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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
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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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Baroness Evans of Bowes Park	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
Earl Howe	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
Lord Agnew of Oulton	Minister of State, Cabinet Office and Treasury
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Lord Ashton of Hyde	Chief Whip
Baroness Barran	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
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
Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist	Whip
Lord Callanan	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
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Lord Gardiner of Kimble	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Baroness Goldie	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park	Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
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

Monday, 12 October 2020

Local government update

[HLWS496]

Lord Greenhalgh: My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset

On Friday, I issued invitations under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to principal councils in Cumbria, North Yorkshire, and Somerset, including associated existing unitary councils, to submit proposals for moving to unitary local government in those areas. This is the first step in the statutory process under the 2007 Act for establishing unitary councils in response to locally led proposals from one or more existing councils in the area concerned.

Councils in these areas have requested such invitations and have been developing ideas about restructuring local government in their areas for some time. It is right that they should now have the opportunity to take their local discussions to a conclusion, and if they wish, make proposals for unitary reform. Under the statute such locally led proposals, subject to consultation and Parliamentary approval, can be implemented if I consider this appropriate.

There is thus no question of any top down imposition of Government solutions. We are clear that any reform of an area's local government, where there is strong local support for the principle of a unitary structure, is most effectively achieved through locally led proposals put forward by those who best know the area.

It is now for the councils in each of the three areas to make, if they wish, their unitary proposals, either individually or jointly with other councils in the area. The invitations provide that if a council is responding it must submit by 9 November 2020 at least an outline proposal, and if a full proposal has not been submitted by then, the full proposal must be submitted as soon as practical thereafter and by no later than 9 December 2020.

I will carefully consider any proposals I receive, assessing them on the basis of the longstanding criteria for establishing unitary councils, namely that if a unitary proposal is to be implemented it must be likely to improve local government in the area, command a good deal of local support overall across the area, and lead to unitary councils covering a credible geography.

Whilst traditionally various population ranges for unitary councils, such as 300,000 to 600,000 populations, have been referred to, regard must be had to the particular circumstances of a proposed unitary council; including issues of local identity, local geography, delivery of public services and economies of scale when assessing population size.

I recognise that when making proposals councils may request that the May 2021 local elections in the area are postponed. Such postponement of local elections where unitarisation is under consideration isprecedented, and I will carefully consider any such request.

With these invitations councils in the three areas now have an opportunity to move forward with reforms which can open the way to significant benefits for local people and businesses, delivering service improvements, facilitating economic growth, and contributing to the levelling up of opportunity and prosperity across the country.

Broader policy on local government reorganisation

The Government is also re-affirming its policy position on the issue of local government re-organisation; this broadly reflects that outlined in the Written Ministerial Statement made by my predecessor (my Rt Hon Friend, the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup) in July 2019.

Locally-led changes to the structure of local government, whether in the form of unitarisation or district mergers, can be an appropriate means of improving local service delivery, saving taxpayers' money and improving local accountability. However, restructuring is only one of the different ways that councils can streamline and make savings. Joint working with other councils and partners can take a variety of forms ranging from adopting joint plans, setting up joint committees, sharing back office services or special purpose vehicles to promote regeneration. Such joint working may extend across county boundaries. Indeed, councils' general power of competence under the Localism Act 2011 makes it easier for councils to get on with sharing services.

The Government will not impose top-down restructuring of local government and will continue to follow a locally-led approach for unitarisation where councils can develop proposals which have strong local support. This has been the Government's consistent approach since 2010, when top-down restructuring was stopped through the Local Government Act 2010.

When considering reform, those in an area will know what is best – the very essence of localism to which the Government remains committed. However, the pandemic has rightly necessitated resources across Whitehall and in local government being re-allocated to tackling Covid-19 and on economic recovery, and this must be Whitehall's and town hall's number one priority at present.

