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

# **HOUSE OF LORDS**

## **WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS**

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[I] indicates that the member concerned has a relevant registered interest. The full register of interests can be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/register-of-lords-interests/>

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<b>Earl Howe</b>	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
<b>Lord Agnew of Oulton</b>	Minister of State, Cabinet Office and Treasury
<b>Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon</b>	Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development
<b>Lord Ashton of Hyde</b>	Chief Whip
<b>Baroness Barran</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
<b>Baroness Berridge</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education and Department for International Trade
<b>Lord Bethell</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care and Whip
<b>Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist</b>	Whip
<b>Lord Callanan</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
<b>Earl of Courtown</b>	Deputy Chief Whip
<b>Lord Gardiner of Kimble</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
<b>Baroness Goldie</b>	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
<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
<b>Lord Greenhalgh</b>	Minister of State, Home Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
<b>Lord Grimstone of Boscobel</b>	Minister of State, Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Department for International Trade
<b>Lord Keen of Elie</b>	Advocate-General for Scotland and Ministry of Justice Spokesperson
<b>Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay</b>	Whip
<b>Baroness Penn</b>	Whip
<b>Baroness Scott of Byfleet</b>	Whip
<b>Baroness Stedman-Scott</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
<b>Baroness Sugg</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development
<b>Lord True</b>	Minister of State, Cabinet Office
<b>Baroness Vere of Norbiton</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
<b>Viscount Younger of Leckie</b>	Whip

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# Written Statements

*Tuesday, 12 May 2020*

## A38 Derby Junctions Development Consent Order

[HLWS227]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** My Right Honourable friend, the Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps), has made the following Ministerial Statement.

This statement concerns the application for the A38 Derby Junctions Development Consent Order made by Highways England under the Planning Act 2008, which had been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 23 April 2019.

Under section 98(1) of the Planning Act 2008 the Examining Authority appointed to examine the application must complete its examination within six months. Under section 98(4) the Examining Authority must submit its recommendation report to the Secretary of State within three months of its completion of the examination. The examination began on 8 October 2019 and was due to close on 8 April 2020. The recommendation report would need to be sent to the Secretary of State on or before 8 July 2020.

Under section 107(1) of the Act, following receipt of the Examining Authority's recommendation report, the Secretary of State must decide whether to grant development consent. A decision in this case would therefore be made on or before 8 October 2020.

Sub-sections 98(4) and 107(3) of the Act give the relevant Secretary of State power to set new deadlines in respect of the above which are later than the statutory maxima. For this application, the relevant Secretary of State is the Secretary of State for Transport. In exercising this power, the Secretary of State for Transport must, amongst other things, make a statement to Parliament announcing the new deadlines.

The deadline for the completion of the examination is to be extended to 8 September 2020 (an extension of five months) to enable examination hearings postponed in the light of Government advice concerning coronavirus (COVID-19) to be rescheduled and held in a virtual forum. Consequently, the deadline for the Examining Authority to submit its recommendation report to the Secretary of State for Transport is amended to 8 December 2020 and the deadline for the Secretary of State for Transport to take his decision is amended to 8 March 2021.

The decision to extend an examination under the Planning Act 2008 regime is not taken lightly and reflects the exceptional public health circumstances the country finds itself in.

The decision to set a new deadline is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant development consent.

## Bounce-back Loans Scheme

[HLWS222]

**Lord Callanan:** My Right Honourable friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Alok Sharma) has today made the following statement:

I am tabling this statement for the benefit of Honourable and Right Honourable Members to bring to their attention the details of the new Bounce Back Loans Scheme (BBLs).

The Bounce Back Loans Scheme was launched on 4 May, and is facilitated by the Government-owned British Business Bank and delivered through its delivery partners. Lenders offer term loans of between £2,000 and £50,000 to support small businesses that are affected by the coronavirus outbreak.

The scheme is available on a temporary basis for an initial period of six months and can be extended as required. The key parameters of the scheme are as follows:

- BBLs will provide term loans only for a term of six years, with businesses able to access loans equivalent to 25 per cent of their turnover from £2,000 up to a maximum loan size of £50,000. The interest rate will be standardised across all lenders and fixed at 2.5 per cent. There will be no fees for borrowers to access the scheme.
- The percentage of net (post-recovery) losses for each loan that is guaranteed by the Government will be 100 per cent, with no cap on gross Government liability at the level of the lender's whole BBLs portfolio. Personal guarantees are not permitted, although some personal assets could be claimed as part of recovery from sole traders. Sole traders' principal private residence and vehicle may never be claimed as part of recovery.
- A Government grant ('the business interruption payment') will be provided for the benefit of businesses, equal to the interest incurred on the facility for the first twelve months. Businesses will not be required to make any repayments on capital during the first twelve months of the facility.

The Government will be subject to a new contingent liability as a result of the Bounce Back Loans Scheme, and I will be laying a Departmental Minute today containing a description of the liability undertaken.

For more information on this and other support for business, please go to <https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/>

## Businesses: Safe Working Guidance

[HLWS221]

**Lord Callanan:** My Right Honourable friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Alok Sharma) has today made the following statement:

The government today published new guidance to help UK employers get their businesses back up and running and workplaces operating as safely as possible.

The new guidance covers eight workplace settings from outdoor environments and construction sites to factories and takeaways and sets out practical steps for businesses.

The government has consulted approximately 250 stakeholders in preparing the guidance. It has been developed with input from firms, unions, industry bodies and the devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and in consultation with Public Health England (PHE) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), to develop best practice on the safest ways of working across the economy, providing people with the confidence they need to return to work.

The guidance applies to businesses currently open. This also includes guidance for shops which we believe may be in a position to begin a phased reopening at the earliest from the 1 June. Guidance for other sectors that are not currently open will be developed and published ahead of those establishments opening to give those businesses time to plan. The Government will also shortly set up taskforces to work with these sectors to develop safe ways for them to open at the earliest point at which it is safe to do so, as well as pilot re-openings to test businesses' ability to adopt the guidelines.

As part of today's announcement, the government has made available up to an extra £14 million for the HSE, equivalent to an increase of 10% of their budget, for extra call centre employees, inspectors and equipment if needed.

The guidance is available at [gov.uk/workingsafely](https://gov.uk/workingsafely).

### **Covid-19: Job Retention Scheme**

[HLWS226]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** My right honourable friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rishi Sunak) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

The Government's economic plan is one of the most comprehensive in the world.

We have provided:

- Billions of pounds of grants and loans for businesses
- Tens of billions of pounds of deferred taxes
- Income protection for millions of the self-employed
- And a strengthened safety net to protect millions of the most vulnerable people.

These schemes speak to my and this Conservative government's values. We believe in the dignity of work. And we are doing everything we can to protect people currently unable to work.

Yesterday, my Right Honourable Friend the Prime Minister set out our plan for the next phase of the public health response. Today I can confirm the next stage of our Jobs Retention Scheme.

The scheme has been a world-leading economic intervention, supporting livelihoods and protecting

futures. 7.5 million jobs have been furloughed – jobs we could have lost if we had not acted. Nearly a million businesses who could have closed shop for good. And as we reopen the economy we will need to support people back to work. We will do so in a measured way.

I can announce the job retention scheme will be extended, for four months, until the end of October. By that point, we will have provided eight months of support to British people and businesses.

Until the end of July, there will be no changes whatsoever. Then from August to October the scheme will continue, for all sectors and regions of the UK, but with greater flexibility to support the transition back to work. Employers currently using the scheme will be able to bring furloughed employees back part time. And to change their incentives, we will ask employers to start sharing, with government, the costs of paying people's salaries.

Full details will follow by the end of May, but I want to assure people today of one thing that won't change: Workers will, through the combined efforts of government and employers, continue to receive the same overall level of support as they do now, at 80% of their current salary, up to £2,500. I'm extending this scheme because I won't give up on the people who rely on it.

### **Donation to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation**

[HLWS223]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** My Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Dominic Raab), has made the following written Ministerial statement:

It is the normal practice when a government department proposes to make a gift of a value exceeding £300,000, for the department concerned to present to the House of Commons a minute giving particulars of the gift and explaining the circumstances; and to refrain from making the gift until fourteen parliamentary sitting days after the issue of the minute, except in cases of special urgency.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 27 January 2020 made a formal joint announcement of a donation by the UK Government of £1 million to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation. This donation reflects HMG's strong commitment to Holocaust remembrance in this the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The donation will be funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government at a cost of £500,000 each. This is a gift donation with no preconditions attached. There is however a precedent for this donation. In 2011 the then Foreign Secretary and then Communities Secretary announced a £2.15 million donation to the Foundation over three years. The Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation was founded in 2009 and collects funding for the preservation and maintenance of

the grounds and remnants of the former Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II Birkenau concentration camps, which are supervised by the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oświęcim, Poland. The proposed donation has a symbolic value; moreover, preserving Auschwitz-Birkenau contributes to the continuation of Holocaust education. Several thousand UK citizens visit Auschwitz-Birkenau each year and it provides a lasting memorial to the dangers of antisemitism, extremism and racism in general.

The Treasury has approved the proposal in principle. If, during the period of fourteen parliamentary sitting days beginning on the date on which this minute was laid before the House of Commons, a Member signifies an objection by giving notice of a Parliamentary Question or a Motion relating to the minute, or by otherwise raising the matter in the House, final approval of the gift will be withheld pending an examination of the objection.

### **IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust**

[HLWS225]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** My right honourable friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rishi Sunak) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

The Government have today augmented the UK's 2010 agreement to lend to the International Monetary Fund's Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust by a total of 2 billion Special Drawing Rights (approximately £2.2

billion) to support economic recovery and response to COVID-19 in the most vulnerable countries. This takes the total UK agreement to up to 4 billion Special Drawing Rights (approximately £4.4 billion). A copy of the agreement will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses in due course.

### **Service Complaints Ombudsman's Annual Report 2019**

[HLWS224]

**Baroness Goldie:** My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State and Minister for Defence People and Veterans (Johnny Mercer MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

I am pleased to lay before Parliament today the Service Complaints Ombudsman's Annual Report for 2019 on the fairness, effectiveness and efficiency of the Service complaints system.

This report is published by Nicola Williams – her last as Ombudsman – and covers the fourth year of operation of the reformed Service complaints system and the work of her office in 2019.

The findings of the Report and the new recommendations made will now be considered fully by MOD, and a formal response to the Ombudsman will follow once that work is complete.



# Written Answers

Tuesday, 12 May 2020

## Africa: Food Supply

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Winchester*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security in Africa. [[HL3567](#)]

**Baroness Sugg:** COVID-19 is exacerbating an already negative trend, with a high and increasing baseline of chronic food insecurity being further driven by drought, conflict, and locusts and other shocks. Immediate harvest prospects are favourable in some countries and for some commodities, but distribution is a challenge in many vulnerable areas, even at the best of times. COVID-19 related disruptions to supply chains threaten price rises at the same time as secondary impacts are dramatically reducing the purchasing power of the poor and of farmers who cannot afford inputs for the next planting season. To tackle the factors driving COVID-19 induced food insecurity, the UK is repurposing programmes in agriculture, social protection and humanitarian assistance, for example, our bilateral Commercial Agriculture for Smallholders and Agribusiness and multilateral Global Agriculture and Food Security Program. In all of these we continue to put the poorest and most marginalised at the heart of our programmes to address the underlying causes of chronic hunger.

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Winchester*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what additional financial support and assistance they are providing the World Food Programme to develop an effective response to the risk of food insecurity in Africa. [[HL3568](#)]

**Baroness Sugg:** The UK is one of the main Government partners of the World Food Programme and the third largest Donor (in 2019 we contributed over \$700 million to the Agency). We are also supporting other UN Agencies with a mandate to address the risk of food insecurity such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the International Fund for Agricultural Development and promoting synergic and coordinated programmes to maximise efficiencies and outcomes.

Our support to the World Food Programme includes financial support both from the centre and at country level (in 2019 we supported World Food Programme programmes in 26 countries, 18 of which are in Africa), including on preparedness to better deal with extreme weather events, and agricultural issues. We also assist with policy steer and advocacy, as we lead on global efforts against the fall-army worm, assessments on early warning systems and climate change. Lastly, we also provide technical assistance to local production to support

smallholder farmers and support cash-based transfers in humanitarian settings.

## Africa: Peacekeeping Operations

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Worcester*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have put in place to deal with the potential transmission of COVID-19 to civilians among UK military personnel and staff deployed to UN peacekeeping missions in Africa. [[HL3572](#)]

**Baroness Goldie:** We continue to work closely with the UN to support a coordinated approach to limiting the spread of COVID-19, including from UN peacekeepers to local populations.

The UK and all other nations contributing to peacekeeping missions have implemented additional measures to prevent the spread of the virus. While not an exhaustive list, these include a reduction in rotations and deployments of military personnel, pre-deployment quarantine of personnel, mission-led processes for isolating those suspected of contracting the virus, and changes to the level and means of interaction between peacekeepers and local populations.

## Africa: Ventilators

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken, if any, to support African countries in manufacturing ventilators. [[HL3721](#)]

**Baroness Sugg:** UK funding for the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNICEF is helping them work with governments to identify requirements and ensure supplies reach those in need, including the critical medical equipment for oxygen therapy. Ventilators are one part of a wider oxygen therapy package, as illustrated in the WHO emergency global supply chain catalogue.

Since mid-March, DFID's Frontier Technologies Hub has been leading a project called COVIDaction in collaboration with the UCL Institute of Healthcare Engineering, to identify frugal innovation in a range of COVID-19 areas, which included an early focus on ventilators and oxygen therapy, designed for emerging markets that can be used globally in the fight against COVID-19. Designs used in resource constrained environments could be adapted for rapid manufacturing because they are often easier and cheaper to build and are often designed to be operated without highly specialist medical training. This initial work has fed into the UK Ventilator Challenge and has also highlighted the importance that any ventilators used or manufactured locally for low resource developing countries healthcare systems, are proven as safe and effective for use for COVID-19 patients and meet the most recent WHO specifications and relevant medical device regulatory approvals.

**Agriculture: Seasonal Workers**

*Asked by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to encourage more flexible and part-time seasonal employment on farms in order to encourage more British workers to apply for the vacancies. [HL3400]

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble:** We know how important seasonal workers are to our farmers and we are aware of the impact that restrictions on travel from other countries, as a result of Covid-19, is having on the number of seasonal workers coming to work in the UK. We need to mobilise the British workforce to fill that gap and make sure our excellent fruit and vegetables are on people's plates over the summer months.

The Pick for Britain (PfB) website is a recently launched joint Defra and industry initiative to support this effort. The website acts as a central hub to signpost people to the jobs available. It provides guidance and resources so growers, workers and industry can have a single place to go, available at <https://pickforbritain.org.uk/>. The website also provides links to a wide range of recruitment campaigns organised by labour providers. The PfB website includes links to the Government's 'Find A Job' website, giving access to a wide reach of potential applicants. The Find a Job website has more than 1.6 million registered users and is available here: <https://findajob.dwp.gov.uk/>.

Our farmers are doing a fantastic job of feeding the nation during this challenging time. To help our farmers, industry Best Practice Guidance for employers of seasonal agricultural workers to avoid the spread of coronavirus has also now been published, which has been endorsed by Public Health England: <https://ahdb.org.uk/coronavirus/social-distancing-farm-businesses>.

**Air Pollution: Coronavirus**

*Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effect of air quality on the exacerbation of COVID-19 symptoms. [HL3024]

**Lord Bethell:** There is no clear evidence yet to suggest that air pollution has a direct link to the spread or severity of COVID-19.

Public Health England and other Government departments are reviewing and considering factors such as air pollution which may influence the health impact of COVID-19. This includes assessing whether there is any evidence of an association between exposure of particulates and COVID-19 mortality in the United Kingdom. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' independent Air Quality Expert Group has launched a call for evidence to assess the impact of the pandemic on air quality issues.

**Apprentices: Coronavirus**

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps have been taken to support apprentices who are unable to claim furlough pay during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3639]

**Baroness Berridge:** Under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), all UK employers with a PAYE scheme will be able to access support to continue paying part of the salaries of those employees who would otherwise have been laid off during this crisis. This includes apprentices.

