officer. Protecting the health of the UK public will always come first.

## Bahrain: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Scriven*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports by the Committee to Protect Journalists that the authorities of Jau Prison in Bahrain placed Bahraini political prisoner Mahmoud Al-Jaziri in solitary confinement in response to statements made by the Bahraini National Institute for Human Rights (NIHR) about COVID-19 prevention measures inside the prison; what assessment they have made of the accuracy of the NIHR's statements in regard to those prevention measures; and what representations they have made to government of Bahrain about the case of Mahmoud Al-Jaziri. [HL3434]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are aware of the case of Mahmoud Al-Jaziri and have previously raised it with the Government of Bahrain. Our Embassy in Manama have spoken to the National Institute for Human Rights and have no reason to doubt their statements regarding COVID-19 prevention measures.

*Asked by Lord Scriven*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, following the statement by non-governmental organisations which calls for the release of political prisoners and raises concerns about the impact of prison conditions in Bahrain on the spread of COVID-19, published on 6 April, what representations, if any, they have made to the government of Bahrain about ensuring (1) the release of political prisoners vulnerable to COVID-19, and (2) the provision of adequate protective materials to prisoners; and what response they received to any such representations. [HL3435]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We have spoken to the Government of Bahrain about COVID-19 prevention measures for prisoners and staff. They have assured us that these measures are consistent with World Health Organisation standards. 1,506 prisoners have been released or given non-custodial sentences since 12 March.

## Bahrain: Human Rights

*Asked by Lord Scriven*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the documentary by BBC Arabic Breaking the Silence which found that institutions and individuals in Bahrain who received UK funding for training have been implicated in severe human rights abuses including torture and rape; and what plans they have to review the UK's technical assistance programme in Bahrain. [HL3436]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are aware of the BBC Arabic programme 'Breaking the Silence'. Any technical assistance we provide is kept under regular review to ensure it is in line with international standards, and fully complies with our human rights obligations and the Overseas Security and Justice Assistance process.

## Business: Coronavirus

*Asked by Baroness Thornhill*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what percentage of the funding available to support businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic has been allocated to date. [HL3352]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** The Government has announced unprecedented support for business and workers to protect them against the current economic emergency including an initial £330 billion of guarantees – equivalent to 15% of UK GDP. We have taken further steps to give businesses access to cash to pay rent, salaries or suppliers, alongside a commitment to pay 80% of the regular monthly wages, up to £2,500, of furloughed workers for four months, via the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS).

So far over £15 billion has been issued through the Bank of England's Covid Corporate Finance Facility (CCFF) and over £4.4 billion through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) (as of 30 April). On 20 April the Government launched the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS), and the first CLBILS loans have already been agreed. The Bounce Back Loan scheme launched on 4 May. Together these measures ensure almost all viable UK businesses can apply for a government backed loan.

The CJRS went live on 20 April. There is no limit on the amount of funding available for the CJRS.

All eligible businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors will pay no business rates in England for 12 months from 1 April. This support is worth over £9.5 billion to businesses. In addition, all business are able to defer VAT for up to 12 months which is worth over £30 billion or 1.5% of GDP.

The Small Business Grant Fund and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund are already making a real difference to many thousands of businesses across the UK, which have received a total of over £8.6 billion since the schemes were launched.

## Business: Northern Ireland

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Northern Ireland Executive about the Chancellor of Exchequer's COVID-19 support package to businesses in Northern Ireland. [HL3485]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and cabinet colleagues hold regular discussions with Executive Ministers regarding how the UK Government can best support people, businesses and the economy in Northern Ireland through these challenging circumstances.

The UK Government is supporting businesses in Northern Ireland through a combination of UK-wide

support measures and an additional £1.2 billion in Barnett consequential for the Northern Ireland Executive. This additional funding is enabling the Executive to deliver support to businesses in Northern Ireland.

Businesses in Northern Ireland can access the following UK Government schemes:

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, where small and large employers are eligible to apply for a government grant of 80% of workers' salaries up to £2,500 a month. The scheme will be backdated to 1 March and available for at least three months;
- The Bounce Back Loans Scheme, which will provide loans of up to £50,000 to benefit small businesses with a 100% government-backed guarantee for lenders. These loans will be interest free for the first 12 months and businesses can apply online through a short and simple form;
- The Self-Employed Income Support Scheme, which will provide a taxable grant worth 80% of average monthly profits over the last three years, up to a maximum of £2,500 a month to support self-employed workers, who are the lifeblood of the Northern Ireland economy;
- The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, which will provide loans of up to £5m, with no interest due for 12 months. This will provide significant help to SMEs in Northern Ireland impacted by the outbreak of COVID-19;
- The Future Fund, which will provide government loans to UK-based companies ranging from £125,000 to £5 million, subject to at least equal match funding from private investors. These convertible loans may be a suitable option for businesses that rely on equity investment and are unable to access the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme;
- The Northern Ireland Office has signposted this information and additional support available from both the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive on GOV.UK to make it easier for NI businesses to access:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-19-guidance-information-for-ni-businesses-employers>

### Care Homes: Coronavirus

*Asked by Baroness Uddin*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on residential homes which care for people with learning difficulties and autism. [HL3096]

**Lord Bethell:** Public Health England (PHE) records reported outbreaks of suspected and confirmed COVID-19 in care homes. However, PHE does not hold data on the type of residents cared for. PHE is currently seeking advice from the Care Quality Commission on the range of types of care homes that care for people with a learning

disability or autism in order to undertake an analysis of this issue and report back by mid-May.

*Asked by Baroness Pinnock*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the risks to other residents and staff of returning people who have tested positive for COVID-19 from hospitals to care homes; and what steps they are taking to ensure such individuals are able to receive the required nursing care. [HL3482]

**Lord Bethell:** The safety of residents and staff is a priority. We announced in our Adult Social Care Action Plan, on 15 April 2020, that testing will be provided to all care home residents before they are discharged from hospital into a care home.

A small number of people may be discharged from the National Health Service within the 14-day period from the onset of COVID-19 symptoms needing ongoing social care. Some care providers will be able to accommodate these individuals through effective isolation strategies or cohorting policies. If appropriate isolation/cohorted care is not available with a local care provider, the individual's local authority will be asked to secure alternative appropriate accommodation and care for the remainder of the required isolation period.

This is an unprecedented global pandemic and we will continue to review our guidance in line with scientific advice.

### Care Homes: Death

*Asked by Lord Marlesford*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many deaths were recorded in care homes in England in each week since the beginning of 2020. [HL3415]

**Lord Bethell:** The information is not collected in the format requested.

### Cheltenham Hospital: Accident and Emergency Departments

*Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust about the reinstatement of a consultant-led all-hours A&E service at Cheltenham General Hospital. [HL2754]

**Lord Bethell:** There are no plans to close Cheltenham General Hospital's (CGH) accident and emergency (A&E) service and NHS England and NHS Improvement are clear that any potential solution developed as part of One Gloucestershire's Fit for the Future public engagement programme will not include any such plans.

There have been no formal proposals developed which include removing the consultant-led A&E service at Cheltenham.

Discussions have taken place between the Secretary of State and the Chief Executive of Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. Following these discussions, the Secretary of State confirmed on 23 October 2019 that no proposals to close Cheltenham A&E would be included in the forthcoming consultation.

CGH's A&E department is consultant-led from 8am-8pm and overnight (8pm – 8am) the service is led by specialist emergency nurse practitioners. This arrangement, which has been in place since 2013, was in response to a lack of middle grade doctors and has preserved and ensured the continuation of high-quality care for patients in Gloucestershire 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

### **Chemicals: Regulation**

*Asked by Lord Fox*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made in their consultation with UK businesses about the future regulation of chemicals in the UK once the participation with EU REACH ends; how many businesses they have consulted; which sectors those businesses are part of; and when they intend to publish the results of that consultation. [HL3381]

*Asked by Lord Fox*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their latest estimate of the cost to the private sector of the implementation of a new UK chemicals regulation system to replace EU REACH. [HL3382]

*Asked by Lord Fox*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the adequacy of the resources in place to implement the new UK chemicals regulation system replacing EU REACH; and what estimate they have made of the annual cost of that new system. [HL3383]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** UK regulators are well prepared to take on new responsibilities under UK REACH. We have already provided extra resources to both the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Environment Agency (EA) to prepare for UK REACH and we will continue to scale up their resources over the next two years. We have previously estimated the cost of operating UK REACH at £13 million a year at full operation. That figure includes the operation and maintenance of the Comply with UK REACH IT system and staff resourcing in Defra, HSE and the EA. We are keeping this estimate of resource requirements under regular review as planning for the end of the Transition Period continues.

