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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
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HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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Baroness Berridge	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education and Department for International Trade
Lord Bethell	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care and Whip
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Lord Greenhalgh	Minister of State, Home Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Lord Grimstone of Boscobel	Minister of State, Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Department for International Trade
Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay	Whip
Baroness Penn	Whip
Baroness Scott of Bybrook	Whip
Baroness Stedman-Scott	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
Baroness Sugg	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Lord True	Minister of State, Cabinet Office
Baroness Vere of Norbiton	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
Baroness Williams of Trafford	Minister of State, Home Office
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Whip

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Written Statements

Friday, 25 September 2020

Covid-19 Update

[HLWS465]

Lord Bethell: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock) has made the following written statement:

As the Covid-19 incidence rate continues to rise across the country, a suite of local and national actions is required to break the trains of transmission and enable people to maintain a more normal way of life.

The Government will act swiftly and decisively to limit further spread, reduce disruption and contain local outbreaks. The Local Action Committee Command structure has been reviewing the latest evidence, working with local leaders and the scientific community to assess the data and whether further evidence is required.

The latest data shows a sharp increase in incidence rates per 100,000 population in Leeds, Blackpool, Wigan and Stockport, which are significantly above the national average.

As a result, we are making regulations which take effect from Saturday 26 September and will impose restrictions on inter-household mixing in private dwellings and gardens in Leeds, Stockport, Wigan and Blackpool. This is in line with measures seen elsewhere in the country, such as Leicester and the West Midlands. People who live in these areas will not be allowed to gather in a private dwelling or garden with any other household unless in a support bubble. People from anywhere else will also not be allowed to gather with another household in a private dwelling or garden in these areas.

We have also reviewed the position in Leicester, the Borough of Oadby and Wigston, Birmingham, Solihull, Sandwell, Wolverhampton, Bolton, Bradford, Kirklees, Calderdale and the remaining local authorities in Greater Manchester and have decided to maintain their position on the watchlist as areas of intervention, as well as the current restrictions in these areas.

This will be difficult news for the people living in these areas, profoundly affecting their daily lives. These decisions are not taken lightly, and such measures will be kept under review and in place no longer than they are necessary. There are exemptions to these measures so people can still meet with those in their support bubble. There are other limited exemptions such as for work purposes or to provide care or assistance to a vulnerable person. Through the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Protected Areas and Linked Childcare Households) (Amendment) Regulations 2020, people may create an exclusive childcare bubble for the purposes of informal childcare for children under 14, helping ease pressure on those living under local restrictions so they can get to work.

The guidance on GOV.UK covering these areas will also be amended to fully reflect these changes.

Homelessness Update

[HLWS464]

Lord Greenhalgh: My Hon. Friend, the Minister of Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for rough sleeping and housing (Kelly Tolhurst) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which came into force in April 2018, is the most ambitious reform to homelessness legislation in decades and our manifesto committed to enforce the Act in full. It is a key lever for reducing homelessness as we seek to end rough sleeping within the lifetime of this Parliament.

The Act placed new duties on local housing authorities to take reasonable steps to try to prevent and relieve a person's homelessness, and introduced a new duty on named public authorities to refer users of their service who they think may be homeless or threatened with homelessness to their chosen local housing authority. For the first time, local authorities and other public bodies must work together to actively prevent homelessness for people at risk.

During the passage of the Homelessness Reduction Act through parliament, a commitment was made that a review of the Act would be undertaken within two years of commencement. This commitment was reaffirmed in the Rough Sleeping Strategy. This was delayed by Covid-19. However, today we are publishing this review. A copy will be placed in the Library of the House and will be published on GOV.UK at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/homelessness-reduction-act-2017-call-for-evidence>.

The review found that the Act has significantly strengthened England's homelessness safety net at the national and local level. The findings indicate positive change with more people being helped to prevent and relieve their homelessness than ever before, in particular single people who prior to the Act would have received much more limited support. Since the introduction of the Act, 365,000 single households (almost two thirds of the total number of households who were owed a prevention or relief duty), including 28,000 people with a history of rough sleeping and over 15,000 people who were rough sleeping at the time of the assessment, have been assessed as owed help to prevent or relieve their homelessness.