Apprentices who were on the PAYE payroll on or before 19 March 2020 are eligible to be furloughed under the CJRS, should their employer make a claim. Those employed after this date would not be eligible.

The rationale for selecting 19 March as the cut-off date is to reduce the substantial risk of fraud associated in delivering such a large-scale program at pace.

Where employees, including apprentices, are not eligible for the CJRS or have been placed on unpaid leave, Universal Credit may be available as long as they meet the other conditions of entitlement.

Our latest guidance on the support available for apprentices is set out below. This outlines the flexibilities we have introduced so that, where possible, apprentices can continue their learning:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-apprenticeship-programme-response/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-apprentices-employers-training-providers-end-point-assessment-organisations-and-external-quality-assurance-pro>.

We will continue to keep this guidance under review.

**Arms Trade**

*Asked by Lord Campbell of Pittenweem*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many licences were granted for the export of military equipment to each member state of the Arab League in each of the last five years for which records are available. [HL3181]

*Asked by Lord Campbell of Pittenweem*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many licences were granted for the export of military equipment to each EU member state in each of the last five years for which records are available. [HL3182]

**Lord Grimstone of Boscobel:** The Government publishes Official Statistics (on a quarterly and annual basis) about export licences on GOV.UK. The number of licences granted for the export of military equipment to each of the countries in each of the last five years is attached.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Export licences for export of military equipment [Export licences granted for the export of military equipment.docx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-04-21/HL3181>

### Astute Class Submarines

*Asked by Lord West of Spithead*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what the commissioning dates are for (1) HMS Audacious, and (2) Astute hulls 5, 6 and 7. [HL3735]

**Baroness Goldie:** HMS AUDACIOUS was commissioned into the Royal Navy on 3 April 2020.

The commissioning dates for the remaining Astute Class submarines are yet to be determined.

### Asylum: Coronavirus

*Asked by Baroness Hamwee*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what measures asylum accommodation providers have made to ensure that people seeking asylum are able to follow the Government's guidance on social distancing and staying safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3388]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Home Office has been working with a Public Health England embed during the current crisis and we have put in place a number of measures to support people in the asylum system who are affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, including working closely with providers to make sure the most vulnerable people within the system receive the support they need.

The Accommodation providers recognise the challenge of managing COVID 19 within our accommodation estate and are working closely with Public Health England (PHE) on how their guidance on social distancing and self-isolation is properly applied, while ensuring that people can continue to access essential services.

In Initial Accommodation facilities, which tends to be hostel based, PHE Guidance recommends that separate rooms and segregation be provided for symptomatic people, or they should be moved to hotels. Our providers have configured their accommodation estate to meet this guidance.

In Dispersed Accommodation, which is houses or homes of multiple occupancy accommodating small numbers, Service Users have been provided guidance to ensure they socially distance or self isolate in line with the advice provided to the general public. Additionally, services providers have enhanced their contact management and wraparound services to ensure access to medical care, food packages and other essential items.

*Asked by Baroness Hamwee*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that asylum seekers and people who do

not have a settled immigration status are encouraged to seek medical assistance as appropriate during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3391]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Home Office has been working with a Public Health England embed during the current crisis and we have put in place a number of measures to support people in the asylum system who are affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, including working closely with providers to make sure the most vulnerable people within the system receive the support they need.

Those currently accommodated within our support accommodation can receive advice and have access to our Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) provider, Migrant Help. They can contact Migrant Help 24 hours a day on a freephone number if they need assistance or guidance. AIRE are working closely with the Home Office's Asylum Safeguarding Hub.

All asylum accommodation providers continue to provide translated public health guidance, available in 12 languages, and instructions to service users and we are looking at options to provide a level of internet access across our Initial Accommodation estate.

### Asylum: Finance

*Asked by Baroness Hamwee*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will credit the Aspen cards for asylum seekers with more than one week's allowance at a time. [HL3390]

**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.

### Asylum: Housing

*Asked by Baroness Hamwee*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Home Office and its contracted providers have made a public health assessment of asylum accommodation in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3387]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Home Office has been working with a Public Health England embed during the current crisis and we have put in place a number of measures to support people in the asylum system who are affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, including working closely with providers to make sure the most vulnerable people within the system receive the support they need.

The Accommodation providers recognise the challenge of managing COVID 19 within our accommodation estate and are working closely with Public Health England (PHE) on how their guidance on social distancing and self-isolation is properly applied, while ensuring that people can continue to access essential services.

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rooms and segregation be provided for symptomatic people, or they should be moved to hotels. Our providers have configured their accommodation estate to meet this guidance.

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### **Asylum: Interviews**

*Asked by **Baroness Doocey***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made in using conducting asylum interviews and other procedures at Asylum Screening Units through remote means; and how many cases have been processed remotely. [[HL3374](#)]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** We take the wellbeing of asylum seekers extremely seriously and we are adjusting processes and procedures to ensure asylum claims can be registered in a safe way that adheres to social distancing guidance – with in person contact and travel requirements for the asylum registration process being minimised.

Asylum in the UK should continue to be sought at the first available opportunity, however for those who have failed to claim on arrival, or whose circumstances have changed since arrival the Home Office has temporarily introduced additional locations to register claims. These are temporary arrangements which will be kept under review to align with HMG guidance.

An overview of key changes and messages are outlined below.

1) Locations have been identified across the UK to facilitate this. The AIU in Croydon will continue to function as normal but will additionally be supported by limited operations in Glasgow, Belfast, Liverpool, Leeds, Solihull and Cardiff. These will be to meet the demands of asylum registrations within the geographical area and will not operate a 5-day service.

2) These changes do not represent a new operating model. They are contingency measures put in place during the COVID-19 epidemic in order to fulfil the UK's statutory requirement to register asylum claims.

Following guidance from Public Health England, we have cancelled all face-to-face substantive asylum interviews. We are continuing to explore ways to conduct interviews over video link.

### **Aviation: Coronavirus**

*Asked by **Lord Pendry***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have had with UK airline companies

about ensuring refunds for customers whose travel arrangements were cancelled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. [[HL3425](#)]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Government recognises the challenges businesses and consumers are experiencing regarding refunds for cancelled holidays and flights. Airlines are working hard to answer the high call volumes and to process the very large number of applications for refunds.

The Government appreciates the distress and frustration consumers may be experiencing. The Department for Transport is in regular conversation with UK airlines and working closely with the sector, the regulator and consumer groups to help ensure airlines deliver on their commitments.

### **Bangladesh: Mobile Phones**

*Asked by **Baroness Tonge***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Bangladesh about (1) the mobile data ban imposed in that country, and (2) the impact of that ban on women and girls in that country. [[HL3446](#)]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We continue to raise with the Government of Bangladesh the issue of telecommunications restrictions imposed in the Cox's Bazar refugee camps. I have raised this several times with the Bangladesh High Commissioner in London and we continue to engage through our British High Commission in Dhaka. In all of these interactions, we have requested full communications access in the camps.

Good communications are critical for crisis preparedness and response, as well as for maintaining stability in the camps. These communications are also central to monitoring and delivering critical services to Rohingya communities.

The restrictions limit the ability of humanitarian agencies to share information with refugee communities and each other; they also restrict the ability for the Rohingya to communicate across the camps. Women and girls are likely to be disproportionately affected by these restrictions as social norms in Rohingya communities mean they generally have less access to information than men. Ensuring that women and girls can access information on COVID-19 is especially important given their major role in caring for children, elders and sick household members.

### **Borders: Northern Ireland**

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

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the benefits of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland are protected, and in particular the movement of goods in the island of Ireland. [[HL3808](#)]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** The Protocol ensures that there will be no hard border with Ireland and that Northern Ireland will continue to have full access to the EU Single Market for goods.

On 30 April, the first meeting of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Specialised Committee was held via video conference, co-chaired by officials from the UK Government and European Commission.

A representative from the Northern Ireland Executive attended as part of the UK delegation in line with the commitment made in the *New Decade, New Approach* deal. The UK was clear that our approach at all times will be focused on protecting the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and gains of the peace process, and on preserving Northern Ireland's place in the UK consistent with the principle of consent.

### Brexit

*Asked by Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they had with the devolved administrations in preparation for their post-Brexit trade negotiation meetings with the European Commission in the week beginning 20 April. [HL3260]

**Lord True:** We are committed to working closely with the devolved administrations throughout negotiations to secure a future relationship that works in the interests of the whole of the UK. The Cabinet Office is leading work across Whitehall to ensure the devolved administrations are engaged in key stages of the negotiations.

### British Airways: Finance

*Asked by Baroness Randerson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with British Airways about their financial position; and when any such discussions took place. [T] [HL3802]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Department cannot comment on the commercial or financial matters of private companies.

The Transport Secretary, Aviation Minister and Department officials are in regular contact with the aviation sector, ensuring that the Government is kept fully aware of the latest developments with all firms and to understand where additional policy measures could address specific industry issues.

### Business Premises: Rents

*Asked by Lord Allen of Kensington*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the proposals for a Furloughed Space Grant Scheme, put forward by the British Retail Consortium and the British Property Federation; and what plans they have, if any, to implement such a scheme. [HL2995]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** In this difficult period, the government is making sure that people and businesses have access to the support they need as quickly as possible. That is why the Government has announced unprecedented support to protect against the current economic emergency, including immediate steps to give businesses access to cash to pay its rent, salaries or suppliers. Alongside this, the Government has also taken temporary steps to protect commercial tenants from eviction as well as to safeguard UK high streets against aggressive debt recovery actions during the coronavirus pandemic.

### Cancer and Heart Diseases: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Campbell of Pittenweem*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure cancer and heart disease patients are able to access hospital treatment during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3462]

**Lord Bethell:** The National Health Service has continued to provide urgent and emergency services throughout the outbreak and has run the 'Open for Business' media campaign to encourage people with potentially serious health issues to continue to seek medical advice, particularly those with symptoms of cancer, heart attack and stroke.

NHS trusts and Cancer Alliances are working to identify ring-fenced diagnostic and surgical capacity for cancer so that they can deliver cancer surgery and treatment at cancer hubs, which have been set up to treat patients in non-COVID-19 environments. Full use is also being made of independent sector hospital and diagnostic capacity.

Referrals for cancer treatment from general practitioners (GPs) to hospital continue to go ahead and the NHS is working hard to increase these to pre-COVID-19 levels.

To ensure patients with heart disease are given the care they need, hospitals are prioritising capacity for cardiac surgery, cardiology services and neuroradiology. Secondary care is prioritised for patients with heart failure, valve disease and arrhythmia services.

Further cardiac and stroke services continue to operate throughout the COVID-19 response and GPs continue to refer into these services.

### Cancer: Surgery

*Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many operations for cases of cancer have been cancelled in England since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3613]

**Lord Bethell:** Information on operations for cases of cancer cancelled in England since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic is not held centrally.

## Care Homes: Finance

*Asked by Baroness Altmann*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the financial strength of the companies in charge of the majority of elderly care homes. [HL3648]

*Asked by Baroness Altmann*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether there are any regulations or requirements placed on owners of care homes to demonstrate financial strength; and what plans they have, if any, to place limits on the level of debt such companies may be allowed to have. [HL3649]

**Lord Bethell:** The Care Quality Commission (CQC) monitors the financial health of the largest and most difficult-to-replace adult social care providers through their Market Oversight Scheme. Under the scheme, they have a duty to notify local authorities if they consider that a provider's services are likely to be disrupted because of business failure. This allows local authorities time to step in and ensure that people continue to receive the services they need. As a minimum, all providers in the Market Oversight Scheme are required to provide the CQC with financial information on a quarterly basis. However, where the CQC perceives a greater risk to continuity of care, more regular engagement is undertaken.

We recognise the pressures that all parts of the sector are facing, and we have provided councils with £1.6 billion funding in March to help local authorities deal with the immediate impacts of COVID-19. On top of this, on 18 April the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government announced an additional £1.6 billion of funding to support local authorities delivering essential frontline services.

## Care Quality Commission: Coronavirus

*Asked by Baroness Greengross*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many Care Quality Commission personnel have been dispatched to the front line during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3656]

**Lord Bethell:** The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is committed to supporting its colleagues who wish to undertake a different role to support the national effort in combatting COVID-19. As of 30 April 2020, the CQC has 101 colleagues with a formal external loan agreement. It has released 18 colleagues to the Department, 16 to NHS Improvement, one to Public Health England and one to Public Health Wales. It has released an additional 65 colleagues under local agreements to organisations including National Health Service trusts, general practitioner practices and pharmacies. In the majority of cases they are undertaking a frontline role. The CQC paused its routine inspection programme on 16 March 2020. This has freed up around 2,300 specialist advisors, who are not the CQC's employees but can be called upon

to support their inspection programme alongside clinical duties, to focus on frontline work.

## Charities: Coronavirus

*Asked by Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support charities, such as Coeliac UK, who are providing information to patients with dietary conditions; and what assessment they have made of the impact of the loss of income and the increase in demand for such charities' services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3741]

**Baroness Barran:** I recognise that many charities such as Coeliac UK are experiencing some particular pressures as a result of loss of income as a result of Covid 19, while demand for their services is unchanged or even increasing. The voluntary sector is playing a vital role in providing services for vulnerable people, and will continue to be an important vehicle for the UK's Covid-19 response.

I thank Coeliac UK for continuing to work closely with gluten free food industry contacts to understand how coronavirus might affect the production and supply of gluten free food to make sure that the safety of people with coeliac disease is maintained.

In response to the pressures faced by charities and voluntary organisations a package of grant funds worth £750 million was announced on 8 April to support charities at risk of financial hardship. This is a substantial package of targeted support for charities on the frontline of responding to Coronavirus. £360 million is coming directly from government departments, and £370 million will be provided for smaller charities, including through a grant to the National Lottery Community Fund. More information on this second tranche of funding More details will be released in the coming days via the National Lottery Community Fund. The aim is to get funding to those in greatest need as soon as possible.

Charities also have access to cross-cutting support already announced including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which enables them to furlough staff, and a three-month VAT deferral.

*Asked by Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take to support charities, in particular those that support the NHS, who have experienced a loss of income at the same time as an increased demand for services during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3743]

**Lord Bethell:** On 8 April 2020 the Chancellor announced £750 million to support the charity sector in response to COVID-19. This fund comprises three elements:

- £360 million will be allocated by central Government to charities in England based on evidence of service need.

- £370 million will support charities working with vulnerable people. In England, this support will be provided through the National Lottery Community Fund.

- The Government will match the public donations to the BBC Big Night In fundraising event that took place on 23 April, starting with a contribution of at least £20 million to the National Emergencies Trust appeal.

### Children: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Campbell of Pittenweem*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that vulnerable children attend school during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3465]

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

Our latest guidance on supporting vulnerable children is set out below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-s-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings>.

Attending school is a strong protective factor for many vulnerable children and young people and educational establishments remain open for them. We are closely monitoring the attendance of vulnerable children and are encouraging attendance where that would be in their best interests. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has written to leaders of all education settings and directors of children's services in England to encourage attendance for these children.

69,000 vulnerable children were attending educational settings on Thursday 7 May, compared to 58,000 on Thursday 30 April.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has also stressed the need for schools, local authorities and social workers to maintain contact and support services for vulnerable children and young people throughout this period. Officials from the department, and re-deployed Ofsted inspection teams, are working with local authorities directly to ensure that the systems and processes for maintaining contact with vulnerable children are robust in every local authority in England. We have also issued detailed guidance for education settings on how they can support vulnerable children, including how to monitor and encourage attendance.

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

### Contracts: Quintessentially

*Asked by Lord Macpherson of Earl's Court*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the written answer by Viscount Younger of Leckie of 18 March (HL2228), whether Foreign and Commonwealth

Office ministers or their special advisers were aware of the involvement of Quintessentially in the 2016 competitive tender exercise managed by UK Shared Business Services prior to the awarding of the contract. [HL3414]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The FCO awards and manages its Commercial Contracts in accordance with Government Commercial Function best practice and regularly assesses the maturity of our Commercial operations against the Commercial Operating Standards. This contract is held by the Department For International Trade (DIT).

### Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Selkirk of Douglas*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to (1) undertake, or (2) take part in, an international inquiry into the origins of COVID-19 and its global spread. [HL3437]

**Lord Bethell:** The World Health Organization (WHO) has an important role to play in leading the global health response. We want to see the WHO continue to learn lessons on how to improve its response to global health emergencies and as such would expect a full review of all elements of their response to COVID-19 to take place once they are out of response mode, as has occurred after previous Public Health Emergencies of International Concern. The United Kingdom intends to engage constructively with a future review.

### Coronavirus: Asthma and Hay Fever

*Asked by Lord Truscott*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bethell on 6 April (HL2662), what assessment they have made of the particular vulnerability of hay fever and asthma sufferers to COVID-19. [HL3354]

**Lord Bethell:** At present there is insufficient evidence to determine whether there is any particular vulnerability of hay fever and asthma sufferers to COVID-19.

The British Thoracic Society's *Advice for Healthcare Professionals Treating People with Asthma (adults) in relation to COVID-19* and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's *COVID-19 rapid guideline: severe asthma*, recommend that patients should continue taking their regular medications in line with their personalised asthma action plan. Some patients with severe asthma have been identified as being potentially extremely vulnerable to COVID-19 and been placed in the shielding group.

With regards to hay fever, the Global Initiative for Asthma and the Allergic Rhinitis and its Impact on Asthma organisation recommend that people with allergic rhinitis should continue to take their nasal corticosteroids, as prescribed by their healthcare professional.



## Coronavirus: Death

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the accuracy of the COVID-19 death statistics disclosed at the daily briefings. [HL3089]

**Lord Bethell:** All data released by the Department is robust and includes only cases officially confirmed by NHS England or the devolved administrations, following discussion with next of kin.

The Government publishes daily figures on confirmed COVID-19 deaths in hospital, as that gives us the most up to date figures on a consistent basis. The vast majority of serious cases and fatalities of the virus will occur in hospital settings.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) are also publishing statistics from deaths registered in a given week, which include deaths outside hospital such as care homes. From 28 April 2020, the ONS will publish counts of deaths involving COVID-19 in care homes, based on reporting from care home operators to the Care Quality Commission. These figures will put deaths involving COVID-19 in care homes in proper context, alongside the ONS's more comprehensive figures.

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to include care home deaths in the statistics reported at their COVID-19 daily briefings. [HL3726]

**Lord Bethell:** From 29 April, figures for deaths include all cases where there is a positive confirmed test for COVID-19. The figures include deaths with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 in all settings, not just those in hospital, and this provides us with a single figure on an equivalent basis for the whole of the United Kingdom.

These UK figures are compiled from validated data provided by each of the four nations of the UK. Figures from Health Protection Scotland, Public Health Wales and the Public Health Agency (Northern Ireland) have always included tested cases outside hospital. Figures for England from 29 April onwards are provided by Public Health England and draw together several different data sources, including data from NHS England and NHS Improvement, to produce this broader measure.

This approach allows us to compile deaths data on a daily basis using up-to-date figures across all settings.

## Coronavirus: Disease Control

*Asked by Lord Birt*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what scientific advice they have received to explain the flattening of the growth trend of newly reported cases of COVID-19 (1) in Japan, (2) in South Korea, and (3) in China. [HL2735]

**Lord Bethell:** The Government is monitoring the development of the COVID-19 outbreak around the world, including in Japan, China and South Korea, and international evidence has been used alongside a wide range of other intelligence to inform the United Kingdom response. Lessons learned from other countries on what worked well in certain situations, for example social distancing measures, can be useful for the Government to consider as we form policies. The Government Office for Science is working closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department for International Development, Cabinet Office and other departments to ensure the latest evidence on the international outbreak and response is scientifically sound and the conclusions drawn are robust.

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what the term "let it run hot" means in relation to COVID-19; and what plans they have to publish the evidence base for behind the use of that phrase. [HL2998]

**Lord Bethell:** We are not aware of the use of the term 'let it run hot' being used in relation to COVID-19 by the Department.

*Asked by Lord Warner*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will cite the scientific and public health evidence that they used to justify the blanket restriction on the movement of people with no underlying health conditions outside their own homes; and what consideration they gave to the alternative of introducing measures to ensure people without underlying health conditions maintained social distancing and wore personal protective equipment to prevent infection to themselves and others but were otherwise free to move as they desired. [HL3448]

**Lord Bethell:** The Government has published the scientific evidence supporting its action on social distancing. In the document, *Potential effect of non-pharmaceutical interventions on a COVID-19 epidemic in the UK 26 February 2020*, the Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling assessed four different response options. It outlined that social distancing for 13 weeks could reduce the peak by up to 50-60%, showing that this measure would have the largest impact than the other proposed measures in containing the outbreak. A copy of *Potential effect of non-pharmaceutical interventions on a COVID-19 epidemic in the UK 26 February 2020* is attached.

The Government continues to be led by the evidence in our response to COVID-19. Following the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies' advice, we think there will be some benefit for people wearing face coverings for epidemiological reasons and for giving people confidence as we return to work.

We will set out plans soon on what role face coverings may have as we look towards easing any lockdown measures.



The Answer includes the following attached material:

Potential\_effect\_of\_non\_pharmaceutical\_interventio  
[Potential\_effect\_of\_non\_pharmaceutical\_interventions.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-04-23/HL3448>

*Asked by Lord Blunkett*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they plan to develop a national COVID-19 test and tracing system; how that system will operate; how that system will be held accountable for its work; and what will be the role of local Directors of Public Health and related professionals. [HL3751]

**Lord Bethell:** We are developing a new test and trace programme which will bring together an app, expanded web and phone-based contact tracing, and swab testing for those with potential COVID-19 symptoms.

If someone installs the National Health Service COVID-19 app, it will start logging the distance between their phone and other phones nearby that also have the app installed. It measures this distance using a form of Bluetooth that is less energy hungry than normal Bluetooth. This log of proximity information will be stored securely on the person's phone. If a person becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19, they can report this to the NHS via the app which will mean that other app users who have come into significant contact with that person over the previous few days can be alerted and provided with advice if appropriate.

The first phase of the app rollout is taking place on the Isle of Wight. This will ensure the app is functioning as expected and will help us to see how it works best alongside the web and phone-based systems and to ensure that it dovetails with the testing programme.

Ministers are accountable to Parliament for the Department's response to COVID-19, including the test and trace programme.

Directors of Public Health and their teams will be key to the local delivery of the test and trace programme.

### Coronavirus: Disinfectants

*Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the suggestion by the President of the United States of America that injecting or ingesting disinfectant might be a cure for COVID-19; and what scientific advice they have received about the impact such treatment would have on patients so treated. [HL3606]

**Lord Bethell:** No assessment has been made.

### Coronavirus: Ethnic Groups

*Asked by Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that a higher proportion of black, Asian and minority ethnic people are dying as a result of COVID-19 than people of other ethnicities; whether they have now established an inquiry into the issue; and if so, what that inquiry has discovered to date. [HL3034]

**Lord Bethell:** We are very concerned by the apparent disproportionate number of people from minority ethnic backgrounds who have died, both within the National Health Service and overall. We have asked Public Health England (PHE) to complete a rapid review to understand how COVID-19 may be having an impact on different ethnic groups, and other groups of concern. PHE has begun linking thousands of existing health records for people who have had COVID-19 in order to gather more robust data.

To complement this rapid review by Public Health England, the National Institute for Health Research and UK Research and Innovation issued a joint call on 22 April for research proposals to investigate emerging evidence of an association between ethnicity and COVID-19 incidence and adverse health outcomes.

*Asked by Baroness Doocey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the timetable for the review by the NHS and Public Health England on the impact of COVID-19 on ethnic minorities; and what data they will publish before that review is completed. [HL3376]

**Lord Bethell:** Public Health England (PHE) has been asked by the Chief Medical Officer to review the potential that some ethnic minority groups are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. The findings of the Review will be published at the end of May.

NHS England publishes data of deaths broken down by ethnicity and PHE is planning to include data by ethnicity in its weekly COVID-19 surveillance report.

### Coronavirus: Hospitals

*Asked by Baroness Pinnock*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to use the NHS Nightingale Hospitals for the admission of patients with mild to moderate COVID-19 symptoms to prevent the deaths of people in their own homes or in community settings. [HL3430]

**Lord Bethell:** The Nightingale Hospitals have been established to build extra capacity during the COVID-19 pandemic and help local hospitals ensure that all those who need care can get it.

Over the coming months the Nightingale Hospitals will continue to have a role to play in supporting the National Health Service. This will be based on decisions by local clinical leaders on what will best complement other care available in the region to meet the needs of their communities.

### **Coronavirus: Houseboats**

*Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what health advice has been provided to those living on boats during the COVID-19 pandemic; and how that advice is being made available. [HL3176]

**Lord Bethell:** The Government takes the welfare of all our citizens seriously and we are working hard to ensure people who need help to do so are identified, supported and enabled to take necessary measures to reduce the spread of the virus.

All the latest information and guidance for the public is available on the GOV.UK website. The current general advice is that everyone should stay at home except in very limited circumstances, practise social distancing and follow handwashing guidance.

We are constantly evaluating what more we can do to support different groups in society that have particular needs or face particular challenges.

COVID-19 health guidance for members of Gypsy, Traveller and Boater communities is currently in development for dissemination in a range of formats.

### **Coronavirus: Intensive Care**

*Asked by Baroness Manzoor*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many patients diagnosed with COVID-19 have needed intensive care since 1 March; of those, how many have needed breathing assistance from respirators; how long each of those patients spent in intensive care; and how many such patients (1) recovered, (2) died, and (3) are still in intensive care. [HL3331]

**Lord Bethell:** Data is not available in the format requested. Data relating to the COVID-19 response is published online on a monthly basis via statistical work areas on the NHS England website.

### **Coronavirus: Legislation**

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether COVID-19 related legislation will be revoked once the pandemic is over or when such legislation is no longer reasonably required. [HL3061]

**Lord Bethell:** The Government have consistently made it clear over the course of our response to the COVID-19

outbreak, and during debates in both Houses on the recent Coronavirus Act 2020, that we will take all measures necessary to protect the public's health, and that in doing so we will act proportionately and with due regard for the rights of the individual. These measures are therefore intended to be temporary, and the legislation contains many safeguards to ensure that its provisions are in force for only as long as they need to be.

Some measures, for example indemnities for National Health Service employees, will of necessity remain in force after the outbreak is over, but wherever possible we will ensure that we remove any burdens on individuals and on society as soon as the science tell us that we can.

### **Coronavirus: Pneumonia**

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bethell on 21 April (HL2602), why they have not been in contact with the National Cancer Institute Pascale Foundation or the Colli Hospital in Italy to assess the potential outcomes of the use of Tocilizumab to treat patients with COVID-19 related pneumonia; how they are monitoring "the results of trials of experimental therapies for COVID-19 from around the world"; what discussions they plan to have with the National Cancer Institute Pascale Foundation, and the Colli Hospital in Italy as part of that monitoring; whether the United Kingdom Therapeutics Task Force will report on its findings of its assessment of tocilizumab; and if so, when. [HL2997]

**Lord Bethell:** Tocilizumab has begun evaluation in the United Kingdom as part of the RECOVERY and REMAP-CAP studies. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is in regular contact with sponsors and trial investigators to review clinical trials, offer scientific and regulatory advice on clinical trials and encourage early submission of emerging data through facilitated licensing routes. Emerging results from global trials will be taken into consideration by the MHRA during authorisation of UK clinical trials and to inform any amendments needed to ongoing trials.

The Government recognises the importance of collaborating effectively to combat COVID-19, and the UK is meeting regularly with other countries both bilaterally and multilaterally to share information on a variety of subjects including clinical trials. Working with partners across the health and care system, the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) is supporting the identification, prioritisation and delivery of high quality COVID-19 research, a key element of the Government's overall response. As part of this work, the NIHR Innovation Observatory is monitoring the progress of trials taking place across the world.

The Therapeutics Taskforce has not been in direct contact with the National Cancer Institute Pascale Foundation or the Colli Hospital in Italy.

## Crimes of Violence: Females

*Asked by Baroness Anelay of St Johns*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what work the Department for International Development is funding to ensure that safe spaces are designated for women and girls where they can report abuse without alerting perpetrators during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3584]

**Baroness Sugg:** The UK is deeply concerned about the surge in violence against women and girls (VAWG) during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is more important than ever to support safe spaces and services for survivors of violence. These are essential and life-saving.

The UK is already the largest donor to the UN Population Fund and we have committed an additional £10 million to their COVID-19 response, which will provide services to women and girls through safe spaces. We have provided £20 million to support the UN Children's Fund COVID-19 response, strengthening and establishing response and referral mechanisms for survivors. We are urgently reorienting existing bilateral programmes to ensure women and girls can continue to access support during the lockdown, including safe spaces. For example, in Nepal, DFID is financing safe spaces for women in nine shelters and 42 COVID-19 quarantine sites. In Uganda, DFID is supporting the Government's response to the spikes in VAWG by funding 13 shelters across the country and supporting revisions of standard operating procedures to ensure safety of frontline staff and survivors.

## Data Protection: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Lucas*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, to help protect the privacy of the public in using the proposed COVID-19 tracking app, they plan to bring into force immediately sections 77 and 78 of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008, which would allow a maximum custodial sentence of two years for those convicted of unlawfully obtaining and selling personal data. [HL3706]

**Baroness Barran:** Existing law and NHS standards set out a framework of protective measures to ensure the app is legally compliant and meets the standards expected to keep data secure and confidential. This includes GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, and the Common Law Duty of Confidentiality in cases where data is provided that might identify an individual.

The data protection legislation provides the Information Commissioner with a range of enforcement powers to ensure organisations comply. As well as significant financial penalties for non-compliance, the 2018 Act includes a range of criminal offences for the very worst breaches of the legislation. This includes the offences of unlawfully obtaining data and re-identifying personal data that has been pseudonymised without lawful excuse. We are satisfied this provides a comprehensive framework

and have no plans to increase the maximum penalties of any offences under the Act.

Sections 77 and 78 of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 related to the historic offence of unlawfully obtaining personal data under section 55 of the Data Protection Act 1998. That offence and the relevant provisions in the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act were repealed by the Data Protection Act 2018.

## Databases: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Mawson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the accuracy of data collection across the UK in respect of COVID-19; and whether they have identified any regional variability in the quality of data collection processes. [HL3420]

Lord True: The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have therefore asked the Authority to respond.

Dear Lord Mawson,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking what assessments have been made of the accuracy of data collection across the UK in respect of Covid-19, and any regional variability in the data collection processes (HL3420).

In my role as National Statistician, I have a responsibility to ensure the presentation of all data and analysis across Government is useful, transparent about its caveats, and of a high quality. Trustworthy, coherent and relevant data and statistics to support democratic decision-making is as important now as ever. As part of our response to Covid-19, we are working to ensure that the UK has the vital information needed to respond to the impact of this pandemic on our economy and society. I have been pleased with the response of colleagues in stepping up to that challenge by adapting data collection methods and sources, and publishing relevant, timely information. It is a strength of the UK statistical system that we provide equality of access to data on which important decisions will rely.

Data collection processes feeding into the production of evidence to support the response to COVID-19 are monitored, and any reports of differences in data collection investigated. Currently there are a very small number of those investigations ongoing. Those investigations would not have an impact on ONS weekly deaths statistics, which remain the most complete source of information.

The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) has also been helpful in adapting processes for assessing accuracy and coherence of statistics during this crisis. These steps further enhance the trustworthiness of the statistical system's response.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

## Death

Asked by **Lord Dobbs**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what analysis they have undertaken into the estimated number of non-COVID-19 related deaths during the COVID-19 pandemic; whether any such analysis shows an increase in that number; what assessment they have made of the causes for any such increase; and what plans they have to publish any such analysis. [HL3372]

**Lord True:** The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have therefore asked the Authority to respond.

Dear Lord Dobbs,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking what analysis has been undertaken into the estimated number of non-COVID-19 related deaths during the COVID-19 pandemic; whether any such analysis shows an increase in that number; what assessment they have made of the causes for any such increase; and what plans they have to publish any such analysis (HL3372).