We have put in place measures to enable industry to comply with UK REACH through a phased transitional period. Defra's estimates of the costs to industry broadly align with those identified by industry, and we continue to

explore a range of further steps to minimise the burdens on businesses.

As part of that process we have been undertaking a focused evidence-gathering exercise to better understand costs and practical options to reduce burdens on industry. This involves a number of key stakeholders including businesses of different sizes across the supply chain, trade associations and NGOs. We are now considering how to respond to the conclusions of this work.

### **China: South China Sea**

*Asked by Lord West of Spithead*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what diplomatic action they have taken in response to unlawful actions by China in the South China Sea. [HL3736]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We regularly encourage all parties, including China, to settle their disputes peacefully through the existing legal mechanisms, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and to uphold the 2016 Arbitration ruling. The British Government's position is to oppose any action which changes the facts on the ground in the South China Sea, raises tensions, or hinders the chance of peaceful settlement of the disputes. We regularly make this position clear to the Chinese authorities and will continue to do so. We have also set out our position publicly alongside partners such as France and Germany, with whom we made a joint statement in August 2019.

### **Civil Service: Coronavirus**

*Asked by Baroness Smith of Gilmorehill*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, following the comments made by Sir David Lidington on 22 April, what assessment they have made of the available capacity of the Civil Service; and whether that capacity is sufficient to conclude a trade agreement with the EU at the same time as responding to COVID-19. [HL3083]

**Lord True:** At this time of national crisis, resources have been redirected to work on Covid-19. There is a robust resourcing process in place that can be used to increase resource capacity on EU exit related work if departments require. This is a temporary arrangement, and at all times consideration has been given to ensuring that sufficient resource remains in place to support negotiations and readiness in line with the end of the transition period on 31 December.

### **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

*Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of any discrepancies between the Coronavirus Act 2020 Functions of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (Coronavirus Job Retention

Scheme) Direction, published on 15 April, and the guidance available on the HMRC website; and where there are discrepancies, which rules will be followed when processing a claim through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. [[HL3019](#)]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme was introduced in extraordinary circumstances and at unprecedented pace in order to provide vital support to employers and their employees. The scheme was announced by the Chancellor on 20 March and launched on 20 April. In its first day of operation, applications were received from over 140,000 employers, in respect of over 1,000,000 jobs.

HMRC will act at all times in accordance with the HM Treasury Direction. HMRC's interpretation of the Direction is set out in their published guidance, and it is HMRC's view that the published guidance is consistent with the Direction. It is HMRC's expectation that employers should consider the guidance in the first instance when seeking to understand the operation of the scheme and HMRC's interpretation of the Direction.

*Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether employees who were made redundant, or stopped working for their employers, after 19 March can be claimed for under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme if they are now re-employed. [[HL3020](#)]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** Employees who were made redundant or stopped working for their employers after 19 March can be claimed for under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme if their employer agrees to re-employ them and place them on furlough. The employer will still be able to claim a grant to cover 80% of the employee's regular wages from the date they were placed on furlough, up to a cap of £2,500 a month. This applies if the employees were made redundant or stopped working for their employer after 19 March 2020, as long as the employees were employed by them on 19 March 2020 and on their payroll on or before 19 March 2020. This means an RTI submission to HMRC notifying payment in respect of the employee must have been made on or before 19 March 2020.

*Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether employers can claim through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for employees who (1) were furloughed as of 28 February and (2) were transferred under TUPE between 28 February and 19 March. [[HL3021](#)]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** A new employer is eligible to claim under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) in respect of the employees of a previous business transferred after 28 February 2020 if either the TUPE or PAYE business succession rules apply to the change in ownership. Further guidance on the CJRS has been published on GOV.UK.

*Asked by Baroness Drake*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many employees have been furloughed to date, broken down by (1) industry sector and (2) size of business. [[HL3308](#)]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** Applications for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) opened on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April. As of midnight Sunday 3 May 800,000 employers had furloughed a total of 6.3m jobs, with a total value claimed of around £8bn.

This is a new scheme and HMRC are currently working through the analysis they will be able to provide based on the data available. HMRC will make the timescales for publication and the types of data available in due course.

## Coronavirus: Death Certificates

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether there have been any changes to the categories of those with authority to sign a death certificate due to arrangements put in place for the COVID-19 pandemic. [[HL3715](#)]

**Lord Bethell:** On 21 April the Government published guidance for doctors completing Medical Certificates of Cause of Death (MCCDs) in England and Wales which advised that, in an emergency period, any doctor can complete the MCCD, when it is impractical for the attending doctor to do so. This may, for example, be when the attending doctor is self-isolating, unwell, or has pressure to attend patients. In these circumstances, it may be practical to allow a medical examiner or recently retired doctor returning to work to complete the MCCD. There is no clear legal definition of 'attended', but it is generally accepted to mean a doctor who has cared for the patient during the illness that led to death and so is familiar with the patient's medical history, investigations and treatment.

## Coronavirus: Older People

*Asked by Baroness Scott of Needham Market*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to reports of the increased risk of serious COVID-19 related illness in the over 60s, what work they are conducting to assess the increased risk of over 60s working in the care system, and in particular, those who have come out of retirement to support services during the pandemic. [T] [[HL3069](#)]

**Lord Bethell:** We are very grateful to all those working in social care for their incredible commitment to caring for others at this difficult time; we are especially thankful to those who have returned to work or come out of retirement to support services to deliver the best possible care.

We expect every employer to ensure that each employee is undertaking a role that is appropriate to their skills, experience, and personal circumstances. This is the

case whether the employee is a permanent member of staff, or somebody who has returned to the sector to help care for and support people during the pandemic. Where, because of their own circumstances, an employee needs to shield themselves, then a social care employer is able to place these staff on furlough.

*Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the risks and benefits of lifting the lockdown now, while advising those aged over 65 years old to continue to self-isolate. [HL3278]

**Lord Bethell:** The Government advises anyone aged 70 or older regardless of medical conditions to be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures because they are at increased risk of severe illness.

The Government has been clear throughout the COVID-19 outbreak that it is vital to take the right steps at the right time. Any change to social distancing measures now would risk a return to exponential spread of the virus and undo all the good progress made to date, requiring a longer period of more stringent distancing measures, damaging both the economy and public health.

As set out by the First Secretary of State (the Rt. Hon. Dominic Raab MP), there are five tests that the Government needs to be satisfied with before we adjust the measures of the lockdown:

- The National Health Service is able to provide sufficient critical care and specialist care across the United Kingdom;
- A fall in the death rate;
- Rate of infection has decreased across all settings;
- Confidence that operational challenges, such as increasing our testing capacity and having enough personal protective equipment, are in hand; and
- Confidence that any changes will not lead to a significant second peak of infections.

At all times we have been consistently guided by scientific advice to protect lives. The current advice from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies is that relaxing any of the measures could risk damage to public health, our economy, and the sacrifices we have all made. Only when the evidence suggests that it is safe to do so, and the scientific advice provides for it, will we adjust these measures.

## Coronavirus: Public Health

*Asked by Baroness Uddin*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that public health information is reaching vulnerable people, including those with (1) hearing impairments, and (2) other disabilities. [HL3095]

**Lord Bethell:** Public Health England (PHE) has created a number of easy read versions of the public

health advice on COVID-19 for people with learning difficulties, which is available to the public and organisations. An example of an easy read guide on COVID-19 is attached.