As you would expect for legislation in its infancy, there remain challenges to full and effective implementation. There are changes under the Act that will take a longer time to fully embed such as the development of the local homelessness workforce and engagement with public authorities under the duty to refer. The Government is committed to fully enforcing the Homelessness Reduction Act and we will continue to work with the homelessness sector, local authorities and their partners to ensure the Act is working effectively for all involved. In 2020/21, the Government has provided an additional £63 million

through the Homelessness Reduction Grant for local authorities to implement the Act. Taken together, the overall amount spent on rough sleeping and homelessness this year is over half a billion pounds.

Written Answers

Friday, 25 September 2020

Apprentices: Young People

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of research by the Learning and Work Institute, published on 27 August, that suggested young people have lost apprenticeship opportunities at a faster rate than any other age group. [HL8091]

Baroness Berridge: On 27 August we published our latest data on apprenticeship starts. There were 53,530 apprenticeship starts reported to date between 23 March, when restrictions were announced, and 31 July. This is just over half of the equivalent figure of 101,300 for this period last year – a reduction of 47%. Considering these statistics, the Learning and Work Institute highlighted the challenges that young people, particularly 16 to 18-year-olds, face in the current labour market.

We are aware that young people are likely to be disproportionately affected by the impacts of the Covid-19 outbreak and are working across government to help young people continue to develop the skills they will need for the future.

Through our 'Plan for Jobs' a total of £1.6 billion is to be invested in scaling up employment support schemes, training and apprenticeships.

To help support employers to offer new apprenticeships, employers are now able to claim £2,000 for every new apprentice they hire under the age of 25, in recognition of the particular impacts of Covid-19 on the employment prospects of young people.

We have introduced flexibilities to enable apprentices of all ages to continue to train during the outbreak, and we encourage employers to take advantage of these flexibilities and the new payments to offer new opportunities.

To help young people progress onto an apprenticeship or other employment we are tripling the scale of our traineeship programme. We have also announced £101 million for a brand new offer to give 18- and 19-year-old school and college leavers the opportunity to study high value level 2 and 3 courses when there are not employment opportunities available to them.

Cycling

Asked by *Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of campaigns to encourage people to cycle more; and what support they are giving to teach adults to ride a bike. [HL8243]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government supports various campaigns to encourage people to cycle more, including the Big Bike Revival programme delivered by Cycling UK, and local programmes delivered by local authorities under the Department's £20 million per annum Access Fund. The effectiveness of these and other campaigns is considered in the first Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy Report to Parliament published in February 2020.

The Government is committed to ensuring that every adult and child who wants it can be trained how to ride a bicycle safely. This builds on our manifesto commitment to offer Bikeability training to all schoolchildren. This year, the Department's Bikeability funding has enabled 28 local authorities to offer adult cycle training, and £235,000 of it will go towards family cycle training. The Department has also provided £2 million to Transport for London to support adult cycle training in the capital, and its Access Fund has allowed 16 local authorities to provide adult cycle training in their areas.

Decisions on future funding for campaigns and Bikeability will be a matter for the Spending Review in the autumn.

Employment

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the recent report by Culture Shift, Maintaining Workplace culture in a rapidly changing environment, published on 11 September. [HL8164]

Lord Callanan: Remote working is more appropriate for some roles and sectors than others, which is why we have been consistent in making the distinction between those who can and those who cannot work from home as part of our Covid-19 guidance. We also appreciate that the appropriateness of remote working depends on an individual's personal circumstances and remote working environment.

The Government has committed to consulting on making flexible working the default and we will use this consultation to consider the lessons learned from Covid-19. The consultation will consider flexible working in all its forms – it is not just about where people work, but also when they work and their associated working patterns.