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is responsible for publishing weekly numbers of deaths registered in England and Wales. The most recent annual figures published are for deaths registered in 2018[1], however we do publish provisional weekly death registrations which are currently published for deaths registered up to 24 April 2020[2]. National Records Scotland (NRS) and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) are responsible for publishing the number of deaths registered in Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively.

Cause of death is defined using the International Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 10th edition (ICD-10). Deaths involving COVID-19, which refers to deaths where COVID-19 is mentioned anywhere on the death certificate, are identified by the ICD-10 codes U07.1 and U07.2.

Table 1 shows the provisional number of deaths registered each week in England and Wales up to 24 April 2020, broken down by deaths involving COVID-19 and deaths not involving COVID-19. This table also includes the 5-year average for number of deaths. The data shows that the overall increase in deaths compared to the 5-year average is not solely due to deaths involving COVID-19.

The ONS is publishing a report on the increase in non-COVID-19 deaths observed in weekly deaths statistics, in coming weeks. This is mentioned in the ONS's statement of upcoming analysis on deaths and coronavirus (COVID-19)[3]. The report will analyse how the number of non-COVID-19 deaths occurring in different places of death, for different age groups and for different causes of death differ from previous years' data, and will suggest how these findings correspond with possible reasons for the increase.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

*Table 1: Number of deaths registered by week, England and Wales, 28 December 2019 to 24 April 2020[4][5][6]*

Week	All deaths - 2020	COVID-19	Non-COVID-19	All deaths - 5-year average
1	12,254	0	12,254	12,175
2	14,058	0	14,058	13,822
3	12,990	0	12,990	13,216
4	11,856	0	11,856	12,760
5	11,612	0	11,612	12,206
6	10,986	0	10,986	11,925
7	10,944	0	10,944	11,627
8	10,841	0	10,841	11,548
9	10,816	0	10,816	11,183
10	10,895	0	10,895	11,498
11	11,019	5	11,014	11,205
12	10,645	103	10,542	10,573
13	11,141	539	10,602	10,130
14	16,387	3,475	12,912	10,305
15	18,516	6,213	12,303	10,520
16	22,351	8,758	13,593	10,497
17	21,997	8,237	13,760	10,458

Source: Office for National Statistics

[1]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/datasets/deathsregisteredinenglandandwalesseriesdrreferencetables>

[2]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsregistere weeklyinenglandandwalesprovisional/weekending24april2020>

[3]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/news/statementsandletters/statementofupcominganalysisondeathsandcoronaviruscovid19>

[4]Cause of death was defined using the International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision (ICD-10) codes U07.1, U07.2

[5]Figures are based on deaths registered up to 24 April 2020

[6]All figures for 2020 are provisional



## Death: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they are recording deaths due to COVID-19 by age; if so, when they will release this information to assist in research modelling; and if not, why not. [HL3407]

**Lord True:** The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have therefore asked the Authority to respond.

Dear Lord Kennedy,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking whether deaths due to COVID-19 by age are being recorded and if so, when this information will be released to assist in research modelling; and if not why (HL3407).

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes mortality data that are compiled from information supplied when deaths are certified and registered as part of civil registration. This includes information on the cause of death, such as COVID-19, and the age of the deceased.

The ONS are responsible for producing a weekly report on the provisional number of deaths registered in England and Wales including deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19)[1]. As part of this report, data is published for death registrations and death occurrences where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate by five-year age bands. This weekly report gets published every Tuesday at 9.30am with the data available to be used for research purposes.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

[1]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsregistere dweeklyinenglandandwalesprovisional/previousReleases>

*Asked by Lord Mawson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the date by which they will have robust data on the number of deaths from COVID-19 that occur outside of hospitals. [HL3417]

**Lord True:** The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have therefore asked the Authority to respond.

Dear Lord Mawson,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking for the date by which robust data on the number of deaths from COVID-19 that occur outside of hospitals will be available (HL3417).

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is responsible for producing a weekly report on the provisional number of deaths registered in England and Wales including

deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19)[1]. As part of this report, data is published for deaths registered where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate by place of occurrence, which includes places outside of hospitals such as care homes or the home of the deceased. Additionally, on 28 April, the ONS published data from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on the number of deaths in care homes involving COVID-19[2]. Going forward, data from the CQC will be published alongside the weekly report.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

[1]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsregistere dweeklyinenglandandwalesprovisional/previousReleases>

[2]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/datasets/numberofdeaths incarehomesnotifiedtothecarequalitycommissionengland>

*Asked by Lord Dobbs*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to publish a breakdown of the number of people in the UK who have died of COVID-19 (1) as a contributory, and (2) as the main, cause of death since 23 March. [HL3769]

**Lord True:** The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have therefore asked the Authority to respond.

Dear Lord Dobbs,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking what plans there are to publish a breakdown of the number of people in the UK who have died of COVID-19 (1) as a contributory, and (2) as the main, cause of death since 23 March (HL3769).

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is responsible for publishing mortality statistics for deaths registered in England and Wales. The most recent year for which mortality statistics are available is 2018[1], however we do publish provisional statistics for weekly deaths registrations, which are currently published for deaths registered up to 24 April 2020[2]. National Records Scotland (NRS) and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) are responsible for publishing the number of deaths registered in Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively.

The most up-to-date figures on the number of deaths registered in England and Wales involving COVID-19 as a contributory cause of death are available in the weekly deaths bulletin[3] and accompanying dataset[4]. These data provide provisional numbers for deaths where COVID-19 or suspected COVID-19 was mentioned anywhere on the death certificate. These data are released every Tuesday.



A breakdown of the number of deaths in England and Wales where COVID-19 was the underlying cause of death was published in a separate article <sup>[5]</sup> and accompanying dataset<sup>[6]</sup> on deaths involving COVID-19 that occurred in March 2020. These data include the number of deaths where the underlying cause of death was COVID-19, that occurred between 1 March and 31 March, registered up to 6 April 2020 in England and Wales. Figures for April will be published in mid-May.

NRS publish weekly statistics<sup>[7]</sup> on the number of deaths in Scotland where COVID-19 was the underlying cause of death, or where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate. The latest data available are for deaths registered up to the week ending 26 April 2020. NRS are also planning to release a detailed monthly report on COVID-19 deaths in the upcoming weeks.

NISRA publish provisional weekly deaths statistics<sup>[8]</sup> for Northern Ireland which have now been extended to include data on deaths where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate. The latest data available are for deaths registered up to the week ending 24 April 2020.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

[1]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/datasets/deathsregisteredinenglandandwalesseriesdrreferencetables>

[2]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsregistere dweeklyinenglandandwalesprovisional/weekending24april2020>

[3]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsregistere dweeklyinenglandandwalesprovisional/latest>

[4]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/datasets/weeklyprovisionalfiguresondeathsregisteredinenglandandwales>

[5]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsinvolvedin covid19englandandwales/deathsoccurringinmarch2020>

[6]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/datasets/deathsinvolvedin covid19englandandwalesmarch2020>

[7] <https://www.nrsotland.gov.uk/covid19stats>

[8] <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/weekly-deaths>

## Debts: Coronavirus

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Leeds*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the letter published in the Financial

Times on 14 April, and signed by 18 African and European leaders, which called for an immediate moratorium on all bilateral and multilateral debt payments, both public and private, until the COVID-19 pandemic has passed; and what plans they have, if any, to support that request. [HL3474]

**Baroness Sugg:** The UK Government is deeply concerned about the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the public finances of low-income developing countries. During 2020, developing countries were projected to spend around \$36 billion on servicing external debts to bilateral, multilateral and private sector creditors. In this time of crisis, it is vital that creditors work together to ensure that servicing debts does not prevent countries protecting their citizens and economies.

The UK, alongside the G20 and the Paris Club of official creditors, has committed to a temporary suspension of debt service repayments from the poorest countries. This official sector effort could provide up to \$12 billion of additional fiscal space for eligible countries until the end of the year, allowing their governments to redirect finances towards mitigating the health and economic impacts of COVID-19. This initiative provides time to assess what further assistance these countries may need.

The G20 has called for the private sector creditors to participate on comparable terms and has asked the Multilateral Development Banks to explore whether there are options for them to participate, while maintaining their current credit ratings and low cost of funding which are important for supporting their client countries.

## Department for Work and Pensions: Staff

*Asked by Baroness Sherlock*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many additional staff members have been (1) redeployed from other parts of the civil service, and (2) hired as new staff members, to handle increases in benefits claims. [T] [HL3845]

**Baroness Stedman-Scott:** The Department for Work and Pensions has agreed and planned the transfer of 967 staff from Other Government Departments. 500 colleagues have been redeployed from other parts of the civil service already, with 475 of them currently still working for DWP. A further 397 redeployments are scheduled in the week of 11 May.

The Department has offered 1344 posts to people who were already on waiting lists following successful interviews for positions with the department, 543 people have accepted and pre-employment checks have been completed for 377 of these.

In addition, the Department is engaged in an exercise to directly recruit temporary staff on six-month contracts, many of whom are Jobcentre Plus customers recommended for these roles by their Work Coaches. So

far, 1984 provisional offers of employment have been accepted, subject to background checks being completed.

We have also engaged 315 agency staff with a further 350 due to start work scheduled in the week of 11 May.

We have also committed to re-deploying 10,000 DWP staff to critical frontline services.

### Detention Centres: Coronavirus

*Asked by **Baroness Hamwee***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the use of Immigration Removal Centres in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in particular (1) how many detainees have been released from detention since 23 March; (2) how many detainees remain in detention; (3) whether any asylum seekers have been placed in detention since 23 March, and if so how many; and (4) what measures have been taken to shield detainees and to maintain social distancing both for detainees and staff. [\[HL3389\]](#)

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The safety and health of those in immigration removal centres is of the utmost importance but we remain committed to removing foreign national offenders or those who violate our immigration rules. Detention plays a key role in securing our borders and maintaining effective immigration control.

There is a general presumption of liberty for all individuals. Detention is used only when necessary, and decisions to detain an individual are made on a case by case basis and are based on all of the information known at the time of the review. As circumstances of the case change, detention is reviewed in light of these changes and release may then become appropriate.

There is no-one currently detained and going through the Detained Asylum Casework process. The majority of asylum claims are processed in the non-detained system, with claimants living in the community. Only a minority of claimants are detained whilst their claim is considered and almost all of those who have their claim considered in detention only claim asylum after being detained for removal. Asylum claims in detention are considered in accordance with published detention guidance, incorporating the policy on safeguarding adults at risk.

The Home Office is following all Public Health England guidance and have robust contingency plans in place including measures such as protective isolation to minimise the risk of COVID-19 spreading in the immigration detention estate. Further measures including shielding, single occupancy rooms and the cessation of social visits have been introduced in line with the Government direction on social distancing.

The Home Office publishes data on people leaving and in detention in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release'. Data on the number of people detained under immigration powers at the end of each quarter are published in table Det\_D02 and of those leaving detention are published in table Det\_D03 of the immigration detention detailed datasets.

Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates to those in detention as at 31 December 2019. Additionally, the Home Office publishes a high-level overview of the data in the 'summary tables'. The 'contents' sheet contains an overview of all available data on detention.

Figures covering the first quarter of 2020, including those detained as at 31 March 2020 will be released on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020. Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the 'Research and statistics calendar'.

### Developing Countries: Debts

*Asked by **The Lord Bishop of Leeds***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with other G20 leaders to extend the agreement reached on 15 April, to suspend debt payments owed by 77 of the world's poorest countries, to include the (1) the World Bank, and (2) the African Development Bank. [\[HL3476\]](#)

**Baroness Sugg:** The UK Government is deeply concerned about the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the public finances of low-income developing countries. The UK, alongside the G20 and the Paris Club of official creditors, has committed to a temporary suspension of debt service repayments from the poorest countries.

The UK, together with other G20 Finance Ministers, has asked the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) to explore options for them to participate in the G20 initiative, while maintaining their current credit ratings and low cost of funding which are important for supporting their client countries. The MDBs are currently conducting analysis and will report back to the G20.

During 2020, developing countries were projected to spend around \$13 billion on servicing external debts to multilateral creditors. In response to COVID-19, the international financial institutions (including the World Bank and African Development Bank) have made over \$300 billion of finance available for developing countries over the coming 15 months.

### Disabled Students' Allowances

*Asked by **Lord Addington***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that those applying for Disabled Students Allowance who need formal diagnosis, normally provided through one-to-one assessments, will have that Allowance in place before the start of the next academic year. [\[HL3170\]](#)

**Baroness Berridge:** The Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) published revised guidance on diagnostic assessments on 4 May 2020. The department is working with the Student Loans Company on how best to take account of the

revised guidance in administering Disabled Students Allowances, and will communicate the approach to stakeholders shortly.

### Disease Control: EU Action

*Asked by The Earl of Sandwich*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the UK has continued membership of the EU's Early Warning and Response System for pandemics. [HL3812]

**Lord Bethell:** Infectious diseases such as COVID-19 do not respect borders and we are working closely with the European Union, European countries and global partners to tackle this global pandemic.

The United Kingdom continues to access all EU health security alerting systems, databases and networks during the transition period, including the EU's Early Warning and Response System (EWRS). We continue to use the EWRS system as part of our response to the pandemic, to share information with the EU and Member States relating to COVID-19.

Our responses will continue to benefit from this international cooperation, and we are committed to continuing to work with countries and partners from all across the world, as we move into future stages of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Diseases: Death

*Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the number of deaths due to medical conditions other than COVID-19 since 5 March. [HL3543]

**Lord True:** The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have therefore asked the Authority to respond.

Dear Lord Kennedy,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking what assessment has been made of the number of deaths due to medical conditions other than COVID-19 since 5 March (HL3543).

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is responsible for publishing mortality statistics for deaths registered in England and Wales. The most recent figures published are for deaths registered in 2018[1], however we do publish provisional weekly deaths registrations, which are currently published for deaths registered up to 24 April 2020[2]. We have also published an article which contains detailed analysis of all deaths that occurred in England and Wales between 1 and 31 March 2020, registered up to 6 April 2020[3]. This includes data on underlying causes of death. Detailed analysis of all deaths that occurred in England and Wales between 1 and 30 April 2020 is due to be published in mid-May.

National Records Scotland (NRS) and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) are responsible for publishing the number of deaths registered in Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively.

Cause of death is defined using the International Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 10th edition (ICD-10). Deaths caused by COVID-19 are identified by the ICD-10 codes U07.1 and U07.2.

Table 1 below provides the number of deaths by whether the underlying cause was COVID-19 or another medical condition, for deaths that occurred in England and Wales between 1 and 31 March 2020 registered up to 6 April 2020.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

*Table 1: Number of deaths occurring in March 2020, where the underlying cause of death was COVID-19 or other causes, England and Wales[4][5][6]*

<i>Underlying cause of death</i>	<i>Number of deaths</i>
COVID-19	3,372
All other causes	43,986
Total	47,358

Source: Office for National Statistics

[1]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/datasets/deathsregisteredinenglandandwalesseriesdrreferencetables>

[2]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsregistere dweeklyinenglandandwalesprovisional/weekending24apri l2020>

[3]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsinvolvin gcovid19englandandwales/deathsoccurringinmarch2020>

[4] Cause of death was defined using the International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision (ICD-10) codes. Codes used for COVID-19 are U07.1 and U07.2.

[5] Figures are for deaths that occurred between 1 and 31 March 2020 in England and Wales and were registered by 6 April 2020.

[6] More detail on the number of deaths broken down by leading cause groups (other than COVID-19) can be found in Table 1 of the dataset published alongside the article on Deaths involving COVID-19, England and Wales: March 2020.