Negotiations on the UK's Future Trading Relationship with Australia: Update

[HLWS498]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade (Liz Truss MP) has today made the following statement.

The second UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiating round took place from 21 September to 2 October.

Talks were productive, and good progress was made towards a comprehensive deal between our two nations.

Both sides shared draft chapter text or papers outlining their preferred approach, and the groundwork was laid for an initial exchange of tariff offers. Officials from 12 different UK government departments held discussions with Australian officials, with some further sessions coming over the next week that will mean talks will have spanned the breadth of the FTA.

Both countries are committed to removing trade barriers and creating new opportunities for business, and believe a deep and dynamic agreement can send a clear signal to the world that both the UK and Australia are prepared to fight protectionism and advance free and fair trade.

Discussions were productive over all chapter areas, including Digital and Telecoms, where there is a shared willingness to go even further than CPTPP and consider more ambitious proposals.

The number of discussions has now totalled 73 sessions over the first two rounds of talks and both sides have committed to further discussions ahead of round three. This includes on Competition, Digital, Goods, Government Procurement, and Rules of Origin.

The UK and Australia are both keen to continue the momentum of discussions, and the third negotiating round is expected to take place in November.

Below is a summary list of those areas discussed in the round, which continued to take place by video conference:

- Anti-Corruption and Transparency
- Competition
- Cross-cutting general provisions
- Digital/e-commerce
- Environment
- Financial Services
- Trade in Goods
- Good Regulatory Practice
- Government Procurement
- Intellectual Property
- Investment
- Labour
- Trade Remedies
- Rules of Origin
- Services, including Movement of Natural Persons, Professional Business Services, and Transport Services
- Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
- State Owned Enterprises
- Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
- State-to-State Dispute Settlement
- Technical Barriers to Trade
- Telecommunications

We also had further positive discussions on Clean Growth, Development, Women's Economic Empowerment, and Innovation.

Any deal the Government strikes must be fair, reciprocal, and ultimately in the best interests of the British people and the economy.

Public Service Pensions, Guaranteed Minimum Pension indexation consultation

[HLWS497]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: My right honourable friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Steve Barclay) made the following Written Ministerial Statement on 7 October.

The government is today publishing a consultation on 'Public Service Pensions, Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP) indexation'. The consultation sets out how the government proposes to ensure it continues to meet its past commitments to public service employees regarding the full indexation of public service pensions, including for any GMP element related to membership of a public service pension scheme.

On 6 April 2016, the government introduced the new State Pension (nSP). The reformed system simplified pension provision but removed the mechanism that enabled those public servants in 'contracted-out' employment to have their Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP) fully price protected. An 'interim solution', full indexation, was introduced in 2016, which was later consulted on and extended until 5 April 2021. This ensured that public service pensioners had the GMPs they had earned in public service fully indexed by their public service pension scheme.

The consultation will last for 12 weeks and close on 30 December 2020. The consultation document can be found on: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/public-service-pensions-guaranteed-minimum-pension-indexation-consultation>

Schools Update

[HLWS494]

Baroness Berridge: My right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

This government has always made the education of young people a priority. We are determined to make sure that when the time comes, young people are able to take the next step in their lives with the knowledge and qualifications they need. We want to build on the remarkable efforts of teachers, students and parents across the country as children return to school – and education – through these challenging times. We must continue to do all we can to minimise the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on all those who are studying at school or college.

I know that students due to sit exams next summer have experienced considerable disruption to their education, our £1 billion Covid-19 catch-up package will help to

tackle the impact of lost teaching time. It is right that our approach to exams and assessments in 2021 also reflects these students' experience.

Today I can confirm that GCSE, AS and A level exams in 2021 will go ahead, with most exams moved back 3 weeks next year to give students more time to prepare and a chance to catch up on education lost due to COVID-19. We know that exams are the fairest way of measuring a student's abilities and accomplishments, including the most disadvantaged. We want to give our young people the opportunity next summer to demonstrate what they know and can do.