On the report's wider observations around problematic behaviour in the workplace, the government is already seeking to address these issues. Last year we held a consultation to ensure that laws to protect people from sexual harassment at work are operating effectively – and at the start of this year we ran a nationally-representative survey that will further develop our understanding of the problem and its extent.

We are also supporting the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)'s work to develop a statutory Code of Practice on sexual harassment and harassment in the

workplace, which will be based on the technical guidance they published in January.

High Speed 2 Railway Line

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the statement by Network Rail on 16 September that they are reviewing every scheme in the rail network enhancements pipeline to test their viability and business case, whether they are subjecting HS2 to the same review process. [[HL8228](#)]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The programme was comprehensively reset in February 2020 with a revised budget and schedule. The Department published the Full Business Case for Phase One in April and authorised the start of construction.

Higher Education: Internet

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase access to online learning for all university students. [[HL8089](#)]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The government is aware of the disproportionate impact that the Covid-19 outbreak will have on some students and it has already been working closely with the Office for Students (OfS), the regulator of registered higher education providers in England, so higher education providers can draw upon existing funding to provide hardship funds and to support disadvantaged students affected by Covid-19.

As a result of this flexibility, providers were able to use OfS student premium funding worth around £23 million per month for April to July this year. From August, providers have also been able to use £256 million for the current academic year towards student hardship funds, including for the purchase of IT equipment. We have also allocated £100 million to support remote education, which has enabled the provision of routers and laptops to vulnerable students, prioritising care-leavers, including those at university.

We expect that higher education providers will be open for the autumn term, combining online teaching and in-person tuition in ways that they consider appropriate and in line with public health advice. On 10 September, the government issued updated guidance to the higher education sector on reopening campuses and buildings.

The government's expectation is that quality and academic standards must be maintained, and the OfS has made it clear that all higher education providers must continue to comply with registration conditions relating to quality and standards, which set out requirements to ensure that courses are high quality, that students are supported and achieve good outcomes, and that standards are protected.

The OfS has published information and guidance for providers and students, and the Quality Assurance

Agency for Higher Education has also published a series of guides to support providers to secure academic standards and to support student achievement during the Covid-19 outbreak.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State of Education, has commissioned Sir Michael Barber, the Chairman of the OfS, to lead a review to consider how to enhance the quality of digital teaching and learning and the opportunities that digital education presents for universities in the medium and long term. The review is expected to report in spring 2021 and will also explore how higher education institutions can ensure that all students have access to a high-quality digital teaching and learning experience.

Mauritian Wildlife Foundation

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sugg on 17 September ([HL7786](#)), whether the reference in that answer to emergency support having been provided to the Mauritian Wildlife Fund should have been to the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation. [[HL8275](#)]

Baroness Sugg: I thank the Noble Lord for highlighting this error to me.

A correction has now been made to question [HL7785](#) and [HL7786](#) to correctly identify the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation in my previous replies.

Trade Associations

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have a complete list of all (1) chambers of commerce, and (2) trade associations, registered in the UK; and whether the list of trade associations includes identifying each such association by sector. [[HL8169](#)]

Lord Callanan: We do not hold a list of all the Chambers of Commerce, however the majority of Chambers are affiliated to the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC). A list of those Chambers can be found on the BCC's website.

A list of all UK trade associations is not available from official sources. There is no compulsory requirement to register a trade association anywhere, unless it is a company limited by guarantee in which case the organisation must register with Companies House in order to comply with statutory company law.

Trade Associations: Coronavirus

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what support and advice they have provided (1) to chambers of commerce, and (2) trade associations, during the Covid-19 pandemic. [[HL8170](#)]

Lord Callanan: Since the start of the Covid-19 outbreak, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State has held frequent calls with major business representative organisations. Other engagement includes the Secretary of State's recent industry roundtables on Economic Recovery. The BEIS ministerial team continues to use these opportunities to assure the effectiveness of Government's responses to the Covid-19 outbreak and to ensure a safe return to work across the whole UK economy as quickly as possible.

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