### Electoral Register: British Nationals Abroad

*Asked by Lord Wallace of Saltaire*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what the total number of overseas voters on the UK electoral roll was in (1) 2001, (2) 2005, (3) 2010, (4) 2015, and (5) 2017;

and what is their current estimate of the total number of overseas registrations. [HL3524]

*Asked by Lord Wallace of Saltaire*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the current distribution of electoral registration by overseas voters broken down by constituency. [HL3525]

*Asked by Lord Wallace of Saltaire*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the distribution of registered overseas voters by their current country of residence. [HL3526]

*Asked by Lord Wallace of Saltaire*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what proportion of Electoral Registration Officers in (1) England, (2) Scotland, (3) Wales, and (4) Northern Ireland, retain complete constituency electoral registers for all periods since (a) 1945, (b) 1970, and (c) 1990. [HL3560]

**Lord True:** The Government does not hold data on the number of overseas voters, or their distribution by constituency or current country of residence. Electoral Registration Officers (ERO) maintain a register for their own local area, including the number of overseas electors registered in their area.

In its report on the 2019 UK Parliamentary General Election, published on 21 April 2020, the Electoral Commission noted that just over 230,000 people were registered as overseas electors at the time of the general election. The Office for National Statistics also publishes electoral statistics bulletins with some information on overseas electors.

The Government does not hold information on the proportion of EROs that retain complete constituency electoral registers. There is no statutory requirement for EROs to retain previous electoral registers. EROs do however currently keep registers for 15 years to enable them to check the eligibility of those applying to be overseas electors.

The Government is committed to removing the 15 year limit on overseas electors and we will do so in a way that is workable for both voters and electoral administrators.

## **Epilepsy: Cannabis**

*Asked by Baroness Walmsley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to fund private prescriptions for whole plant cannabis pharmaceutical medicines for children with severe drug resistant epilepsy during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3527]

**Lord Bethell:** The costs of medicines associated with treatment sought privately remain the responsibility of patients. No additional public funding is being provided beyond the financial package to provide additional support for public services, individuals and businesses experiencing financial difficulties during COVID-19.

The latest National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines demonstrate a clear need for more evidence to support routine prescribing and funding decisions for unlicensed cannabis-based medicines on the National Health Service, and we are working hard with the health system, industry and researchers to improve the knowledge base.

## **Ethnic Groups: Coronavirus**

*Asked by Baroness Doocey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they started to (1) collect, and (2) publish data relating to the ethnicity of those infected with COVID-19; and for what reasons this did not start at the beginning of the pandemic in the UK. [HL3377]

**Lord Bethell:** Data on those infected with COVID-19 are collected by Public Health England (PHE) for new diagnoses and hospitalised patients. Standard recording practice across laboratory systems requires recording of only minimal data (such as date of birth and name) as these records are not intended for disease surveillance purposes.

PHE has begun a rapid review to better understand how COVID-19 may be having an impact on different ethnic groups. As part of this review, PHE is matching thousands of laboratory records of COVID-19 cases to other health records to draw down accurate data on ethnicity, age, sex and geographical region. The first results will be published by the end of May.

## **Europe: Coronavirus**

*Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with other governments in Europe about the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3459]

**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.



## Fly-tipping: Coronavirus

*Asked by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to recommending the re-opening waste and recycling centres to alleviate the increased incidence of fly-tipping on agricultural land. [HL3399]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

We are aware of reports of an increase in fly-tipping and that, anecdotally, this may be a result of the closure of household waste recycling centres. However, this does not appear to be consistent across the country.

It is legal for household waste and recycling centres (HWRCs) to remain open during the Coronavirus pandemic. However, we know that some local authorities are finding this challenging, which is why on 5 May Defra published some guidance to help local authorities do this.

We worked with industry, local authorities and other Government departments, including Public Health England, on developing the guidance which includes a section on workforce safety. The key principle of the guidance is that human health must be protected while maintaining safe systems of working. Social distancing must also be observed by both staff and visitors to HWRCs wherever possible. The guidance makes it clear that residents must only visit HWRCs if they cannot store safely at home the items they wish to dispose of.

The guidance was published this week after close consultation with the police. The guidance can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-to-local-authorities-on-prioritising-waste-collections/managing-household-waste-and-recycling-centres-hwrcs-in-england-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic>

## Food: Imports

*Asked by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that supplies of imported food are not delayed at UK ports. [HL3401]

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble:** The UK is working with national governments across the globe to ensure supply chains remain open and businesses have access to the information they need to keep goods moving. We have been monitoring the impacts of the coronavirus on supply chains from as many sources as possible, including our ongoing dialogue with business.

Defra and the Food Standards Agency have been developing a range of temporary easements for application in the UK for both intra-EU movements and third country imports to ensure that trade continues to flow during the Covid-19 outbreak. We consider that

these temporary measures will not compromise biosecurity and public health. Separately, the European Commission has adopted Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/466 that provides a number of discretionary, temporary official control easements, some of which overlap with the ones we have been developing. We have written to Border Control Posts to confirm the temporary easements that can be put in place, and will keep these under review to ensure that trade continues without compromising biosecurity and public health.

## Free Movement of People: Nurses

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to change their freedom of movement policy for nurses, resident outside of the UK, who have contributed to addressing the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK. [HL3432]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Government has announced, for NHS doctors, nurses and paramedics, whose visa will expire before 1 October, we will extend their visa for 12 months. This offer also applies to their families. The extension is automatic and free of charge and those benefitting will not have to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge.

We keep all of our policies under review and are continuing to consider how we can best support the NHS and its staff during the current pandemic.

## Free School Meals

*Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support families who have lost access to free school breakfasts; whether such breakfasts are provided elsewhere whilst schools are shut down; and if so, where. [HL3621]

**Baroness Berridge:** Alongside our national approach to supporting pupils to continue to access free school meals, we are also committed to supporting schools and children who benefit from our breakfast club programme.

Our suppliers, Family Action along with Magic Breakfast, are in contact with schools on the programme, where possible, and are working closely with them to target the children most in need to continue to provide them with a healthy breakfast.

Schools on the programme can choose to support target children in the way which works best for them; this may include parents collecting food parcels from open schools or breakfast food 'drop offs' to target families. This should be arranged alongside the school's wider support for children on free school meals, and schools must follow Public Health England's advice on social distancing at all times.

Family Action have reported that more than 880 schools in disadvantaged areas are registered to receive breakfast deliveries from this programme during the



coronavirus outbreak. These schools are located nationwide across England.

### Golf

*Asked by Lord Kirkhope of Harrogate*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to allow golf courses and golf facilities to re-open, subject to safeguards. [HL3704]

**Baroness Barran:** Golf courses along with other sports facilities remain closed at this time in line with the government's clear message to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives.

The government is in regular contact with stakeholders across the sport and physical activity sector and will continue to provide advice as and when there are any changes to the current guidance. The Government's position is led by our medical experts and the key priority is to protect people's health,

Despite the current restrictions, it is vitally important that we keep the nation active, which is why a person can leave the house for one form of exercise a day; for example a run, walk, or cycle - alone or with members of their household.

### Health Professions: Protective Clothing

*Asked by Baroness Doocey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether their guidelines on personal protective equipment for frontline medical staff are (1) based on expert medical advice and evidence or (2) also based on economic or other factors. [HL3375]

**Lord Bethell:** The guidance on the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) by health and social care workers is based on expert reviews and advice from the Department's New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (NERVTAG) as well as literature reviews by Health Protection Scotland. The guidance is updated regularly, in line with emerging evidence.

Public Health England has not undertaken an economic assessment of the PPE guidance.

### Hereditary Peers: By-elections

*Asked by Lord Rennard*

To ask the Leader of the House what assessment she has made of whether there has been any reduction in the capacity of the House to scrutinise the policies of Her Majesty's Government caused by the suspension of by-elections for hereditary peers until 8 September; and what consideration she has given to extending that suspension to limit the size of the House and reduce costs. [HL3709]

**Baroness Evans of Bowes Park:** The House has agreed to a number of temporary changes to its usual

working practices and procedures in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. One of these changes was to delay any by-elections under Standing Order 10 until at least Tuesday 8 September. Without this delay a by-election would have had to be held before 26 June owing to a retirement.

In practical terms it is possible to put the arrangements in place for by-elections to be held in a way that reflects our current circumstances and ways of working. So a further extension is not necessary.

### Hong Kong: Human Rights

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the letter sent by United Nations Special Rapporteurs to the government of China on 19 February about violations of the human rights of healthcare workers in Hong Kong; and what representations they have made to that government about any such violations. [HL3671]

**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.

### Housing

*Asked by Lord Beecham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Affordable Housing Commission Making Housing Affordable Again: Rebalancing the Nation's Housing System, published in March; and what estimate they have made of the number of properties in which second home owners falsely claim to live to avoid council tax. [HL3496]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** The Government agrees that we need to maximise the supply of new affordable housing and make sure that more people in housing need can have access to a good quality social home. We announced at Budget 2020 that we are investing £12bn to build affordable homes between 2021/22 and 2025/26. This will be the biggest cash investment in affordable housing for a decade.

All second homes are liable for council tax, subject to any discounts which the council may apply locally, regardless of whether they are occupied. 95% of properties that are classed as second homes are charged the full rate.

### **Huawei: 5G**

*Asked by Lord Maginnis of Drumglass*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to reconsider the role of Huawei in the development of telecommunications infrastructure in the UK. [HL4098]

**Baroness Barran:** The final conclusions of the Government's Telecoms Supply Chain Review in relation to high risk vendors were announced on 28 January. High risk vendors should be excluded from those parts of the 5G and full fibre networks that are critical to security ("the core"), and their presence in the rest of the UK's networks should be limited to 35 per cent, with further restrictions in sensitive geographic locations.

The UK Government does not plan to reconsider this decision. We will be introducing the Telecoms Security Bill to implement the new security framework for our telecoms networks, including the restrictions to be applied to the presence of high risk vendors, at the earliest possible opportunity.

### **Human Rights: Coronavirus**

*Asked by Lord Hain*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effect of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic by governments overseas on human rights standards in those countries. [HL3864]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are concerned by reports that some governments are using the current crisis to fail to comply with their human rights obligations. On 9 April, the UK participated in the UN Human Rights Council's first ever virtual conversation with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Discussion focused on the human rights implications of the COVID-19 crisis; both the immediate impact of the response on human rights around the world, and the social and economic consequences, including the prospect of greater inequality. In his statement to the Council, our Ambassador to the UN in Geneva stressed the importance of ensuring that parliaments, media and civil society all play their role to scrutinise the actions of governments and international agencies, and that we make use of the international human rights frameworks. The British Government remains committed to standing up for human rights and the rule of law in all circumstances.

### **Humanitarian Aid: Food Supply**

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Coventry*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to help people around the world who are dependent on humanitarian assistance for food, particularly in relation to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3766]

**Baroness Sugg:** The UK is at the forefront of supporting those in need of humanitarian assistance and we are actively working with international partners to better track, monitor and respond to the impact of COVID-19 on food security.

To date, the UK has committed £744 million to the global response. We are a key contributor to the UN Global Humanitarian Response Plan, which is helping the most vulnerable access the support they need. We have provided considerable support to the World Food Programme to secure the continuity of supply chains for essential commodities and services, and to pre-position food supplies.

Through existing programmes, we also continue to work with partners to tackle acute food insecurity and malnutrition and provide food to millions of people. We are supporting the UN Food and Agriculture Office to tackle the current locust plague, including providing livestock feed and planting material for farmers already facing economic uncertainty due to COVID-19. We are also repurposing programmes to address the impact of COVID-19 on food security including to monitor food prices and stocks.

### **Humanitarian Aid: Minority Groups**

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Coventry*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that religious minorities in countries affected by the COVID-19 pandemic have equal access to humanitarian assistance. [HL3767]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK Government works to ensure that all aid reaches the most vulnerable including those from religious minorities. Vulnerable populations will experience COVID-19 outbreaks differently. COVID-19 is likely to reinforce their marginalised position in society, their experience of discrimination, violence and stigma, and further limit their access to essential support and services. For this reason, guidance was circulated across DFID highlighting that inclusion must be central to our response and the specific contexts and needs of all religious minorities should be taken into account when developing practical programmes to tackle COVID-19.

## Immigrants: Detainees

*Asked by Lord German*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many people were held in immigration detention centres in each month of 2020 to date. [HL3386]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Home Office publishes data on people in detention in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release':

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release>

Data on the number of people detained under immigration powers at the end of each quarter are published in table Det\_D02 of the immigration detention detailed datasets.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/returns-and-detention-datasets#immigration-detention>

Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates to those in detention as at 31 December 2019. Additionally, the Home Office publishes a high-level overview of the data in the 'summary tables'. The 'contents' sheet contains an overview of all available data on detention.

Figures covering the first quarter of 2020, including those detained as at 31 March 2020 will be released on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020. Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the 'Research and statistics calendar'.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/returns-and-detention-datasets#immigration-detention>

The Answer includes the following attached material:

copy of detention summary tables [Copy of detention-summary-dec-2019-tables copy 2.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-04-23/HL3386>

## Influenza: Older People

*Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many people (1) over 65, (2) over 75, and (3) over 85 years old died of influenza in England and Wales in each of the last five years. [HL3275]

**Lord Bethell:** The data is not held in the format requested.

## Insurance: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Empey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of insurance companies refusing to pay claims from customers for business interruption on the grounds that the restrictions

introduced by the Government to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic invalidated customers' policies. [HL3378]

*Asked by Lord Empey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with insurance companies that are refusing to pay claims to customers as a result of the restrictions introduced by the Government to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3379]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** For those businesses which have an appropriate policy that covers government ordered closure and unspecified notifiable diseases, the Government's social distancing instructions are sufficient to allow businesses to make a claim against their insurance, provided the other terms and conditions in their policy are met.

However, it is important to note that most businesses have not purchased insurance that covers losses from unspecified notifiable diseases, such as COVID-19. Insurance policies differ significantly, so businesses are encouraged to check the terms and conditions of their specific policy and contact their providers. Some policies cover losses arising from any disease classed as notifiable by the Government, however, most policies only cover a specific list of notifiable diseases. The terms of a policy cannot be changed retrospectively.

The Government recognises that businesses who do not have appropriate insurance cover will require support from elsewhere. The Government encourages businesses to seek assistance through the wider support package if they are in financial difficulty. Businesses should explore the full package of support set out by the Chancellor in recent weeks, which includes measures such as business rates holidays, the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and wage support.

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

*Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they will ensure that there is adequate civil society consultation and involvement in the upcoming Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. [HL3692]

*Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how civil society views will be included in the outcome of the upcoming Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. [HL3693]

*Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether civil society in the focus countries of the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2018–22 will be consulted as part of the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. [HL3694]

*Asked by **Baroness Hodgson of Abinger***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Department for International Development will incorporate equality into the upcoming Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. [[HL3695](#)]

*Asked by **Baroness Hodgson of Abinger***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether (1) the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, (2) the Ministry of Defence and (3) the Department for International Development, will ensure that all equalities, including gender equality, are included in the outputs and policy of the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy; and if so, how. [[HL3696](#)]

**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.

### International Assistance: Coronavirus

*Asked by **The Marquess of Lothian***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what international responses they are initiating with partners in the UN to provide assistance to those states which are the least prepared to address the health and economic crises arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. [[HL3792](#)]

**Baroness Sugg:** We are using UK aid to its full effect to counter the health, humanitarian, and economic risks and impacts of COVID-19. The UK strongly supports the United Nations Global Humanitarian Response Plan and continues to work with international partners, including the United Nations and its agencies, to ensure aid reaches those most in need.

Up to £744 million of UK aid funding has been committed so far to support the global efforts to combat COVID-19. Of that, £145 million is for United Nations appeals, including:

- £75 million for the World Health Organization;
- £20 million for UNICEF and £5 million to Education Cannot Wait to help refugee, migrant and displaced children proving basic supplies and lessons;
- £20 million for the UN Refugee Agency providing access to handwashing stations and drinking water for displaced people;
- £15 million for the World Food Programme; and
- £10 million to United Nations Population Fund to provide lifesaving sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender-based violence prevention.

The UK is also providing up to £150 million of UK aid funding which will go the International Monetary Fund's Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust to help developing countries meet their debt repayments so that they can focus their available resources on tackling COVID-19.