There are also a number of British Sign Language resources for the public on PHE's campaign resource centre including the television advert with the Chief Medical Officer. PHE has provided links from its public facing guidance web page to the wide range of content available in sign language. This includes the guidance on staying at home and shielding vulnerable groups.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

COVID-19\_easy\_read [COVID-19\_easy\_read.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-04-22/HL3095>

*Asked by Baroness Coussins*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Lord Bethell on 3 March (HL Deb, col 523), what progress they have made in (1) issuing advice and information about COVID-19 to the public in languages other than English, and (2) arranging specific briefings for public service interpreters working in the NHS. [HL3183]

**Lord Bethell:** As part of the Government's work to ensure the population are informed about COVID-19 and how best to respond, we have translated the *Stay at home guidance for households with possible coronavirus (COVID-19)* and the *COVID 19: guidance on social distancing for everyone in the United Kingdom and protecting older people and vulnerable adults*, into a range of languages. These are the critical pieces of guidance that are relevant to a general public audience.

The translations include Arabic (Modern), Bengali, Cantonese, French, Gujarati, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Urdu and Welsh. These translations can be found online at GOV.UK.

The Government will continue to keep this under review and assess where information needs to be translated into other languages. In the meantime, many local authorities are making arrangements to translate into languages that are widely spoken in their area.

In general, translation and interpretation within National Health Service organisations is commissioned at an organisational level, so it would be down to individual organisations to brief their suppliers of translation and interpretation services.

## Coronavirus: Research

*Asked by Baroness Sheehan*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to stipulate as a condition of COVID-19 UK public funding that any vaccine or medical product developed is licensed according to the principles of

socially responsible licensing which includes, but is not limited to, preventing exclusive licensing. [HL3075]

**Lord Bethell:** The Government is giving careful consideration to the conditions attached to COVID-19 public funding. The National Institute for Health Research is a signatory of the data sharing concordat and are working closely with research institutions to share the results of COVID-19 funded research in line with these principles. In addition, the United Kingdom has committed over £300 million to global efforts on vaccines, diagnostics and medicines, through the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics, the Wellcome Trust Therapeutics Accelerator and other platforms.

### Coronavirus: Vaccination

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of potential mutations of COVID-19 on the delivery of an effective vaccine. [HL3091]

**Lord Bethell:** The rate of mutation of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, and its impact on vaccine effectiveness, is the subject of a large, worldwide research effort to which many United Kingdom institutions are making a significant contribution. The Commission on Human Medicines has convened a COVID-19 Expert Working Group that meets on a regular basis to review the latest developments and advise the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency on their regulatory implications.

### English Language: Assessments

*Asked by Lord Hannay of Chiswick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to streamlining English language tests for students from Africa in receipt of places offered by British higher education institutions or of scholarships under the Chevening and Commonwealth schemes. [HL3189]

*Asked by Lord Hannay of Chiswick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take to enable prospective higher education students in Liberia to take English language tests in Monrovia and not to have to travel to Accra. [HL3190]

*Asked by Lord Hannay of Chiswick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that candidates in receipt of offers for Chevening and Commonwealth scholarships can take English language tests in their country of origin. [HL3191]

*Asked by Lord Hannay of Chiswick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government from which countries in Sub-Saharan Africa it is necessary for potential students to travel to another country to take an English language test in order to obtain a UK student visa. [HL3192]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** Higher Education Providers (HEP) with a track record of compliance are able to decide how they assess the English language ability of their students studying at degree level or above. They can make this assessment however they choose and the Government does not impose any requirement for prospective students to travel to another country.

Due to Covid-19, the ability for Higher Education Providers to self-assess the English ability of their prospective students has been exceptionally extended to some students studying below degree level.

Where sponsors are not HEPs, students are required to demonstrate English ability to B1 level. These students must demonstrate their English language ability by undertaking a Secure English Language Test (SELT), or meet one of the exceptions.

There is currently a procurement project underway for SELT. Following mobilisation of new concessions there will be four overseas SELT Providers, which will increase customers choice of location for taking a test.

Both the Chevening and Commonwealth scholarships programmes have policies in place to ensure maximum flexibility and opportunity for scholarship awardees from countries where English language testing facilities are limited or unavailable.

The Chevening Scholarship provides assistance to Chevening scholars who are required to travel internationally to take English Language Testing (ELTs), or if necessary, bring invigilators to posts.

### European Union: Northern Ireland

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government why they did not accept the EU's initial request for an office in Northern Ireland. [HL3487]

**Viscount Younger of Leekie:** Article 12 of the Northern Ireland Protocol does not necessitate or place any requirement on the UK to facilitate an EU Delegation office in Belfast, or indeed any other permanent EU presence in Northern Ireland.

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consultation they have undertaken with (1) the Northern Ireland Executive, (2) political parties, (3) businesses, and (4) other bodies, in Northern Ireland about the EU's request to establish an office in Northern Ireland. [HL3488]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** As set out in *New Decade, New Approach*, the Government has committed to ensuring that representatives from the Northern Ireland Executive are invited to be part of the UK delegation in any meetings of the UK-EU Specialised or Joint Committees discussing Northern Ireland specific matters which are also being attended by the Irish Government as part of the European Union's delegation.

Accordingly, the Northern Ireland Executive attended the first meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee held on 30 March and also attended at official level the first meeting of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Specialised Committee on 30 April.

The Protocol provides that the working arrangements to enable EU representatives to exercise their rights under Article 12(2) shall be determined by the Joint Committee, upon recommendation by the Specialised Committee.

The Paymaster General responded on behalf of HM Government to the Commission's request on 27 April, and the letter is publicly available on gov.uk.

We will also engage closely with businesses and other stakeholders in Northern Ireland as we take forward work to prepare for the end of the Transition Period.

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to ensure that an EU office is open in Belfast to deal with the implementation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. [HL3710]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** In February, UK Ministers considered an initial request from the European Union to establish an office in Northern Ireland and, on 27 April, responded to their further letter on this issue.

Our position remains the same, that Article 12 of the Northern Ireland Protocol does not necessitate or place any requirement on the UK to facilitate such a presence.

## Firearms: Licensing

*Asked by The Earl of Shrewsbury*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the decision of Derbyshire Constabulary to introduce a new process for all firearm and shotgun applications, including renewals, which requires applicants to provide, and pay for, medical information verified by a GP; what discussions they have had with that Constabulary about the compliance of that process with Home Office Guidance; and what assessment they have made of the impact of that process on the workload of frontline medical practitioners and the NHS during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3077]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The police are responsible for assessing the suitability of those who apply for the grant or renewal of a firearm or shotgun certificate. The police carry out a number of checks to ensure that those in possession of firearms do not pose a danger to public safety, including in relation to medical

suitability based on information provided normally by the applicant's GP.

The Government has consulted on the introduction of new statutory firearms guidance to police, which includes proposals for revised medical arrangements to ensure that police have the medical information they require before the grant of a certificate. The consultation closed on 17 September and the Government will publish its response and the statutory guidance in due course.

The Government recognises that firearms licensing arrangements, including the medical aspects, will be affected by the measures that have been put in place in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Police forces may need to adopt a flexible approach to meet local need and risk in the current exceptional circumstances and there may be some impact on firearms licensing arrangements. The Government will continue to have discussions with the police to keep firearms licensing under review over the coming weeks and months, but the Government's priority is to continue to encourage people to stay at home and to protect the NHS.

## Fisheries: Coronavirus

*Asked by Baroness Wheeler*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the timetable for distributing the £10m payments to the fishing sector to support those affected by COVID-19, announced on 17 April; and what additional resources will be made available to the Marine Management Organisation to ensure applications for the grants to fishers whose business has suffered severe market disruption are processed in an efficient manner. [T] [HL3105]

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble:** This Government shares Baroness Wheeler's concern that support reaches those most in need in the English fishing and aquaculture sectors as quickly as possible and that is why we are treating the distribution of this funding as a matter of urgency.

The £10 million financial assistance announced on 17 April 2020 will be broken down into two funds, the Fisheries Response Fund (FRF) and the Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme (DSSS), both delivered by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO).

The FRF, worth £9 million, will contribute to the fixed costs of catching and aquaculture businesses adversely affected by the downturn in export and domestic markets for fish and shellfish.

The MMO has contacted all 1,179 eligible vessel owners; of these, 950 have applied and by 1 May the MMO have made payments totalling £3.6 million to 786 applicants.

The aquaculture portion of the FRF was launched on 6 May.

The Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme will provide £1 million in grants to support seafood businesses to sell

their products in their local communities and nationally. This scheme opened on 29 April. And applications close at noon on Monday 11 May.