The main exam series will start on 7 June and end on 2 July. One maths and one English GCSE exam will take place before the May half-term, giving any Year 11 pupils who need to self-isolate during the exam period the best possible chance of still sitting a paper in each of these core subjects. Some A and AS levels with typically very small numbers of students entering will also be scheduled in the days just before half term. It is expected that for the majority of vocational and technical qualifications that are taken alongside or instead of GCSEs, AS or A levels, awarding organisations will look to align timetables with 2021 exams.

Results days for AS/A levels and GCSEs will fall on Tuesday 24 August and Friday 27 August respectively, with students taking vocational and technical qualifications needed for progression to further or higher education receiving their results no later than their peers.

I am also confirming today the subject-level changes to exams and assessments outlined in the public consultation carried out earlier this year by the exams' regulator, Ofqual. These changes to exams and assessments next year will support teachers and students by freeing up valuable teaching time. Ofqual has also consulted on how assessments of vocational and technical qualifications will be adapted to free up teaching time and respond to any future public health measures.

Schools and colleges have shown exams can be held, even in areas of local restriction, in the autumn exam series which is currently taking place. Exams next year will be supported by contingencies for all scenarios. Today I have written to Ofqual to ask the regulator to support Government in developing these arrangements, engaging closely with the school and further education leaders, teachers, exam boards, unions and the higher education sector. The results of this planning and ongoing discussions with the sector will be published later in the Autumn.

I am grateful for the commitment and willingness that has been shown by groups across the sector in enabling and delivering this additional teaching time next year, helping to ensure that young people have the best opportunity to succeed. Our approach will support students to prepare for exams with confidence and ensure they have the best chance of receiving the qualifications they deserve.

The Electronic Communications and Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment) (European Electronic Communications Code and EU Exit) Regulations 2020 - Transposition Update

[HLWS495]

Baroness Barran: My Honourable Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Digital Infrastructure, Matt Warman MP, has made the following Statement:

I am today laying legislation in Parliament which implements the European Electronic Communications Code Directive.

The importance of electronic communications has been underlined during the COVID-19 pandemic. The UK's networks are ensuring the connectivity which has underpinned the way society is responding to COVID-19.

We are confident that the positive changes implemented during the pandemic will outlast the pandemic itself. For example, it has clearly demonstrated that technology enables many businesses to be agile, allowing many people to work from home. Technology has also played a critical role in continued learning, and has played a more important role than ever in keeping people in touch with friends, family and others in their communities.

The increased reliance on and use of digital infrastructure brings new expectations around these services, and the infrastructure must keep up with growing levels of demand. Combined with future expectations around new technologies and services including 5G, building future-proofed networks will be essential to our future economy. This is why we are committed to delivering nationwide gigabit-capable connectivity, and the Budget 2020 committed £5 billion investment in gigabit-capable broadband rollout in the hardest-to-reach areas of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The transposition of the European Electronic Communications Code into UK law will help ensure that both the government and Ofcom have the tools required to deliver these ambitions.

The Directive revises the EU telecoms regulatory framework which has underpinned UK telecoms law since 2003. The UK played a leading role in the negotiations for the European Electronic Communications Code prior to its exit from the EU, and in the development of the directives which preceded it, which largely reflect UK best practice. And our commitments in the European Union Withdrawal Agreement require transposition of European Union law until the end of the transition period.

The core objectives of the Directive are to: drive investment in future-proofed networks and communications services through sustainable competition; support efficient and effective use of radio spectrum; and provide a high level of consumer protection. Therefore, the changes introduced in the Directive include new measures that are important to delivery of our digital ambitions. Transposing these

changes into UK law will ensure Ofcom's powers remain operable and reflect recent technological innovation. Some measures are being given effect through alternative legislation, such as the requirements for the security of networks and services.