### International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia

*Asked by **Baroness Anelay of St Johns***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they intend to mark the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia on 17 May. [[HL3583](#)]

**Baroness Sugg:** To mark the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) government buildings across the UK and, where locally appropriate, our overseas missions will fly the Rainbow flag. The theme of IDAHOBIT 2020 is "breaking the silence". One of the core objectives of our human rights work is increased respect and equality for all members of society. The British Government is proud to promote LGBT rights worldwide through our global network and our global leadership position. We work through existing international mechanisms and institutions to promote tolerance and non-discrimination against LGBT people and to address discriminatory laws.

As with each year we plan to mark the day on social media, celebrating how far we've come and noting the challenges we still have to face.

### Internet: Safety

*Asked by **Lord McNally***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether their proposed statutory duty of care to tackle online harms will address harms to public health; and when the full response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation will be published. [[HL3044](#)]

**Baroness Barran:** The Government published the initial response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation on 12 February 2020. This confirmed that the Government is developing legislation on online harms to establish a new duty of care on online companies towards their users, overseen by an independent regulator. The duty of care will require companies to put appropriate systems and processes in place to deal with harmful content on their services to keep their users safe.

The White Paper provided an indicative list of online harms that in-scope companies would be expected to address. That list was not exhaustive or fixed. Online harms legislation will need to be sufficiently flexible, so that it is responsive to emerging technologies and forms of harmful content and behaviour, while at the same time providing sufficient certainty to companies. The White Paper also excluded some types of harm from scope, including harm to companies and harm arising from a breach of data protection legislation or cyber-security.



Further information on the duty of care will be provided in the Full Government Response to the White Paper consultation, which will be published later this year.

*Asked by Lord McNally*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to publish a draft Online Harms Bill for pre-legislative scrutiny. [HL3509]

**Baroness Barran:** The Government is committed to making the UK the safest place to be online and we will introduce legislation when parliamentary time allows. We recognise the benefits of pre-legislative scrutiny, and a final decision about whether to publish the Bill in draft for such pre-legislative scrutiny will be taken nearer the time.

### Iran: Arms Trade

*Asked by Baroness Deech*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the forthcoming expiration of the UN-imposed arms embargo on Iran in October 2020 on stability in the Middle East and the security of UK allies. [HL3655]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA) is a reciprocal deal: it lifts sanctions in exchange for tough nuclear limits. Iran has broken the nuclear limits in the JCPoA and we are working to bring Iran back into compliance through the deal's Dispute Resolution Mechanism.

UNSCR 2231, which underpins the JCPoA, includes a number of clauses designed to allow sanctions to expire on fixed dates: the UN conventional arms embargo is due to expire in October 2020. We have repeatedly set out concerns about Iranian destabilising behaviour, including proliferation to non-state actors. UNSCRs 1540, 2216 and 1701, which prohibit the proliferation of weapons to the Houthis and Lebanese Hizballah, will remain in place after the arms embargo expires. The EU arms embargo and UN ballistic missile restrictions will also remain in place until 2023. We are consulting partners on the broader implications of arms embargo expiry and encourage all states to implement national export control best practice.

### Iran: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Iran about its COVID-19 policies and the (1) infection, and (2) death, rates in that country. [HL3773]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We routinely discuss with Iran their response to COVID-19. The UK is taking a key role in the global response to the virus. Our support is directed to help the most vulnerable across the globe, which is why we have provided up to £2m of financial aid and funding for technical expertise to UN agencies in Iran, to combat the rapid spread of the disease.

### Iraq: Politics and Government

*Asked by The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the current political situation in Iraq and the efforts of its new prime minister-designate to form a new cabinet; and whether they have offered any support to the government of Iraq to assist in that respect. [HL3787]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We consider it important that an Iraqi Government is in place to address the significant economic, security and health challenges Iraq faces. The UK maintains frequent engagement with Iraqi political leaders and parties. The Minister for Middle East and North Africa discussed the current situation in Iraq with the Iraqi Ambassador to London on 16 March and with Foreign Minister Hakim on 1 April. The Iraqi Parliament is due to vote on 6 May the proposed Iraqi Government under Prime Minister designate Mustafa Khademi.

### Legal Profession

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the number of lawyers who have been asked to continue working despite being furloughed. [HL3642]

**Lord Keen of Elie:** The Government has not made any assessment of the number of lawyers who have been asked to continue working despite being furloughed. Under the framework established by the Legal Services Act 2007, the legal services profession in England and Wales, and the bodies that regulate it, are independent of Government. The legal services regulators are able to take action if lawyers or law firms breach conduct rules.

### Leisure: Wales

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what financial support they are making available to (1) the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod, (2) the National Eisteddfod of Welsh, (3) the Urdd National Eisteddfod, and (4) the Hay Festival of Literature and Arts, following their cancellation in 2020. [HL3718]

**Baroness Barran:** Culture is classed as a devolved competency and organisations should look at the support being provided by the relevant Government in the Devolved Authorities. In addition to the support provided by the UK Government, the Welsh Government has announced almost £2 billion of support for businesses in Wales (<https://businesswales.gov.wales/coronavirus-advice/>).

The Arts Council of Wales has also established the Arts Resilience Fund which provides financial support to artists and cultural organisations so they may survive this

crisis and to find ways of getting back on their feet (<https://arts.wales/funding/coronavirus>).

### Local Government Finance: Coronavirus

*Asked by Baroness Thornhill*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the scale of the loss of income incurred by local authorities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic; and what steps they intend to take to assist local authorities financially. [HL3664]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** The department has engaged closely with councils from across the country, and across different tiers, since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. Allocations of the additional £1.6 billion support for councils to respond to COVID-19 were announced on Tuesday 28 April. This is a significant package of support which responds to the range of pressures councils have told us they are facing, and takes the total amount provided to local councils to over £3.2 billion.

### Marriage

*Asked by Baroness Cox*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made on their commitment in the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper, published 14 March 2018, to "explore the legal and practical challenges of limited reform relating to the law on marriage and religious weddings". [HL3013]

**Lord Keen of Elie:** The Government continues the exploration of both limited reform and non-legislative options that it began in detail last Spring. We are doing so with the greatest care. Any proposals affecting how religious groups are permitted to conduct marriages must be thoroughly assessed for their fairness to all religious groups and for how far they could achieve the change of practice intended.

### Migrant Camps: Females

*Asked by Baroness Uddin*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to provide support and assistance to women and girls in refugee camps, following reports that humanitarian organisations are recalling their staff to return home due to COVID-19. [HL3729]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Refugees are amongst the most vulnerable to the COVID 19 pandemic, with women and girls disproportionately affected. That is why the UK is pushing for greater support to women and girls across the international response.

To date, the UK has committed £744 million in the international fight against COVID-19. That includes significant support to the United Nations Population Fund to address the needs of women and girls, with regards to

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

The UK is also supporting the UN's High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to provide essential services for refugees including tackling GBV and child protection, as well as emergency cash assistance to survivors and women-at-risk. Displaced women are actively involved in delivery of assistance, informing their communities about the risks of violence and providing information on prevention and protective health measures.

Whilst the current crisis inevitably has had an impact on access and movement, aid workers remain very much engaged in refugee camps around the world. We are pushing to ensure humanitarian access is maintained and assistance is targeted to those most in need. Humanitarian organisations are also working through local partners on the frontlines of the response including women-led and women's rights organisations.

### National Security Council

*Asked by Lord Foulkes of Cumnock*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when the National Security Council (1) last met, and (2) will next meet. [T] [HL3824]

**Lord True:** It is a long established precedent that information about the discussions that have taken place in Cabinet and its Committees, as well as when and how often they have met, is not shared publicly.

### NHS: Computer Software

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether their track and trace app is accessible to blind and partially sighted people, including those who use screen reading technology. [HL4047]

**Lord Bethell:** We continue to work to ensure the National Health Service COVID-19 app is compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. We are committed to regular audits of the app by independent specialist assessors to conduct usability testing of the app, including dedicated research to solely focus on accessibility. We have published an Accessibility Statement, which will be kept under review and updated as necessary.

### NHS: Protective Clothing

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that NHS staff and key workers have personal protective equipment and suitable reserves of equipment; and when they estimate new equipment will be delivered to such workers. [HL3348]

**Lord Bethell:** While the United Kingdom entered the current situation with a stockpile designed to respond to a

pandemic influenza and a no-deal exit from the European Union, the supply chain for personal protective equipment (PPE) was designed to accommodate delivering to 226 National Health Service trusts. We are now providing essential PPE supplies to 58,000 different providers.

In response we brought in the armed forces to aid distribution and the Government published 'Coronavirus (COVID-19): personal protective equipment (PPE) plan' on 10 April. It incorporates guidance on who needs PPE and when they need it, routes to ensure those who need it can get it at the right time and sets out actions to secure enough PPE to last through the crisis. We are working at pace to bolster the supply chain to ensure it is able to meet the high demand for PPE from the health and social care sectors.

### NHS: Voluntary Work

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many people have registered to volunteer for the NHS in England since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3486]

**Lord Bethell:** 607,074 NHS Volunteer Responders have completed the necessary identity checks to begin helping those most vulnerable, and as of 1 May, volunteers have completed 82,385 tasks.

NHS Volunteer Responders can provide a range of support, including collecting shopping, medication or other essential supplies for someone close to their home, providing telephone support to individuals at risk of loneliness as a consequence of isolation, and patient transport support.

The programme is now accepting self-referrals and hon. Members are also able to refer vulnerable people to the programme to receive support from the NHS Volunteer Responders. This can be done by completing an online referral form via the Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) website or by calling the RVS call centre.

### Organs: Donors

*Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the risk that COVID-19 poses to recipients of kidney transplants. [HL3777]

**Lord Bethell:** Public safety throughout this period has been the Government's top priority. Patients who have had a kidney transplant, along with other patients who have had solid organ transplants and remain on long-term immune suppression therapy, have been classified as clinically extremely vulnerable. All transplant recipients have received information about what steps they should take to make sure they remain shielded and how they will continue to receive healthcare and support.

Work is underway with the transplant community to support clinicians' understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic in transplant recipients. Research is looking at links to specific anti-rejection medication, comorbidity

and other factors that predict hospitalisation and subsequent patient outcomes. International collaboration is well established to share experience and learning about the impact of COVID-19 on transplanted patients.

### Overseas Aid: Coronavirus

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Worcester*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assistance and support they are providing to (1) the Chairperson of the African Union, (2) the World Health Organisation and (3) the African Union's Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, in coordinating a response to, and mitigating, the economic impact of COVID-19 in Africa. [HL3571]

**Baroness Sugg:** Ministers and officials are in regular contact with senior World Health Organisation and African Union representatives in coordinating a response to COVID-19 in Africa.

Our partnership with the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention includes technical cooperation through the UK Public Health Rapid Support Team and Public Health England, as well as a £2 million research grant through the joint DFID-Wellcome Trust Initiative on Research for Epidemic Preparedness.

Under the African Union-UK strategic partnership, we are in close contact with the African Union on their plans to address the peace and security impacts of the pandemic and promote the continent's economic recovery. This has included action alongside the Paris Club and G20 partners to respond to African Union calls for debt support.

The UK has provided £75 million to the World Health Organisation to coordinate and support international efforts to end the pandemic.

### Parking: Pedestrian Areas

*Asked by Lord Selkirk of Douglas*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to outlaw pavement parking throughout England; and whether the responses to their consultation on such parking have been in favour of its ban. [HL3549]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Government intends to carry out a public consultation later in the year, on possible solutions to the complex pavement parking problem. The consultation will fill evidence gaps, seek views on specific options that were raised by the Transport Select Committee and call for alternative ideas. Ministers will take decisions on next steps in the light of the consultation responses.

### Press Freedom

*Asked by Lord Foulkes of Cumnock*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light World Press Freedom Day on 3 May, what assessment they have made of threats posed to press freedom (1)

globally, and (2) domestically; and what plans they have to (a) establish a national committee, and (b) develop an national action plan, for the safety of journalists. [HL3380]

**Baroness Barran:** The Global Index, released by Reporters Without Borders on 21 April, showed press freedom improved very slightly around the world in 2019. While this is welcome news, the threat to free media remains very concerning, and the overall trend is downwards. There has been a rise in the suppression of media freedom by authoritarian regimes. Online threats to journalists have also increased, including through governments imposing blanket shut-downs and misinformation being used to target journalists. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated an already alarming situation. There are examples of states introducing disproportionate restrictions, silencing debate and abusing journalists. Some states and non-state actors are seizing the chance to propagate disinformation. Funding and advertising revenue has been significantly reduced, causing publications to close and journalists to be laid off. Without action, much of the media on which our democratic systems and values depend risks becoming another victim of the pandemic.

The UK press is among the most respected and free in the world. The government recognises press freedom is fundamental to a healthy democracy and strongly supports it. We are working to support a sustainable future for quality journalism in the UK through the government's response to the Cairncross Review, so that it can continue to hold government and others to account.

These efforts have increased as we work to support the continued provision of news through the COVID-19 crisis. The government has ensured that the press is able to carry out their essential function at this critical time, designating them as key workers for the purpose of access to educational places, and making sure that newspaper deliveries can continue. The Government has also maximised the advertising we are placing in national and regional newspapers at this critical period, in order to use their powerful, familiar voices and reach on the government's COVID-19 public information campaign.

The government has previously announced its intention to convene a National Committee and devise a National Action Plan for the Safety of Journalists. We remain committed to this goal.

## Prisoners' Release: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many prisoners they have so far released, temporarily or permanently, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic; how many were pregnant women; and what is their response to the Prison Governors Association's call for the release of 15,000 prisoners. [HL3393]

*Asked by Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what are their criteria for the temporary or permanent release of prisoners during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3396]

**Lord Keen of Elie:** On 31 March, we announced that pregnant women and prisoners with their babies in custody will be considered for Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) on compassionate grounds during the COVID-19 pandemic. As of Friday 1 May, 21 pregnant women and mothers with babies in custody have been released.

On 4 April, we announced the End of Custody Temporary Release scheme. This scheme enables risk-assessed prisoners, who are within two months of their release date, to be temporarily released from custody, as part of the national approach to managing public services during this challenging period. As of Friday 1 May, 30 offenders have been released under this scheme.

Policy and guidance for both the End of Custody Temporary Release and COVID-19: Use of Compassionate ROTL can be found on gov.uk and is attached with this answer.

HMPPS took decisive action in March to restrict regimes and minimise movements between jails to save lives. Strong further measures were introduced to ease pressure on prisons with the early release of [low-risk offenders](#), [temporary expansion of the estate](#), and work to reduce the number of those held on remand.

Latest modelling informed by new Public Health England advice shows that creating headroom of c. 5,000 could be effective in limiting the spread of the virus. The population has already reduced by almost 3,000 over a seven-week period. Combining a reduction in the prison population, creating additional headroom in the estate, and managing prisoners through 'compartmentalisation', HMPPS can continue to protect life.

The modelling can be found on gov.uk and is also attached with this answer.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

covid-19-population-management-strategy-prisons [covid-19-population-management-strategy-prisons.pdf]

covid19-use-compassionate-rotl [covid19-use-compassionate-rotl.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-04-23/HL3393>

*Asked by Baroness Corston*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many pregnant women have been released from prison during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3533]

**Lord Keen of Elie:** On 31 March, this government announced that pregnant women and prisoners living on Mother and Baby Units will be considered for Release on



Temporary licence on compassionate grounds during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As of Friday 1 May, 21 pregnant women and prisoners with babies in custody have been released.

### **Prisoners' Release: Hotels**

*Asked by Lord Blencathra*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to accommodate people released from prison in hotels. [HL3455]

**Lord Keen of Elie:** In response to the current unprecedented situation, the Government has announced that risk-assessed prisoners who are within two months of their release date will be temporarily released from jail.

Prisoner releases are being phased over time to ensure stringent risk assessments can be carried out and that the required support for offenders is in place. No prisoner will be released without housing and health support being in place.

If an individual does not have identified accommodation to be released to, then probation services will investigate options for securing temporary accommodation.

To facilitate this process, we are working with several public, private and voluntary sector providers to secure a range of accommodation options.