The MMO has reprioritised resources to ensure efficient and timely delivery of this support and has extended its opening hours to 7pm and Saturdays. This is being kept under review.

### **Food: Coronavirus**

*Asked by **Baroness Smith of Basildon***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what goods, other than food or pharmaceutical products, are considered essential items for the purposes of COVID-19 measures. [HL3078]

**Lord Callanan:** The Government has ordered certain businesses and venues to close. The Government has set out guidance on which organisations this requirement covers and what the exceptions are. Government have not published a list of goods it deems essential for the purposes of Covid-19.

*Asked by **Baroness Smith of Basildon***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, for the purposes of COVID-19 measures, what guidance and advice is available to shops and retail outlets that have essential and non-essential goods for sale. [HL3079]

**Lord True:** The Prime Minister has given important instructions to enforce social distancing to reduce the chance of transmission. To help this vital effort, he has announced the closure of all shops selling non-essential goods.

The Government has not asked all businesses to shut – indeed it is important for business to carry on – and comprehensive guidance on the exceptions can be found on gov.uk:

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close>) Only some non-essential shops and public venues have been asked to close.

The UK Government, working with Public Health England and the Health and Safety Executive, has published guidance on social distancing, which it continues to update to provide greater clarity for employers and employees on these measures which can be found on gov.uk: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/social-distancing-coronavirus.htm>

Businesses that do have people onsite should ensure that employees and customers are able to follow Public Health England guidelines including, where possible, maintaining a two metre distance from others. This guidance can also be found on gov.uk: (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19>)

In addition to this, the Prime Minister has said we will take every step that we can to ensure that businesses are

protected; this includes essential businesses experiencing difficulties. There is specific business advice available; the first port of call for advice and guidance should be the dedicated gov.uk pages referenced above. There is a dedicated Business Support Helpline (0300 456 3565) which has also been strengthened so businesses can speak directly to an adviser.

*Asked by **Baroness Jones of Whitchurch***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on imports of (1) wheat and (2) rice. [HL3324]

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble:** The Government has been regularly meeting industry and utilising our global diplomatic network to identify and monitor global supply issues across agricultural commodities, including wheat and rice. The Government is also engaged with the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS), an international body established in the wake of the 2007/08 food price hike to promote policy dialogue and market transparency.

In addition, the UK made a joint statement with G20 Agriculture Ministers at the G20 Extraordinary Agriculture meeting to affirm the importance of the continued flow of food, products and inputs for agriculture and food production. To date, we have seen only a few small-scale export restrictions announced by our trading partners, some of which have already been eased. We are aware industry are currently facing logistical challenges sourcing basmati rice as an indirect consequence of COVID-19 restrictions in some countries and will continue to explore options to support them in the short and medium term. While there are challenges around basmati rice, other rice varieties are continuing to trade although at a higher price.

AMIS estimates suggest that global cereal production is currently close to historic highs and stocks of rice and wheat are considered to be at comfortable levels. We will continue to work closely with industry, the international community and across our network to monitor markets and respond to emerging issues as they arise.

### **Foreign Nationals: Coronavirus**

*Asked by **Baroness Kennedy of Cradley***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to help foreign nationals in the UK who wish to return home but who are unable to book travel because of the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3776]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We would advise all foreign nationals in the UK who wish to return home to contact their Consulate to find out what assistance they are able to offer. For Foreign nationals who have been working or studying in the UK they can find further information on Gov.UK Coronavirus (COVID-19): get support if you're a migrant living in the UK.

### Further Education: Students

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Winchester*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that all further education students who are (1) 16 or 17 years old receive at least 540 teaching hours, and (2) 18 years old or over receive at least 450 teaching hours. [HL3165]

**Baroness Berridge:** Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, most students are not able to attend education at present and therefore cannot receive planned teaching hours in person.

In the guidance issued by the government on maintaining education and skills training provision in further education providers, we are clear that we want learners to be able to continue to study. Colleges and providers are moving more learning online to allow students to continue with studies remotely and we have provided advice and signposted to support to help with this.

Where young people are not able to learn online because they lack or cannot afford suitable devices or internet connectivity, we are encouraging 16-19 education providers to help using the 16-19 Bursary Fund. Top-up funding will be available where necessary to support 16-19 education providers with this.

### Health Services: Coronavirus

Asked by *Lord Kennedy of Southwark*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the duty of employers to report cases of COVID-19 to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 where the employees have tested positive in a healthcare setting. [HL3540]

**Baroness Stedman-Scott:** The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) provides the national reporting framework for responsible persons (usually employers) to report certain cases of injury, disease and dangerous occurrences to the Health and Safety Executive.

In relation to the current pandemic, where an individual has either been exposed to or contracted coronavirus (SARS- COV-2) as a direct result of their work, those instances are reportable under RIDDOR either as a Dangerous Occurrence (under Regulation 7 and Schedule 2, paragraph 10) or as a disease attributed to an occupational exposure to a biological agent (under Regulation 9 (b)) or as a death as a result of occupational exposure to a biological agent under Regulation 6 (2).

For an incident to be reportable as a Dangerous Occurrence, the incident must result (or could have resulted) in the release or escape of the coronavirus.

For an incident to be reportable as a disease due to occupational exposure to a biological agent there must be reasonable evidence suggesting that a work-related exposure was the likely cause of COVID-19.

Where any person dies as a result of occupational exposure to a biological agent, such as coronavirus (SARS- COV-2) this must also be reported by the responsible person.

### High Speed 2 Railway Line: Costs

Asked by *Lord Berkeley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to Full business case High Speed 2 Phase One, published on 15 April, what is the total amount of the 'sunk costs'; what costs incurred before December 2019 were not included in the economic appraisal; what would the benefit-cost ratio figures be if those costs had been included; whether the writing off of development costs up to the time of Notice to Proceed is in compliance with the HM Treasury's Green Book; what other Government-funded projects have had the development costs written off; and whether any such costs were written off in order to improve the benefit-cost ratio figures. [HL3008]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The spend to date on HS2 up to the end of 2019 was £7.5bn (2015Q1 prices, excluding VAT). However not all of this is treated as sunk costs in the economic case as the land and property costs could be recoverable were HS2 not to go ahead.

*What would the benefit-cost ratio figures be if those costs had been included;*

The benefit cost ratio figures including sunk costs are as follows:

	<i>Full Network</i>	<i>Statement of Intent</i>	<i>Parliamentary Powers</i>
BCR without WEIs	1.1	0.8	0.8
BCR with WEIs	1.3	1.0	1.0

*Whether the writing off of development costs up to the time of Notice to Proceed is in compliance with the HM Treasury's Green Book;*

The appraisal of HS2 has been undertaken in compliance with HM Treasury's Green Book. The Green Book states that "what matters are costs and benefits affected by decisions still to be made."

*What other Government-funded projects have had the development costs written off; and whether any such costs were written off in order to improve the benefit-cost ratio figures.*

Costs have not been written off in the approval of HS2. HS2 Ltd's delegated Funding Envelope (the "Target Cost") for Phase One is £40bn (2019 prices). This Target Cost includes the costs already spent on the project.

## Higher Education: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to encourage the promotion of distance learning courses at universities and colleges in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3362]

*Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support and promote the Open University during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3363]

**Baroness Berridge:** Despite the significant disruption being felt across the higher education sector, students deserve appropriate support and recognition for their hard work and dedication. I welcome the way in which many universities and colleges have moved rapidly to develop new ways of delivering courses through online teaching and alternatives to traditional end-of-course exams.

We expect providers to consider how their response to the current situation will affect all students and those who might be most vulnerable to disruption. This includes students suffering from COVID-19 or who need to self-isolate, international students, and students unable or less able to access remote learning for whatever reason, together with care leavers, those estranged from their families, and students with disabilities.

The Office for Students (OfS) has recently published guidance setting out the actions it will take to support providers to maintain standards and teaching quality. The guidance highlights flexible models for teaching, learning, assessment that will most likely satisfy OfS quality and standards conditions. The clear expectation is that providers should make all reasonable efforts to enable students to complete their studies, for achievement to be reliably assessed, for qualifications to be awarded securely. Providers are already be making these arrangements. On 23 March, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education published the first in a series of good practice guidance notes that are available to all UK higher education providers. We know higher education providers take their responsibilities seriously and are best placed to identify the needs of their student body, as well as how to develop the services needed to support it.