The changes we are making as part of this SI are a crucial milestone towards our delivery of our digital ambitions. These changes will facilitate a pro-investment regulatory environment, supporting gigabit-capable rollout across the UK.

I therefore lay this instrument in the House today.

Transparency and Scrutiny Arrangements with the International Trade Committee and the International Agreements Sub-Committee for the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement

[HLWS493]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade (Liz Truss MP) has today made the following statement.

I am setting out transparency and scrutiny arrangements for international trade deals starting with the UK - Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (UK-Japan CEPA) which will be signed shortly.

At the outset of negotiations, the government published its objectives for this agreement, along with a scoping assessment. During the consultation period we have discussed progress with trusted advisors across industry, including with stakeholders in farming. This sector has been involved throughout, to ensure that nothing we agree undermines our farmers' ability to compete internationally whilst producing food at a high standard. The government has also established a Trade and Agriculture Commission to advise on future trade policy. This will look at policy for our trade agreements and our work to improve the world's trade rules, making sure they work for British business and consumers.

We will share future trade agreements with the International Trade Committee in the House of Commons and the International Agreements Sub-Committee in the House of Lords, in advance of being laid in Parliament through the process set out under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 (CRaG). Today we are doing this for the UK-Japan CEPA.

We will always endeavour to make sure the committees have at least 10 sitting days to read through these on a

confidential basis, as we are doing for this deal. We are also sharing a full impact assessment which covers the economic impacts along with the social, environmental, and animal welfare aspects of the deal. This impact assessment has been independently scrutinised by the Regulatory Policy Committee.

At the end of negotiations, this government is committed to ensuring the final agreement text, alongside an explanatory memorandum, is laid in Parliament under the CRaG scrutiny procedure for 21 sitting days. This will ensure the House has sufficient time to scrutinise the detail of any deal.

This overall approach goes well beyond many comparable Parliamentary democracies. Parliament has been provided with the information it needs to provide effective scrutiny at all stages of the negotiations. We are also working constructively with the Select Committees referred to above, who may choose to produce independent reports on the agreement.

Widespread prior consultation and the publication of detailed impact assessments and objectives upfront, allows informed debate at the start of the negotiations. Extensive stakeholder engagement on the detail of the negotiations as they proceed, and confidential briefing of relevant committees, means we have taken best practice at every stage from comparable democratic systems. Combined with the confidential sharing of text at the end of negotiations, this is a best in class approach to transparency and openness to scrutiny by Parliament and other stakeholders, compared with such countries.

For example, before any of our negotiations with the US, Japan, Australia and New Zealand commenced, this government led a comprehensive public consultation or call for input. Like Canadian, Australian and New Zealand systems, we have kept Parliament updated on negotiations as they progress, including close engagement with relevant Select Committees.

These arrangements are appropriate to the UK's constitutional makeup and separation of powers. Ultimately if Parliament is not content with a trade deal, it can raise concerns by resolving against ratification and delay any implementing legislation indefinitely.

This government is committed to ensuring that no trade deal undermines key industries or lowers standards for consumers. We are concluding free trade agreements that benefit all parts of the UK, by creating opportunities for our world-leading industries and maintaining high standards, while increasing choice for consumers.

Written Answers

Monday, 12 October 2020

5G

Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to speed up the 5G rollout. [HL8833]

Baroness Barran: The Government is committed to the delivery of world-class digital infrastructure, including 5G, across the UK. Our ambition is for the majority of the population to have access to a 5G signal by 2027.

All four mobile network operators have now launched 5G networks, with 5G services now available in over 100 towns and cities across the UK. Whilst the vast majority of investment in 5G will be made by industry, the Government is funding the research and trials of 5G networks through the £200 million 5G Testbeds and Trials Programme which invests in targeted projects across the UK to build the commercial case for 5G.

The Government is committed to reducing the barriers to the deployment of mobile infrastructure to help speed up rollout. As part of this, the Government has announced that, subject to a technical consultation, it intends to take forward reforms to the planning system to support the deployment of 5G and extend mobile coverage. The Government also intends to consult on whether changes to the Electronic Communications Code are needed to support these aims.