### **Prisoners: Mobile Phones**

*Asked by Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the opportunity for a prisoner to use a mobile telephone is determined by their good conduct; and what assessment they have made of the impact of mobile telephone usage on preventing the breakup of families in the absence of visits. [HL3395]

**Lord Keen of Elie:** In recognition of the importance of continued contact with family and to ensure stability in our jails the Government has moved quickly to keep prisoners in touch with their family members by the introduction of 900 secure mobile PIN phones for those prisons which do not already have in-cell telephony. These are in addition to, but operate in the same way, as wing PIN phones which remain in use.

Behaviour is not part of the formal risk assessment for the allocation of mobile telephones for prisoners' use. Access to the locked mobile PIN phones is given following completion of a risk assessment, for those deemed to represent the greatest risk to the public and require additional safeguards approval must be given by the Governing Governor.

There has been no recent assessment of the impact of mobile PIN telephone use on families in the absence of visits. However, Lord Farmer's Report in June 2019,

"The Importance of Strengthening Female Offenders' Family and other Relationships to Prevent Reoffending and Reduce Intergenerational Crime" shows that facilitating regular family contact can reduce a prisoners' likelihood of reoffending by 39%. Family members are also able to contact the National Prisoners' Families helpline or the prison's safer custody line if they have individual concerns.

### **Private Rented Housing: Natural Gas**

*Asked by Baroness Pinnock*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what advice they have provided to landlords about fulfilling the statutory obligation to conduct gas safety checks on properties during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3801]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** Government advice to landlords and tenants may be found (attached) at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/876500/Consolidated\\_Landlord\\_and\\_Tenant\\_Guidance\\_COVID\\_and\\_the\\_PRS\\_v4.2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/876500/Consolidated_Landlord_and_Tenant_Guidance_COVID_and_the_PRS_v4.2.pdf)

Landlords should make every effort to abide by statutory gas safety obligations. However, we recognise that the current restrictions may be making it harder to carry out these checks. There are provisions in the regulations for landlords to account for situations in which they cannot carry out inspections, however they must demonstrate they have taken all reasonable steps to comply with the law. Recognising the concern among landlords, residents and inspectors, on 7 April 2020, HSE published further guidance setting out detailed advice for a range of scenarios. This can be found (attached) here: <https://www.gassaferegister.co.uk/help-and-advice/covid-19-advice-and-guidance/landlords/>

Our guidance is clear that no work should be carried out in any household which is isolating or where an individual is being shielded, unless the work is to remedy a direct risk to the safety of the household. Where entry is required for emergency repairs landlords should take every possible step to minimise contact with residents and follow government guidance on tradespeople working in people homes, which may be found (attached) at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-distancing-in-the-workplace-during-coronavirus-covid-19-sector-guidance>

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Advice for Landlords [200511 Coronavirus (COVID-19)\_ Advice for landlords - Gas Safe Register - HL3801.pdf]

Landlords and Tenant guidance [200511 Consolidated\_Landlord\_and\_Tenant\_Guidance\_COVID\_and\_the\_PRS - HL3801.pdf]

Social distancing [200511 Social distancing in the workplace during coronavirus (COVID-19)\_ sector guidance - HL3801.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-04-30/HL3801>

## Protective Clothing: Procurement

*Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made to secure personal protective equipment for health professionals from small and medium-sized businesses based in the United Kingdom. [HL3327]

**Lord Bethell:** As part of the national effort to focus the United Kingdom's manufacturing industry on this immediate challenge, the Government has issued a 'call to arms' for industry partners and other manufacturers to make essential personal protective equipment (PPE) that demonstrably meets required specifications for use by the National Health Service and care sector.

Each offer from industry is being followed up with checks on the organisation making the offer and technical checks on the safety and effectiveness of the products on offer before they are purchased for use within the NHS and care sector. The large number of offers means that it has been taking some time to respond. This is because we have a rigorous process in place and are checking at every step to ensure that the offers meet our safety requirements.

Lord Deighton will lead the national effort to boost UK PPE production and also support the scaling up of engineering efforts for small companies capable of contributing to supplies.

## Public Houses: Rents

*Asked by Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that pub owners who own three or less public houses with a total annual rental income of less than £100,000 are exempted from any plans to waive public house rentals during the COVID-19 pandemic; what plans they have to support such owners if their tenants are unable to pay rent during the pandemic; and what assessment they have made of whether it is compliant with the Human Rights Act 1998 to impose the suspension of rent without payment being deferred and without offering compensation. [HL3368]

**Lord Callanan:** The Government recognises that this is a very challenging time for the pub sector. The majority of landlords and tenants are working well together to reach agreements on debt obligations. While landlords are urged to give their tenants the breathing space needed, tenants that can afford to pay rent, or a proportion of it, are still expected to do so. The Government recognises that commercial landlords have their own obligations to meet.

The Government is implementing temporary measures that were provided for in the Coronavirus Act 2020 to protect business tenants from forfeiture or re-entry on grounds of non-payment of rent. The Government will also introduce temporary measures to ban the use by commercial landlords of aggressive debt recovery tactics,

as part of the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Bill. These measures do not require landlords to waive rent.

The Government is providing an unprecedented package of measures to help businesses during the current COVID-19 outbreak, including loans, employee salary support and self-employed income support, which are available to commercial landlords.

## Public Service Broadcasting: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Addington*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce a compulsory requirement for broadcasters to include a public service component in their programming following the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3452]

**Baroness Barran:** The Government recognises that broadcasting has an important role to play for UK audiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, Public Service Broadcasters (PSBs) have played a vital role during the pandemic, acting as sources of trusted news, entertaining and informing the UK population and bringing the nation together through shared moments.

Under the Communications Act 2003 Ofcom has a statutory obligation to periodically review the effectiveness of public service television broadcasting and to report on how it can be maintained and strengthened. The Government welcomes that Ofcom's current PSB Review will bring together evidence not only about the main PSB services but also the range of media services available to consumers in the UK. The government looks forward to the outcome of the review in due course.

## Remand in Custody

*Asked by Lord German*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many people have been remanded in custody in England and Wales in each month of 2020 to date. [HL3384]

**Lord Keen of Elie:** The requested data is not available at this time. Court data up to the year ending December 2019 is due to be published in May 2020, and data for the year ending December 2020 is planned for publication in May 2021. Prison receptions data covering January to March 2020 is planned for publication in July 2020 and data covering April to June 2020 is planned for publication in October 2020.

## Rohingya: Coronavirus

*Asked by Baroness Sheehan*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to educate and inform Rohingya refugees in the Kutupalong Camp about the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3630]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK is reaching refugees with information and support to reduce rumours,

myths, fear and panic about COVID-19, through the Communications with Communities Working Group. This includes a large array of methods to disseminate messages to refugees and the host community including community meetings where possible; radio, posters and leaflets, videos, loudspeakers and information service centres. Messages are being endorsed by the Cox's Bazar Civil Surgeon, translated into the Rohingya language and Bangla, and are being developed in consultation with Rohingya people, including religious leaders, to ensure they are effective. Child-friendly messaging is also being used.

*Asked by Baroness Sheehan*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any to provide additional support to Rohingya children in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3631]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK is working with partners to support and protect Rohingya children whose parents or care-givers become sick or die from COVID-19. This includes identifying temporary carers within the same camp block for children at risk of being left alone. These efforts are building on existing foster and child protection systems and will increase the number of Child Protection Volunteers within the Rohingya community in the camps. Although schools in the camps are closed, every effort will be made to get them up and running again as quickly as possible, and to ensure children return to education.

### **Rohingya: Females**

*Asked by Baroness Uddin*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what support they are giving to Rohingya women survivors of violence, rape and torture now living in Bangladesh, given reports of an increase in violence against women and girls there. [HL3730]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK's support to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in the Rohingya and host communities in Cox's Bazar since 2017 has helped more than 12,000 individuals receive GBV case management support. In the current situation, while camp operations have been limited to minimise the risk of COVID-19 exposure to refugees, protection services are still being provided. Child Protection Focal Points, GBV case workers, and the Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Network (led by the Inter-Sectoral Coordination Group) continue to play a critical role and ensure continuity despite reduced humanitarian staff presence in the camps. This includes monitoring, coordination, referral and immediate support for survivors. Anti-trafficking awareness raising is also ongoing. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the heightened risks as a result of the current restrictions and – through our partners – will monitor this closely and respond as best as possible within the constraints faced.

### **Rohingya: Human Trafficking**

*Asked by Baroness Sheehan*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of child trafficking and child marriage in Rohingya refugee camps; and what action, if any, they are taking as a result. [HL3634]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Approximately 40% of trafficking survivors in the Rohingya refugee camps are children, predominantly girls. Girls are at risk of early marriage both within the camps and through trafficking.

Irregular movements are not new to Cox's Bazar district or Bangladesh, which is on the US' Tier 2 Watch List for Trafficking in Persons. The UK has contributed significantly to the protection sector within the humanitarian response, through partners including the International Organisation for Migration, UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the UN Children's Fund. Our support helps to raise awareness about the risks of trafficking and build capacity among law enforcement to prevent it. UK funding also supports efforts to identify and provide direct assistance to victims of trafficking, such as safe shelters, psycho-social support, and social workers for children.

### **Rohingya: Humanitarian Aid**

*Asked by Baroness Sheehan*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the availability of aid workers in the Kutupalong refugee camp; and what action, if any, they are taking as a result. [HL3633]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Cox's Bazar District, where the Rohingya refugee camps are located, is subject to lockdown measures to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19. In addition, on World Health Organization advice, the Bangladeshi Government has instructed a reduction in humanitarian activity to an agreed list of critical (lifesaving) services. This means that fewer aid workers than normal are entering the refugee camps. For example, essential site management activities continue, but staff are reduced to 20% of their usual number. There are no education facilities open at the moment. However, critical UKAid funded services such as food and medical aid continue to be delivered to support the daily needs of refugees, including by refugee volunteers themselves. We consider this temporary reduction in staff accessing the camp a challenging, but important measure to try to prevent or at least delay the transmission of the virus in the camps. Social distancing arrangements have been put in place to prevent the possible spread of COVID-19 between humanitarian workers, and to provide medical care for those on the humanitarian frontline, coordinated by IOM. We are closely monitoring the situation, including access issues, and working with our humanitarian partners to best protect and prepare the Rohingya and host communities for an outbreak and to maintain critical services and assistance.

**Rohingya: Refugees***Asked by Baroness Sheehan*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to help the boats of Rohingya refugees that have been turned away from Bangladesh and Malaysia. [HL3635]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are extremely concerned about the reports of hundreds of Rohingya still at sea and reports of failure to disembark vessels in distress. I have raised this with the Bangladesh Foreign Minister and with the Bangladesh High Commissioner in London. In addition, the British High Commission in Dhaka have raised this issue with the Government of Bangladesh. We continue to urge the Governments of Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia and other governments in the region to assist boats carrying Rohingya refugees to land.

We are working with UN partners, including the International Organisation for Migration and UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to find out more and provide live-saving action where possible. The UN are already providing shelter and assistance to survivors from the boat which reached Bangladesh on 16 April and stand ready to help any further refugees who make it ashore. We agree with UNHCR that there is a need for greater coordination and responsibility-sharing by states to address the maritime movements of refugees and asylum-seekers in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea. The UK is committed to protecting the Rohingya community, some of the world's most vulnerable peoples.

**Rugby: Finance***Asked by Lord Hoyle*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what financial support they intend to provide to ensure the long-term future of Rugby League. [HL3697]

**Baroness Barran:** The Government announced on 30 April that the Rugby Football League (RFL) will receive a £16 million cash injection to safeguard the immediate future of the sport for the communities it serves.

This emergency loan will help the sport deal with the extreme financial impact of the coronavirus outbreak while the season remains suspended, due to social distancing measures.

It comes ahead of England hosting the Rugby League World Cup next year, which will see the men's, women's and wheelchair games come together for a world first on the sport's biggest stage. The Government's manifesto included a commitment to delivering a successful tournament, with significant financial support already provided.

**Saudi Arabia: Migrant Workers***Asked by The Lord Bishop of Coventry*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of Saudi Arabia's decision to deport 30,000 Ethiopian migrant workers, including some who are suspected of suffering from COVID-19. [HL3686]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are aware of these reports of deportations and are concerned at reports of COVID-19 amongst returned migrant workers in quarantine centres in Ethiopia. We are monitoring the situation closely.

It is important that we work collectively to respond to the unprecedented threat of COVID-19 to limit the spread of the virus and to mitigate its negative impacts. Under the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, we have committed to cooperation in facilitating the safe and dignified return and readmission of migrants. We encourage all countries to consider measures to respond to this commitment in the context of COVID-19.

**Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies***Asked by Lord Myners*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to publish the names of the members of the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies; and what assessment they have made of the impact of any such publication on public confidence in that group. [HL3423]

**Lord Callanan:** SAGE is not a membership body. Her Majesty's Government does not routinely publish the names of SAGE participants in line with advice from the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure and standard procedure for COBR meetings, to which SAGE gives advice. For the COVID-19 response and to ensure transparency on who is contributing to the science advice being given to the Government, we have published the names of those who are happy to have their names published.

The names that have been published are available on the SAGE page on GOV.UK.

*Asked by Lord Campbell of Pittenweem*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what criteria they use to appoint members to the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies. [HL3461]

**Lord Callanan:** SAGE is not a membership body. The participants of SAGE depend on the nature of the emergency. There are roughly 20 scientists at each meeting, but they will not be the same people at every meeting. Expert participation varies depending on the subjects being discussed.

The Government Chief Scientific Adviser and Chief Medical Officer will decide who or what expertise is needed for each meeting, typically drawing from leading



experts from within government and from the fields of academia and industry. As SAGE responds to emergencies the capacity for participants to respond quickly is also a factor.

### Sentencing

*Asked by Lord German*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many people were sentenced to a prison term of six months or less in each month of 2020 to date. [HL3385]

**Lord Keen of Elie:** The requested data is not available at this time. Data on custodial sentences up to December 2018 has been published. Data for the years ending December 2019 and December 2020 is due to be published in May 2020 and May 2021 respectively.

### Shipbuilding: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord West of Spithead*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to accelerating shipbuilding programmes in the UK to assist with economic revival following the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3734]

**Baroness Goldie:** The Secretary of State for Defence continues to work closely with the maritime industry in his capacity as Shipbuilding Tsar. Current Government shipbuilding programmes are progressing, with the shipbuilding industry following Government social distancing guidance. Future shipbuilding plans remain under close review.

### Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Addington*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic related school closures and social distancing measures on those with identified special educational needs but who do not have an Education Health and Care Plans. [HL3167]

*Asked by Lord Addington*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the provision of support to children with dyslexia, autism and other neuro diverse conditions who are undergoing education at home. [HL3168]

*Asked by Lord Addington*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what advice and guidance they have provided to parents of children who do not qualify for school attendance and who have dyslexia, autism and other neuro diverse conditions about how to support those children successfully at home; whether such guidance is published; and if so, where. [HL3169]

**Baroness Berridge:** We have published guidance on supporting vulnerable children and young people at this time:

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

We have also published guidance on how risk assessments should be carried out for children with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans:

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

This guidance sets out the practicalities for local authorities and other providers in undertaking risk assessments for vulnerable children and young people with EHC plans, in light of school and college closures. Schools remain open to the vulnerable, and children in care and local authority Virtual School Heads are actively tailoring their expert offer of advice and support to the current circumstances. This includes the provision of additional resources such as online learning – in addition to our offer of laptops and tablets – and support for carers where children are unable to attend school. 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 the child or young person's needs cannot be met safely at home. Where the risk assessment determines a child or young person with an EHC plan will be as safe or safer at an educational setting, it may be more appropriate for them to attend the educational setting.

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

### Sports and Voluntary Organisations: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Addington*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what comprehensive guidance they have provided to voluntary and sporting organisations which operate buildings and other facilities in respect of outlining the support available throughout the COVID-19 pandemic; and where any such guidance is published. [HL2993]

**Baroness Barran:** The Government has announced a number of support packages for voluntary and sporting organisations, who have been impacted by Covid-19.