The government recognises the Open University plays an important role as the largest provider of part-time higher education in this country and has brought opportunities to engage in higher education to people across the country who would not have had that chance otherwise. The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 placed a duty on OfS to have regard for part time study, and to promote choice and opportunity in the provision of higher education. The OfS targets an element of the Teaching Grant to recognise the additional costs of part-time study and the Open University receives funding through this.

## Holiday Leave: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) what plans they have, if any, to issue guidance on whether employers can direct employees to take holiday during furlough and (2) whether employers and employees can agree to vary holiday pay entitlement during furlough. [HL3022]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** The Government has published detailed guidance on managing holidays during Covid-19. The Government encourages employers to engage with their workforce before requiring them to take holiday during furlough.

The employer and employee can agree to vary holiday entitlement as part of the furlough agreement, but almost all workers are entitled to 5.6 weeks of statutory paid annual leave each year. The Working Time Regulations require holiday pay to be paid at the employee's normal rate of pay or, where the rate of pay varies, calculated on the basis of the average pay received by the employee in the previous 52 working weeks.

## Hong Kong: Demonstrations

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Coventry*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of China regarding the mass arrests of pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong on 18 April. [HL3685]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are concerned by the arrests of a number of political figures in Hong Kong, and are following these cases closely. We expect any arrests and judicial processes to be conducted in a fair and transparent manner. The right to peaceful protest is fundamental to Hong Kong's way of life and as such is protected in both the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law. It is essential that any protests are conducted peacefully, and that the authorities avoid actions that inflame tensions. The authorities should focus on rebuilding trust through a process of meaningful political dialogue. Officials have raised our concerns with the Hong Kong and Chinese authorities. We are continuing to follow these cases closely and will not hesitate to raise further concerns if necessary.

## Hong Kong: Human Rights

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take to mobilise an international response in support of the letters sent by United Nations Special Rapporteurs to the government of China on 29 January and 19 February which raise concerns about the alleged mistreatment of healthcare workers in Hong Kong and the use of teargas and other hazardous substances by the Hong Kong Police Force. [HL3672]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The allegations relating to the mistreatment and arrest of medics at demonstrations, and the misuse of teargas and other hazardous substances, are serious. We expect the Hong Kong authorities to abide by international humanitarian norms and laws. We have consistently made clear our view that there should be a robust, independent inquiry into events in Hong Kong, including in a recent statement at the UN Human Rights Council. Such an inquiry should consider allegations such as those referenced by the Special Rapporteurs.

We frequently raise issues of concern with senior figures in the Chinese and Hong Kong Governments, and discuss the situation in Hong Kong with our international partners, and will continue to do so. The Foreign Secretary has set out his concerns about the situation in Hong Kong directly to both the Hong Kong Chief Executive, Carrie Lam and to the Chinese Foreign Minister, State Councillor Wang Yi.

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to call for an independent international inquiry into the alleged (1) misuse of teargas and other hazardous substances, and (2) mistreatment of healthcare workers, by the Hong Kong Police Force, following allegations presented by six United Nations Special Rapporteurs in letters sent on 29 January and 19 February. [HL3673]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The allegations relating to the mistreatment and arrest of medics at demonstrations, and the misuse of teargas and other hazardous substances, are serious. We expect the Hong Kong authorities to abide by international humanitarian norms and laws. We have consistently made clear our view that there should be a robust, independent inquiry into events in Hong Kong, including in a recent statement at the UN Human Rights Council. Such an inquiry should consider allegations such as those referenced by the Special Rapporteurs.

We frequently raise issues of concern with senior figures in the Chinese and Hong Kong Governments, and discuss the situation in Hong Kong with our international partners, and will continue to do so. The Foreign Secretary has set out his concerns about the situation in Hong Kong directly to both the Hong Kong Chief Executive, Carrie Lam and to the Chinese Foreign Minister, State Councillor Wang Yi.

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to impose Magnitsky-style sanctions on those responsible, directly or indirectly, for (1) any violation of the human rights of healthcare workers in Hong Kong, and (2) any misuse of teargas and other hazardous substances, by the Hong Kong Police Force. [HL3674]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We have announced our intention to establish a UK autonomous Global Human

Rights ('Magnitsky-style') sanctions regime. The regulations will come into force once secondary legislation is laid in Parliament in the coming months. It would be inappropriate to comment on potential designations before the regulations come into force.

## House of Lords: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Storey*

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker what assessment has been made of any potential risks of the physical Chamber sitting of the House of Lords to those peers present and the compliance of such presence with Public Health England's advice on social distancing and restriction on movement. [HL3086]

**Lord Laming:** The Senior Deputy Speaker has asked me, as Chair of the Services Committee, to respond on his behalf. Risk assessments of all regular activities in the Chamber have been undertaken and resulting mitigating actions implemented. These actions include:

- Additional signage highlighting social distancing;
- Floor markings in and around the Chamber to denote 2m distance;
- Signage on the benches to indicate sufficient social distancing for those using them;
- Removal of one of the Crossbenches to ensure an appropriate distance is maintained for wheelchair users;
- Division lobbies set up in Royal Gallery to enable divisions to take place in line with social distancing requirements; and
- Clerks and Doorkeepers issued with guidance on working practices to maintain social distancing.

Public Health England has visited the Estate to review the social distancing measures in place and is content. Virtual proceedings are in place for almost all House business and members are encouraged to work from home.

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker what assessment he has made of the impact of the decision to not broadcast the Virtual Proceedings in the House of Lords live online on democratic engagement with the House. [HL3092]

**Lord McFall of Alcluith:** Since the 21 April the House of Lords has conducted virtual sittings of the House, and the broadcasting unit have been developing the necessary infrastructure to enable high quality live broadcast of these proceedings. In the interim period, all virtual sittings were made available online as video or audio files as soon as possible after the proceedings concluded. The Hansard record of proceedings for each virtual sitting has also been made available online from approximately three hours after each sitting. On Tuesday 28 April and Thursday 30 April the virtual sittings of the House were broadcast live on parliamentlive.tv.

As of this week, the House of Lords has begun to use the same system as the House of Commons to enable high-quality live broadcast output via parliamentlive.tv. As well as virtual sittings of the House, House of Lords committees have been continuing to meet remotely, and last week the first virtual evidence sessions with witnesses were broadcast live on parliamentlive.tv. Throughout this period the House Administration has used social media channels to promote democratic engagement and publicise the channels through which members of the public can continue to follow virtual House of Lords proceedings.

### Human Rights

*Asked by Lord Scriven*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 6 April (HL2834), on which dates the Foreign and Commonwealth Office carried out assistance reviews over the past 12 months; what plans they have to publish any guidelines which stipulate such reviews; and what was the outcome of their last review of their provision of assistance to Bahrain. [HL3433]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Technical assistance programmes funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are monitored and evaluated by officials on a quarterly basis. The last review of the Bahrain programme indicated that the programme continued to meet programme and contract requirements and continued to comply with our human rights obligations.

### Immigrants: Health Services

*Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the immigration health surcharge on NHS and care workers; and what plans they have to suspend the charge for this group in the light of their contribution to health and social care during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3040]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Government is immensely grateful for the dedication of all those working to tackle coronavirus.

On 31 March the Home Secretary announced that the Home Office will automatically extend the visa of any NHS doctor, nurse or paramedic, where it will expire before 1 October, for 12 months, free of charge. This includes an exemption from payment of the immigration health surcharge.

We will continue to look at whether we can provide further assistance during the fight against this virus.

### Immigration: EU Nationals

*Asked by Baroness Smith of Gilmorehill*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Second Reading of the Immigration and Social Security

Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill not occurring in the House of Commons on 21 April, what steps they are taking to ensure that new immigration arrangements are in place by the end of December. [HL3084]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Government remains committed to ending free movement and introducing a new Points-Based Immigration System.

The Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill will proceed when Parliamentary time allows and taking into account the new virtual operating arrangements in Parliament.

The Government set out proposals for its new Points-Based Immigration system in its policy statement on 19 February.

### Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review

*Asked by Lord Truscott*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress has been made with the Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review; and when they expect it to be completed. [HL3822]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Following the Chancellor's announcement that the Comprehensive Spending Review is being delayed, the Integrated Review has been paused given the pressing need to focus on COVID-19. We will return to the Integrated Review when appropriate to do so, ensuring that we engage with all relevant stakeholders.

### Joint Ministerial Committee on EU Negotiations

*Asked by Baroness Smith of Gilmorehill*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they intend to hold the next meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee on EU Negotiations; and whether that meeting will include a discussion on extending the Brexit transition period. [HL3082]

**Lord True:** The UK Government has been working closely with the devolved administrations throughout negotiations with the EU. It is intended that the next meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee (EU Negotiations) will be convened in the coming weeks. Other engagement with the devolved administrations continues, with the Paymaster General speaking to Ministers from the devolved administrations, to update them on the negotiations, last week.

The Government's position remains that there will be no extension to the transition period.

### Malaysia and Thailand: Coronavirus

*Asked by Baroness Sheehan*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the governments of Malaysia and

Thailand about access to healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic for Rohingya refugees. [HL3632]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We remain concerned by the plight of Rohingya refugees and urge regional governments to engage on this issue.

Officials from the British Embassy in Bangkok have discussed with the Thai government the importance of the provision of humanitarian assistance to Rohingyas aboard vessels that enter Thai waters, including in the last week. The Foreign Secretary raised our concerns about the situation of the Rohingya community with the former Malaysian Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah on 11 February. Our High Commission in Kuala Lumpur has subsequently continued to raise our concerns on the issue with the Malaysian Government.

### NHS: Migrant Workers

Asked by **Baroness Kennedy of Cradley**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many staff who are currently working in the NHS in England are on a Tier 2 visa that is due to expire before 1 October 2020. [HL3025]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Home Office does not collate or publish the information requested. The published statistics relating to Tier 2 are available on the GOV.UK website at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/managed-migration-datasets>

Asked by **Baroness Kennedy of Cradley**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many staff currently working in the NHS are in England on a family reunion visa that is due to expire before 1 October 2020. [HL3026]

**Lord Bethell:** Information on the number of staff currently working in the National Health Service on a family reunion visa that is due to expire before 1 October 2020 is not collected centrally.

### Older People: Coronavirus

Asked by **Lord Warner**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what penalties a police officer can impose on an individual over 70 years old, who has no underlying health conditions and adheres to other government social distancing guidance, who leaves their home to visit family members during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3100]

Asked by **Lord Warner**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what specific legislative provisions are in use currently to curb the movement outside their own homes by people aged over 70; and whether that legislation is considered as compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998 and has been certified as such by a Minister of the Crown. [HL3103]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The powers to restrict individual movements are contained in the Health Protection Regulations 2020, under the Public Health Act 1984, which was certified as Human Rights Act compliant by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Rt Hon Matt Hancock.

The penalties for those who do not comply apply to anyone aged 18 and over. If members of the public do not comply with these new measures, then the police response will follow the 4 Es approach – engaging, explaining, encouraging, and then, as a last resort, enforcing, including through issuing fixed penalty notices and dispersing gatherings.

### Oral Questions

Asked by **Lord Blencathra**

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker what plans he has to introduce a training course for peers about asking oral questions concisely. [HL3361]

**Lord McFall of Alcluth:** There are no plans to introduce such training at present. When introducing virtual proceedings the Lord Speaker and his Deputies have consistently emphasised the importance of brevity when asking and answering supplementary questions, and the part that this can play in allowing a greater number of members to contribute within the time limits.

### Parish Councils: Coronavirus

Asked by **Baroness Scott of Needham Market**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions have been held with the National Association of Local Councils about (1) the role parish and town councils and parish meetings are playing to support communities during the COVID-19 pandemic; (2) the impact of the pandemic on the operation of parish and town councils and parish meetings including (a) local audit timescales, (b) holding meetings, and (c) the services they provide; and (3) the financial impact of the pandemic on the finances of parish and town councils and parish meetings including (a) additional expenditure, (b) lost revenue income, and (c) borrowing repayments to the Public Works Loan Board. [HL3067]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** We are very grateful to local authorities for all that they are doing to support their communities and the most vulnerable. Parish councils have played an important role in many areas and I thank them for their work.

We regularly engage with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) about a wide range of issues and will continue to do so. We have sought to grant additional flexibilities to local government at the current time, to recognise the role they are playing in the response to Covid-19. For example, parish councils are included in the regulations enabling council meetings to be held remotely, including remote access by members of the public, although parish meetings are not. We are

continuing to explore how else we may support parish councils to assist their local communities in these unprecedented times.

However, the government does not fund parish councils; they are funded through a precept on the council tax paid by residents of the parish. There are no plans to change this. If parish and town councils are under financial pressure caused by Covid-19, I would encourage them to engage with the relevant principal authority on the £3.2bn of additional government funding allocated to councils to support the response.

### Ports: Northern Ireland

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Northern Ireland Executive about the operation of ports during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3484]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** The Government has been working closely with the NI Executive to maintain vital supply chains between GB and NI during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We have agreed a generous package (worth up to £17m) to support the five key ferry routes which will secure the supply of food, medicines and other essentials for the next two months and help keep Northern Ireland moving. These routes will continue to operate from Larne, Belfast and Warrenpoint ports. The Northern Ireland Executive has agreed it will meet 40% of the costs.

The Government will continue to work with the Executive to make sure supply lines between NI and GB remain open.

### Public Finance: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the weekly total cost of the financial support being provided to individuals and businesses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3023]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** The Government has announced unprecedented support for public services, business and workers to protect against the current economic emergency. These steps are necessary to ensure that the country, economy and public finances are stronger in the longer-term.

Precise costs will depend on a range of factors including the impact of the crisis on the wider economy and the level of take up for each scheme.

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) published a coronavirus reference scenario on 14 April which provides insight into the potential fiscal costs under a particular set of economic circumstances and updated their policy costings table on 30 April. In their scenario, the OBR estimate the direct cost of Government decisions to be £103.7 billion in 2020/21. The OBR note that the

measures taken should help limit the long-term damage to the economy and public finances, and that the costs of inaction would have been higher.

A full assessment of the economic and fiscal position will be made at the next Budget alongside an updated OBR forecast.

### Public Houses: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Berkeley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what (1) business rates, (2) grants, and (3) loan schemes, are available to pubs to help ensure their financial health; what steps they are taking to ensure that the tenants or landlords receive the full benefit of any such support during the current COVID-19 related restrictions; what steps they are taking to ensure any such financial support continues once those restrictions are lifted; and whether any such steps include a suitable transition period to ensure those businesses are able to recover from any losses incurred. [HL3003]

**Lord Callanan:** The Government has introduced a number of support measures available to pubs during the current COVID-19 outbreak. These include a retail, hospitality and leisure business rates holiday scheme and grants scheme for these sectors, business interruption loans schemes, as well as job retention and self-employed income support schemes. The full details of all these measures have been published, and can be viewed on the GOV.UK website

The Government's decisions on when and how to amend the current social distancing measures will be guided by the scientific advice.

### Public Sector: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Mawson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of siloed working in the public sector, at a local and national level, regarding the response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and what steps they are taking to address any such siloed operations. [HL3422]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** This Department has ensured that there has been regular and significant contact between Ministers, regional mayors and council leaders throughout this crisis to respond to the Covid-19 emergency.

This includes calls between the Secretary of State and Ministers, and regional mayors, as well as regular teleconferences hosted by the Secretary of State for local government representatives, including leaders and chief executives. My Department is also discussing priorities and support measures with councils in each of the nine English regions, alongside a Ministerial-led Covid-19 local delivery board with councillors. Further to this, a Ministerial-led Economic Recovery Working Group has been established, made up of local government leaders from across England including several Metro Mayors to help inform Government's plans for economic recovery.

Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) are making a vital contribution to the efforts to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus emergency on local communities. The Government has also supported the embedding of a number of highly experienced military planners into each LRF, who are providing on-the-ground strategic and logistical support. These are further supported by senior Departmental leaders and experts in local engagement and response, ensuring key issues are raised and responded to as appropriate.