Alcoholic Drinks and Food: Labelling

Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to ensure that labels on alcohol products contain information on nutritional and calorie content in line with other food and drink products. [HL8502]

Lord Bethell: Through *Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives*, published in July, we are committed to consult before the end of the year on our intention to make companies provide calorie labelling on all pre-packaged alcohol they sell. The consultation will also cover introducing calorie labelling on alcoholic drinks sold in the out of home sector, for example bought on draught or by the glass.

A copy of *Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives* is attached.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Attachment [Tackling obesity. Empowering adults and children to live healthier lives 27 7 20.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-09-28/HL8502>

Alcoholic Drinks: Consumption

Asked by **Baroness Kennedy of Cradley**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the level of alcohol consumption amongst the population in England during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL8457]

Lord Bethell: Public Health England has published an online monitoring tool to track behavioural changes, including alcohol consumption. The findings on alcohol consumption throughout the COVID-19 pandemic are that intake across the population as a whole remained about the same during lockdown. Those aged 18 to 34 were more likely to report consuming less alcohol each week than before and those aged 35 to 54 were more likely to report an increase. There was an increase in the proportion of 'high risk' drinking between February and June 2020.

Alcoholic Drinks: Labelling

Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to ensure that labels on alcohol products do not display misleading or out-of-date information. [HL8503]

Lord Bethell: The Department has worked with industry to ensure that alcohol labels reflect the United Kingdom CMOs' Low Risk Drinking Guidelines for drinks produced after the 1 September 2019. The industry has committed to comply with this requirement. Local trading standards have powers to remove products produced after the 1 September 2019 that contain the old guidelines on the labels, remaining stock produced before then can be sold through.

Armed Forces: Civil Proceedings

Asked by **Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what further measures are being taken to protect members of the security forces from "vexatious claims" over actions related to the Troubles. [HL8739]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The Government has been clear that we will introduce legislation to address the legacy of the Troubles in Northern Ireland in a way that focuses on reconciliation, delivers for victims, and ends the cycle of reinvestigations that has failed victims and veterans alike.

We remain committed to making progress and engaging on these issues with the Northern Ireland parties, the Irish Government, and stakeholders from across the community including victims groups as quickly as possible.

Armed Forces: Disciplinary Proceedings

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask Her Majesty's Government under what circumstances would an absconding process be triggered when a person is held at (1) the Napier Barracks in Folkestone, and (2) the Penally Barracks in South Pembrokeshire; and what are the consequences of that process being implemented. [HL8504]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Napier and Penally Barracks are accommodation centres and not detention centres. The people who are supported there are able to leave the site and complete a register when leaving or entering.

The Home Office has established absconder policies and procedures for use across the asylum accommodation estate which we will apply in Napier and Penally.

If applicants leave the site on their own accord, for more than one day, without having obtained agreement, the Provider shall notify the Home Office with written confirmation of the unauthorised absence using the relevant part of the Service Commission Form.

The Home Office will look into the unauthorised absence by contacting the applicant or their representatives by telephone to determine whether they have moved to an alternative address.

If no contact is made the absconder's details will be circulated on the Police National Computer (PNC) database by the PNC team. The PNC team will forward details of absconder notifications to the National Absconder Tracing Team (NATT)

The NATT is responsible for initiating tracing action on all absconders, with the exception of Criminal Casework (CC) absconders. Absconder tracing will be prioritised for removable cases, highest harm cases, vulnerable adults and missing children. On identifying a new address, NATT will make a tasking referral to the relevant Immigration Compliance and Enforcement (ICE) team for further action

The majority of the people we house abide by the conditions of their support and life in the United Kingdom and significant incidents are rare.