For sport, this includes Sport England's announcement of a £195m package of support for the grassroots sport and physical activity sector, including a £20m Community Emergency Fund (CEF) to support those organisations that are suffering from immediate financial hardship. The CEF includes support for organisations which operate facilities and which require specific support to meet fixed and other costs relating to buildings. Further details are available here:

<https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/coronavirus/coronavirus-funding-and-flexibility>.

For the voluntary sector, this has included the Government distributing £310m via the National Lottery Community Fund to support voluntary organisations most affected by Covid-19 as part of the wider £750m Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise funding package announced by the Chancellor.

These packages are in addition to the wider HM Treasury support packages, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Business Interruption loan, both of which the sport and voluntary sector are eligible for. Full details can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>.

### Sports: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Moynihan*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to providing financial support to the national governing bodies of sports whose income has been detrimentally affected by the coronavirus epidemic. [HL3879]

**Baroness Barran:** We recognise the impact that covid-19 is having on the sport sector, and we are continuing to engage with sporting organisations to understand how it is affecting them and provide support. Sport England, the arms-length body of government who invest in and provide a range of services to national governing bodies have been involved in these discussions.

The Chancellor has already announced a host of measures to help businesses, with £330 billion worth of government backed and guaranteed loans to support businesses across the UK. In addition, our national sports council, Sport England, has also announced £195 million of funding to help sport and physical activity organisations deal with the short and long term effects of the pandemic.

### Students: Broadband and Computers

*Asked by Baroness Manzoor*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to provide all secondary school students with laptops and broadband routers; and what criteria they use to determine which students should receive any such provision. [HL3334]

**Baroness Berridge:** The government will provide devices 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 will be given guidance on how to place online orders for 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.

Where care leavers, children with a social worker at secondary school or children in Year 10 do not have internet connections, we will also provide the capability for them to access the internet. 16 to 19-year-olds without a suitable device will be eligible for support via the 16-19 Bursary Fund.

Additionally, the country's major telecommunication providers will make it easier for families to access selected educational resources by temporarily exempting these sites from data charges.

For those in rural areas or without a connection, schools will be able to draw on support from the BBC which is broadcasting lessons on television; and may choose to draw on the many resources offers which have been made by publishers across the country.

### Supply Teachers: Employment Agencies

*Asked by Lord Storey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government to what extent they are working with supply teacher agencies to see that supply teachers are being supported. [HL3636]

**Baroness Berridge:** The department's latest school workforce guidance on COVID-19, including financial support available to supply teachers, is set out below: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures/guidance-for-schools-about-temporarily-closing#supply-teachers-and-other-contingent-workers>.

Further guidance on financial support for all education institutions is set out below: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-education-early-years-and-childrens-social-care/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-education-early-years-and-childrens-social-care>.

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

### Taxation: Self-assessment

*Asked by Lord O'Shaughnessy*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what proportion of people in each local authority who completed a self-assessment between the 1990–91 and the 2018–19 tax years declared a charitable donation of any form. [HL3424]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** In 2017-18, the most recent tax year for which figures are available, 12% of individuals in the UK completing a Self Assessment form declared a donation to charity. UK figures for 2007-08 to 2017-18 are published in Table 5 of HMRC's annual Charity Tax Relief Statistics, and figures for the most recent year are published by region and by Parliamentary Constituency in Table 7. The information requested for each local authority for the period 1990-91 to 2018-19 is

not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Teachers: Coronavirus

*Asked by Baroness Benjamin*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what guidelines they have given to headteachers in order to protect teachers from COVID-19. [HL3359]

*Asked by Baroness Benjamin*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure the safety of teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3360]

**Baroness Berridge:** The school workforce is central to the country's response to COVID-19 and we thank them wholeheartedly for their support at this difficult time.

It is important to underline that schools remain safe places. Reducing the number of children and staff making the journey to school and reducing the number of children and staff in educational settings will protect the NHS and save lives by reducing the risks of spreading the virus.

We have published guidance for school leaders and staff on COVID-19 infection prevention and control in educational settings, which is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>.

Guidelines on implementing social distancing in schools are available at: <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>.

We have also published guidance on the actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak which includes guidelines for school leaders on protecting the school workforce from COVID-19. This guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures/guidance-for-schools-about-temporarily-closing>.

Additionally, the Government has expanded its testing scheme to all essential workers. This includes anyone involved in education, childcare or social work – including both public and voluntary sector workers, as well as foster carers. If they or anyone in their household have symptoms, they are now eligible for a test to confirm whether they have COVID-19, so that if they don't, the critical worker is able to get back into the workplace.

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

### Trade: Northern Ireland

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what (1) financial, and (2) other, support they intend to provide to businesses to assist with (a) customs, (b) animal, and (c) public health, requirements relating to the movement of goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. [HL3807]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** We are considering the best way to implement the Protocol and will be discussing this with the EU in the Joint Committee and Specialised Committee created under the Withdrawal Agreement.

We want to work with Northern Ireland businesses and the Executive to ensure any procedures are streamlined and do not affect the flow of trade.

### Transport and Leisure: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessments they are undertaking to consider the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on future (1) working patterns, (2) transport use, and (3) leisure. [HL3364]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The pandemic is having a profound impact on the lives of everyone in the country and the Government's focus has been on managing the immediate situation. As part of this, the Government continues to monitor behaviour in terms of working patterns, transport use and social distancing measures, and will continue to do so as the situation develops in the coming weeks.

Given the scale of this pandemic, it is likely that we will see some changes in the way people do things in the longer term and the Government is working to understand this. For example, to help understand future demand on transport, we are commissioning research to understand how the pandemic has impacted on people's transport behaviours and the factors that will influence their behaviour as restrictions are lifted.

### Ukraine: Peace Negotiations

*Asked by The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress has been made in ensuring a sustainable peace plan in Ukraine; and what discussions they have had with the government of Russia about European security, including regional arms control. [HL3788]

**Baroness Sugg:** The UK is committed to supporting Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and to ensuring the people of Ukraine are able to define their own future. We welcome President Zelensky's clear commitment to ending the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The Ukrainian people deserve peace. We have been clear on the importance of finding a diplomatic solution and continue to support the Minsk agreements and the work of

Germany and France within the Normandy Format. We welcomed the withdrawal of forces in three zones last year. Since the December Normandy Format summit, there have been two limited prisoner exchanges, but there has been little progress on further disengagement or a ceasefire. The renewed commitment to a ceasefire in the 30 April telephone call between the Normandy Four Foreign Ministers was a further positive step. Continued discussions are a fundamental step in further progress towards peace.

We continue to call on Russia to play its part to end the conflict by immediately ceasing its support for the separatists and fulfilling its obligations under the Minsk agreements. We have repeatedly raised with Russia the need to use its influence on the separatists to provide unrestricted access to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission and humanitarian organisations.

The UK last had discussions on arms control with the Russian Federation at the meeting of the five Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) nuclear weapon states, or 'P5', which took place in London on 12-13 February. At that meeting, all five states underlined the importance of reducing nuclear risk and promoting stability, and agreed that dialogue on strategic risk reduction should continue. We also engage regularly with Russia through OSCE conventional arms control instruments and confidence building measures.

### Undocumented Migrants

*Asked by Lord Marlesford*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many illegal immigrants they have intercepted travelling to the UK, whether on land or at sea, in each of the last 24 months. [HL3416]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** We do not routinely publish the information you have requested. We are unable to provide this information, as it could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

### Universal Credit: EU Nationals

*Asked by Lord Kirkhope of Harrogate*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether EU citizens resident in the UK with pre-settled status can receive Universal Credit if otherwise eligible. [HL3705]

**Baroness Stedman-Scott:** EU citizens with pre-settled status have the same access to benefits as they did prior to the introduction of the EU Settlement Scheme. They will satisfy the right to reside element of the Habitual Residence Test and can access benefits if they are exercising a qualifying right to reside, such as a worker or self-employed person, and are habitually resident in the UK. Their eligibility is verified through the Habitual Residence Test.

### Universities: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Pendry*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the impact of COVID-19 on the provision of education, what discussions they have had with universities about adjusting tuition fees. [HL3210]

**Baroness Berridge:** Universities offering high quality tuition online will continue to charge fees. Fee loans are being paid directly to the university at the start of the third term.

We are working closely with sector representative bodies to understand the impact of COVID-19 and the immediate financial implications for students and providers. It is important that students continue to receive a good standard of education.

The government has made it clear that, if institutions are unable to deliver adequate online teaching, it would be unacceptable for students to be charged for any additional terms as, effectively, they would be charged twice. Whether an individual student is entitled to a refund of their fees will depend on specific contractual arrangements between the higher education providers and the student.

In the first instance, students should speak to their university. We expect student complaints and appeals processes to be operated flexibly, accessibly and sympathetically by institutions to resolve any concerns. Students who are not satisfied with their institution's final response can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education to consider their complaint if their institution is based in England or Wales.

*Asked by Lord Cormack*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to provide financial assistance to UK universities during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3371]

**Baroness Berridge:** The government has announced a UK-wide range of support, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and various business support packages to assist businesses whose viability is threatened by the COVID-19 outbreak, including the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme and COVID Corporate Financing Facility. Higher education providers that meet the published criteria for the loan and financing schemes should approach their bank and begin to apply for the relevant scheme, if they think that they need that support.

We are working closely with higher education providers and the Office for Students (OfS), as the regulator for the higher education sector in England, to ensure that we maintain an up-to-date understanding of the financial risks and implications COVID-19 is bringing to bear on the sector. OfS has stated that one of its key priorities during the pandemic is to support the financial sustainability of the sector. Providers with concerns about their financial viability or sustainability have been encouraged to contact OfS at the earliest opportunity.



*Asked by **Baroness Randerson***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to provide additional financial support to universities during the COVID-19 pandemic; what guidance they have provided to universities about dealing with requests for refunds of fees; and what plans they have to provide compensation to universities to cover the costs of such refunds. [HL3146]

*Asked by **Baroness Randerson***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what additional financial support they plan to provide to universities to deal with increased pressures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3339]

**Baroness Berridge:** The government has announced a UK-wide range of support, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and various business support packages, to assist businesses whose viability is threatened by the COVID-19 outbreak. These include the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme and COVID-19 Corporate Financing Facility. If they need this support, higher education providers that meet the published criteria for the loan and financing schemes should approach their bank and begin to apply for the relevant scheme.

We are working closely with higher education providers and the regulator for the higher education sector in England, the Office for Students (OfS), to ensure that we maintain an up-to-date understanding of the financial risks and implications the COVID-19 outbreak is bringing to bear on the sector. The OfS has stated that one of its key priorities during the pandemic is to support the financial sustainability of the sector. Providers with concerns about their financial viability or sustainability have been encouraged to contact the OfS at the earliest opportunity.

The OfS has produced guidance on practical ways in which students can complete their studies whilst ensuring quality and standards are upheld during this difficult time. Providers are already making these arrangements and we are in close contact with the sector. There are some fantastic and innovative examples of high-quality distance and online learning being delivered by institutions across the UK, and the sector is already working hard to prepare learning materials for the summer and autumn terms. Students ordinarily should not expect any fee refund if they are receiving adequate online learning and support.

However, the government has made it clear that if institutions are unable to facilitate adequate online tuition then it would be unacceptable for students to be charged for any additional terms as, effectively, they would be charged twice. Whether an individual student is entitled to a refund of their fees will depend on specific contractual arrangements between the higher education providers and the student.

In the first instance, students should speak to their university. We expect student complaints and appeals processes to be operated flexibly, accessibly and

sympathetically by institutions to resolve any concerns. Students who are not satisfied with their institution's final response can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education to consider their complaint if their institution is based in England or Wales.

## **VE Day: Anniversaries**

*Asked by **Lord Cormack***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to mark the 75th anniversary of the end of the second world war in August, following the cancellation of events to mark that anniversary of VE Day on 8 May. [HL3597]

**Baroness Barran:** The UK Government continues to plan a programme to mark the 75th Anniversary of VJ Day on 15 August, commemorating the Victory Over Japan and the end of the Second World War.

In light of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, HM Government will continue to follow the advice issued by Public Health England closely and the VJ Day 75 programme will take account of the guidance in place at the time.

Information on what is planned to commemorate VE Day can be found online: <https://ve-vjday75.gov.uk/>

Her Majesty The Queen will send a message to the nation on Friday 8 May. His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales will read an extract from King George VI's diary from 1945. Members of The Royal Family, the Prime Minister and the Culture Secretary will take part in video calls with Second World War veterans. Churchill's famous victory speech will be broadcast and a national two minute silence will take place as the public are asked to mark the occasion at home.

## **Veterans UK: Telephone Services**

*Asked by **Baroness Crawley***

To ask Her Majesty's Government why the Veterans UK Helpline has been suspended; and what assessment they have made of the impact this may have on veterans, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3470]

**Baroness Goldie:** The Veterans UK helpline has not been suspended. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, Veterans UK services are, as far as possible being delivered remotely.

Whilst the helpline is not able to handle telephony enquiries, the helpline contains recorded service information on key subject areas, and all veterans are still able to submit enquiries via email.

A written reply or call-back is made by Veterans UK staff and where welfare support is required, these are referred to the Veterans Welfare Service. More than 4,000 people have been helped in this way since 23 March 2020.

All planned Veterans Welfare Service and Defence Transition Services contact with clients is being maintained, and alternative methods are utilised rather than face to face visits, unless deemed absolutely essential.

### War Pensions: Coronavirus

*Asked by Baroness Crawley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on processing War Pension Scheme and War Widow(er) Pension applications. [HL3471]

**Baroness Goldie:** All of the existing 470,000 War Pensions, War Widows Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments are continuing to be made as usual into nominated bank accounts, and all requests for welfare support are being met, the same day where at all possible.

With staff working remotely, it has been necessary to pause some compensation scheme administration casework on new claims, appeals and reviews. Many files, some dating back to World War II, exist only as paper records and access to office-based IT systems are needed to process this work.

Where a possibility of financial hardship is identified by the Veterans Welfare Service, a small team is in place to take action on urgent payments where the case evidence needed to do so is available.

UK Veterans staff review the situation daily in order to resume as full a level of service as possible within the current restrictions.

### Warships: Shipbuilding

*Asked by Lord West of Spithead*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether surface warship and submarine shipbuilding is continuing during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL3566]

**Baroness Goldie:** It is crucial that defence operations and programmes, on which our national security relies, continue uninterrupted. We are working closely with our industry partners to ensure that essential work in the shipyards continues while adhering to the latest safety guidelines to protect the workforce.

Where specific work is required, instructions have been implemented locally by management to confirm that due

consideration and briefing has been put in place to manage the risk in an appropriate way, protect employees and ensure priority activities are still undertaken as far as is possible.

### Yemen: Baha'i Faith

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Coventry*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations, if any, they have made to President Mahdi al Mashat that the pardon for Hamed bin Haydara and five other Yemeni Baha'i, and their release from jail, be expedited. [HL3684]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are monitoring the case of Hamed bin Haydara closely. On 25 March the Houthis announced that they would release Mr Haydara and his fellow wrongfully detained Baha'i, but we have seen no further action since then. The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa made public our concerns on 22 April, urging the Houthis to release all political prisoners without delay. We strongly condemn the death sentence and the continued persecution of the Baha'i in Yemen for their religious beliefs. We meet often with the Baha'i representatives in London who keep us updated on the situation.

### Yemen: Peace Negotiations

*Asked by The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made in concluding a comprehensive and inclusive peace agreement in Yemen. [HL3791]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK welcomes the unilateral ceasefire announced by Saudi Arabia on 8 April following the call on 25 March by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres for a cease to hostilities in Yemen. To ensure the success of this ceasefire, it must be underpinned by a political deal between the conflict parties. We fully support the efforts of the Secretary-General and the UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths's call for all parties to engage in urgent political talks and de-escalate the conflict. Now that the Saudi unilateral ceasefire has been extended it is more important than ever that both the Houthis and the Government of Yemen seize this opportunity for progress in Yemen. A permanent ceasefire and co-operation with the UN-led political process is the best defence we have against a potentially devastating outbreak of COVID-19.

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