### **Pupil Exclusions: Coronavirus**

*Asked by Lord Storey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what support permanently excluded school pupils receive, and from whom, during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3085]

**Baroness Berridge:** As both my right hon. Friends, the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer, have made clear, the government will do whatever it takes to support people affected by COVID-19.

Our latest guidance on the alternative provision provided for permanently excluded pupils is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people>.

These are rapidly developing circumstances. We continue to keep the situation under review and will keep Parliament updated accordingly.

### **Pupils: Broadband and Computers**

*Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what criteria will be applied to decide which disadvantaged school pupils will qualify for free laptops and broadband routers. [HL3037]

**Baroness Berridge:** Devices have been ordered for the most disadvantaged children who would otherwise not have access and are preparing for exams in Year 10, receive support from a social worker, or are a care leaver.

Where care leavers, children with a social worker at secondary school, and disadvantaged children in Year 10 do not have an internet connection, we will be providing 4G connectivity access to them.

Local authorities, trusts and other relevant organisations overseeing schools will be given guidance on how to request government-funded and allocated devices. We recognise that local authorities and academy trusts are best placed to identify and prioritise children and young people who need devices.

### **Pupils: Coronavirus**

*Asked by Lord Addington*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many pupils were offered a loan computer during the COVID-19 pandemic; and of those, how many took up that loan. [HL2990]

**Baroness Berridge:** Schools across the country are already lending school-owned devices to children who need them.

On 19 April, the Government announced further support for vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people who do not have access to a digital device. Laptops and tablets will be ordered for the most disadvantaged children who would otherwise not have access and are preparing for exams (in year 10), receive support from a social worker, or are a care leaver.

Local authorities, trusts and other relevant organisations overseeing schools and social care have been sent information on how they can request a device.

### **Railways: Coronavirus**

*Asked by Lord Berkeley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they invited open access rail passenger operators to operate reduced services alongside franchised operators to deliver (1) an agreed, and (2) a reduced, service on railway lines by both; and if so, how they are ensuring fair competition between franchised and open access operators. [HL3007]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** Government has put in place Emergency Measures Agreements with franchised train operators to ensure the railway is able to provide critical services as part of the response to COVID-19. As they do not have a direct contractual relationship with Government, open access passenger operators are not eligible for these agreements. Two open access operators, Grand Central and Hull Trains, have temporarily ceased services and will draw upon the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to assist with their costs during the outbreak. Government looks forward to their return to the network once they are able to do so.

*Asked by Baroness Randerson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with National Rail about the provision of compensation to railcard holders and extending the validity period of such railcards to reflect the length of time when train services have been severely reduced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3051]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** Railcards are sold and managed by the Rail Delivery Group on behalf on the rail industry, and proposals for amendments to existing policies are for the Rail Delivery Group to bring forward.

The Rail Delivery Group and the Department are considering the position on Railcards in light of the current COVID-19 related travel restrictions.

*Asked by Baroness Randerson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to (1) standardise the (a) procedures, and (b) terms and conditions, for rail ticket refunds across the UK, and (2) simplify the pricing of rail fares and the ticketing system, during the time that rail franchises have been transferred onto Emergency Measures Agreements. [HL3052]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Department has worked with the rail industry to introduce temporary policy changes to standardise procedures and terms and conditions on ticket refunds across all the Department's franchised operators. This is in the context of the exceptional circumstances and Government advice to avoid unnecessary travel. For example, we have made Advance tickets held on 23 March refundable with no administration fee and have implemented processes to improve the passenger experience of claiming refunds. These include that passengers can now claim refunds online; they have eight weeks to apply rather than the usual four; and can backdate their season ticket refund to 17 March or when their ticket was last used, whichever is later.

At this time, the Department is focused on protecting the public transport services that key workers rely upon to get to and from work and we have taken decisive action to financially support rail operators to ensure services can continue to operate. No changes to pricing of fares or ticketing systems were implemented as part of the Emergency Measures Agreements.

### **Rapid Transit Systems and Trams: Coronavirus**

*Asked by Baroness Randerson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what financial support they have provided, and intend to provide, to light rail services which have been adversely affected or reduced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3050]

*Asked by Baroness Randerson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what financial assistance they are providing to local authorities which manage light rail and tram services; and what plans they have, if any, to provide financial assistance to Transport for London. [HL3053]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Government announced on 24 April 2020 that it would be supporting light rail systems in Sheffield, Manchester, West Midlands, Nottingham, and Tyne and Wear. The Department for Transport has now announced a package worth nearly £30 million to allow these essential services to continue.

Ministers and officials at the Department for Transport hold regular meetings with Transport for London to discuss the financial impacts of COVID-19 and will continue to do so as the outbreak continues.

### **Religion: Coronavirus**

*Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with representatives of faith communities concerning the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3367]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** Faith leaders and communities have a critical role to play during the Covid-19 response and we recognise their contribution, as well as the significant importance of respecting different faith groups, religious practices and personal preference. As the Department responsible for Faith, MHCLG has played a facilitative role in ensuring Government understands the needs of faith communities and the challenges they are facing due to the pandemic. We have consulted widely with key faith and belief stakeholders through ministerial and official level engagement.

We are committed to ensuring faith and belief communities have access to the latest public health advice to support them to adapt their practices to meet the governments Covid-19 guidance. We will continue to engage with national and local faith and belief communities to ensure that any needs arising are understood.

We worked closely with faith and belief groups throughout the passage of the Coronavirus Act to ensure that the religious practices of the deceased are taken into account by local authorities as far as possible. Local authorities are now under an obligation to have regard to the deceased's wishes, religion and belief, as to their final committal, where known, in accordance with Section 58 and Schedule 28 to the Coronavirus Act 2020.

### **Schools: Coronavirus**

*Asked by Lord Addington*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what are the attendance figures for those schools that are teaching pupils entitled to attend during the COVID-19 pandemic; and how many such pupils there are. [HL2989]

**Baroness Berridge:** On Monday 21 April, national data on pupil attendance in educational establishments between Monday 23 March and Friday 17 April was published, and is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings>.

*Asked by Lord Storey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that school re-openings are phased and conducted in an orderly manner so that social

distancing and pupil and staff safety is in place. [HL3088]

**Baroness Berridge:** Schools will remain closed until further notice, except for children of critical workers and vulnerable children who are encouraged to attend where it is appropriate for them to do so. We will only re-open schools when the scientific advice indicates it is safe to do so, and will consult closely with the sector on our approach to reopening.

We will give schools as much notice as possible about when they will be asked to reopen and provide guidance and advice to help schools implement any new arrangements. We have already published guidance on implementing social distancing in education settings where schools remain open for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children, which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-social-distancing-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-social-distancing-in-education-and-childcare-settings>.

### Small Businesses: Finance

*Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what specific support they have identified for small and medium-size enterprises operating in (1) the tourism, (2) the hospitality, and (3) the retail sectors, (a) who are experiencing cash flow problems due to the COVID-19 pandemic, (b) who pay council tax in lieu of business rates, and (c) who have commercial mortgages and are therefore ineligible for payment holidays. [T] [HL3708]

**Lord Callanan:** The two existing business grants schemes have helped supported many thousands of small businesses.

To ensure that Local Authorities can help these businesses, the Government has allocated additional up to £617 million funding to Local Authorities in England to allow them to provide discretionary grants.

It is our intention that the following businesses should be considered as a priority for these funds:

- Businesses in a range of shared workspaces;
- Regular market traders who do not have their own business rates assessment;
- B&Bs which pay Council Tax instead of business rates; and
- Charity properties in receipt of charitable business rates relief which would otherwise have been eligible for Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rate Relief.

### Social Services: Migrant Workers

*Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many care workers in England are currently working on a Tier 2

visa that is due to expire before 1 October 2020 [HL3027]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** Whilst some senior and managerial roles as well as other health professionals, including nurses, working within the care system may be eligible to apply under Tier 2, care workers, including senior care workers, do not currently meet the required skill level to qualify for this route.

Under the UK's Points-Based Immigration system we will expand the skills threshold to jobs at Regulated Qualification Framework level 3 and above.

*Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many care workers in England are currently working on a family reunion visa that is due to expire before 1 October 2020. [HL3028]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** We are extremely grateful for the vital contributions of medical professionals during these unprecedented times, however the information requested on care workers currently on a family reunion visa is not collated or published by the Home Office.

Individuals who enter the UK under family reunion have the right to work, but are under no obligation to inform the Home Office if they enter into employment after they arrive.

The Home Office published data on Family Reunion visa grants can be found here 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release'. Data on the number of on Family Reunion visas granted to family members of refugees, broken down by nationality, sex and age are published in tables Fam\_D01 of the asylum and resettlement detailed datasets.

### Special Educational Needs: Charities

*Asked by Lord Addington*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have made use of support services provided by charities to support children with Special Educational Needs who do not have education and health care plans; and if not, what plans they have to do so. [HL2991]

*Asked by Lord Addington*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to accept recognition and identification assessments made online for hidden disabilities such as dyslexia, autism and other neurodiverse conditions that would normally have been made face-to-face. [HL2994]

**Baroness Berridge:** As both my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer have made clear, the government will do whatever it takes to support people affected by COVID-19.

The COVID-19 guidance on vulnerable and young children was published on 22 March, and explains the

practicalities for local authorities and other providers in light of school and college closures. Which is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-us-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people>.

Further guidance on risk assessments was published on 19 April:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-us-covid-19-send-risk-assessment-guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-send-risk-assessment-guidance>.

We are asking local authorities to work with educational providers, families and the child or young person to carry out a risk assessment to judge whether a vulnerable child or young person, including those with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan, is able to attend a school or other educational setting or can be supported more safely at home. They will need to judge how best to meet the needs of these children and young people, including whether some of the support they require can be provided at home. Local authorities will also need to consider how to ensure they can continue to assess children's needs, including conducting EHC needs assessments through virtual means, whether those children are school or home based at this time.

We are working closely with a range of charities and other organisations to support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, such as the Council for Disabled Children, Contact and the National Network of Parent Carer Forums, and have taken on board their views when framing guidance.

These are rapidly developing circumstances; we continue to keep the situation under review and will keep Parliament updated accordingly.

### Trade Agreements: USA

*Asked by Lord Judd*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what measures are in place to ensure that Parliament and relevant sectors of civil society, including the charitable sector, are able to scrutinise all current and future trade negotiations with the United States, with particular reference to their direct or indirect implications for (1) economies, (2) trade, and (3) vulnerable people, in the least developed countries. [HL3137]

**Lord Grimstone of Boscobel:** This Government is committed to transparency and will ensure that parliamentarians, UK citizens, businesses and charities have access to the information they need on our trade negotiations. For the UK-USA Free Trade Agreement, the Government has set out its negotiating objectives, alongside a response to the public consultation as well as an initial economic assessment.

We engage with businesses, civil society, academics and consumer groups through the Strategic Advisory Group (STAG) and Expert Trade Advisory Groups

(ETAGs), as well as through regular conversations outside of these formal channels.

The UK also remains committed to ensuring developing countries can reduce poverty through trading opportunities.

### Travellers: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with members of the Gypsy and Traveller community concerning the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3366]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** The Government is determined to ensure everyone gets the support they need to look after themselves and their families during the COVID-19 outbreak and are enabled to take the necessary measures to reduce the spread of the virus. We are holding regular discussions with representatives from Gypsy and Traveller communities to understand the issues they are facing, including what guidance and support is needed locally.

### UK Relations with EU

*Asked by The Earl of Sandwich*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the UK is participating in all EU meetings that may be dealing with the survival of UK citizens from COVID-19 or other similar threats. [HL3810]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Covid-19 is a major priority for the Government and we are engaging constructively with the EU and with our European and global partners to respond to the outbreak.

We continue to access all EU health security alerting systems, databases and networks during the transition period, including the Early Warning and Response System (EWRS), which we have used to share information in response to the pandemic, and to attend EU Health Security Committee meetings where it is in our interests to do so.

*Asked by The Earl of Sandwich*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether all EU meetings which concern the wellbeing and security of UK citizens will be attended by a minister until the end of 2020. [HL3811]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Following the UK's departure from the European Union, we continue to engage and cooperate with the EU, and with European Member States, through normal diplomatic channels - as with our other global partners.

We continue to access all EU health security alerting systems, databases and networks during the transition period, including the Early Warning and Response System (EWRS), which we have used to share information in response to the pandemic, and to attend EU

Health Security Committee meetings where it is in our interests to do so.

### UK Trade with EU: Northern Ireland

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to prepare exit summary declarations to be used for business trade arrangements between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. [HL3713]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** The Protocol makes clear that Northern Ireland is and remains part of the UK's customs territory and allows the UK to ensure unfettered market access for goods moving from Northern Ireland to Great Britain.

As committed to in the *New Decade, New Approach* deal, this Government will legislate to guarantee unfettered access by the end of the year. We want to work with Northern Ireland businesses and the Executive as we prepare for the end of the Transition Period and implementation of the Protocol.

### UN Agencies: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with United Nations agencies about the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3458]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK is leading with partners and allies to: support an effective and co-ordinated global health response led by the World Health Organisation, reinforce the resilience of vulnerable countries, pursue a vaccine, support the global economy, and enable travelling nationals to return home where necessary. The UK is working together with international partners to achieve these objectives, including with the G7, G20 and European countries, and with the UN and other multilateral institutions, in order to galvanise a stronger global effort. The Prime Minister last spoke to the UN Secretary-General on 20 March and officials in Geneva and New York, are in regular contact with the UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes on their contributions to the crisis response. The Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and other Cabinet Ministers are speaking regularly to their counterparts in Europe to discuss domestic and international actions.

### Universities: Coronavirus

*Asked by Baroness Randerson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that university courses which supply (1) health workers, (2) teachers, and (3) other core public sector workers, are (a) protected, and (b) expanded, following the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3048]

**Baroness Berridge:** The department recognises these public services are vitally important in such a challenging time and appreciate that this is an uncertain time for all prospective students, and we want to ensure that they are not negatively impacted by disruption to the sector.

For those students receiving A-Levels this summer, results awarded will be formal results, with the same status as results awarded in any other year, and therefore students should continue to receive conditional offers from providers for all courses.

Students accepted on to teaching courses are already eligible for additional bursaries designed to support increased supply and from September this year we are introducing new grants of £5,000 for nurses, midwives and other health professionals to support increased recruitment into these professions. We are also looking at further work with Office for Students to increase capacity in the sector.

The government also contributes to the costs of higher education by providing teaching grant (T-Grant) funding to eligible higher education providers that have opted to be subject to tuition fee caps. This includes high-cost subject funding, which supplements the costs of teaching where tuition fees are insufficient to meet the entire costs of provision, such as for medicine, engineering and some nursing courses. Additional funding is being made available for the expansion of medical school places.

We are committed to supporting our world-class higher education institutions, so will continue working closely with the sector to manage the impact of coronavirus and secure the stability and sustainability of the sector at this difficult time.

*Asked by Baroness Randerson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take to encourage more international and EU students to study at UK universities following the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3049]

**Baroness Berridge:** The UK looks forward to continuing to welcome international and EU students in the future. They enrich UK higher education culturally, socially, and economically and are one of the reasons why our higher education sector remains world-class. The government has provided a number of reassurances for international higher education students already in the UK, as well as for those planning to study at a UK higher education provider from autumn 2020.

On 20 April, the government published bespoke guidance that brings together a number of visa concessions for international students in response to the outbreak of COVID-19. The guidance is available at the following link:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-tier-4-sponsors-migrants-and-short-term-students>.

The visa mitigations in this guidance, which will be kept under regular review, ensure that international students can extend existing visas, engage in online

learning, and switch visa categories where needed in order to start new courses in the autumn.

The visa guidance published on 20 April also recommits to the new Graduate Immigration Route which, as previously announced, will be launched in the summer of 2021. Any eligible student who graduates in the summer of 2021 or after this date will be able to apply for the Graduate Immigration Route. This includes students

who have already started their courses even if, due to COVID-19, they have needed to undertake some of their learning remotely.

To address the longer-term impact of COVID-19, officials at the Department for Education and the Department for International Trade will consider how the International Education Strategy can be updated to respond to the challenges posed by COVID-19.

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