All asylum seekers moving to Napier and Penally will have security checks on arrival in the United Kingdom, and health screening. In addition, further checks will be conducted prior to arrival on site to ensure that they are suitable for transfer from their previous accommodation. Anyone arriving at this site will have already been in quarantine for 14 days, as per public health guidance.

The safety and wellbeing of those we support, and the local communities are paramount. The Home Office will continue to work closely with the police and other authorities in preparing for and managing the impacts of these processes, with a clear focus on the welfare and wellbeing of both those on sites and local residents.

Assessments: Coronavirus

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to assist private candidates denied a centre assessment grade due to the cancellation of exams this year; and what plans they have to prevent a similar situation in 2021. [HL8501]

Baroness Berridge: The department recognises that there is a small group of students for whom there was not enough evidence for a grade to be awarded in the summer. These students will have the opportunity to sit exams in all subjects in the autumn. These candidates should be supported by their previous exam centre to enter the series, even if the student is no longer enrolled at that centre or where they are a private candidate. The department's exam support service will help schools and colleges with any additional costs associated with running exams in the autumn, including fees charged by awarding organisations, sites and invigilation.

The government is committed to ensuring that students taking exams in 2021 receive the qualifications they deserve and that next year's exam series proceeds fairly, efficiently and commands public confidence. We recognise that students due to sit exams and assessments next year will have experienced disruption to their education due to the COVID-19 outbreak. We have been working closely with Ofqual, the exam boards and groups representing teachers, schools and colleges to consider our approach to exams and other assessments next year. Although we are clear in our expectation that exams will go ahead in 2021, we are preparing for all eventualities and this includes considering arrangements for private candidates next year.

Building Alterations: Planning Permission

Asked by *Lord Greaves*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the average cost to a local planning authority of determining an application for prior consent for a two-storey upward extension to a dwelling house. [HL8518]

Lord Greenhalgh: The fee for this type of prior approval will be set at a level that is proportionate to the cost to a local authority in determining the prior approval and consistent with fees for other similar prior approvals. This should be less than where the development would have come forward as a planning application.

Census: Coronavirus

Asked by *Baroness Scott of Needham Market*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Census planned in England and Wales for 21 March 2021 will still take place in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL8551]

Lord True: The 2021 Census will take place as planned in England and Wales on 21 March 2021. We regret the timing of the decision from Scottish Government.

Children and Young People

Asked by Lord Hayward

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the increased pressures facing organisations which provide support to children and young people as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL8520]

Baroness Berridge: The government is aware that the COVID-19 outbreak has resulted in increased pressure on the full range of organisations which provide support to children and young people, including local authorities' children's services and voluntary sector organisations, as well as schools, colleges and early years settings.

The department has been working closely with local authorities to assess the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, setting up dedicated Regional Education and Care Teams (REACTs), comprising of education and social care staff from the department and Ofsted. The teams work closely with the Association of Directors of Children's Services and with local authorities. The REACTs have weekly calls with directors in each region of the country and follow up with individual councils of concern as necessary.

The department also conducts the fortnightly Vulnerable Children and Young People survey, which goes out to all local authorities in England. This provides an overview of how children's services are operating and includes information such as the number of referrals to children's social care services, social worker contact with vulnerable children and numbers of children going into care. A report of data from Waves 1 to 8 of the survey can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vulnerable-children-and-young-people-survey>.

The government has provided an unprecedented package of support for those that support vulnerable children through both statutory and voluntary services. This support package includes £3.7 billion of additional funding to support local authorities in meeting COVID-19-related pressures, including in children's services. This funding is un-ringfenced, recognising local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the major COVID-19 service pressures in their local area. The support also includes the Adoption Support Fund, which has provided £8 million to help families under pressure as a result of the outbreak. It also includes the Innovation Programme, which has funded more than £12 million for 14 projects related to areas including domestic violence and supporting teenagers at risk of exploitation.

Additionally, this support package includes funding of more than £7 million to Barnardo's for the See, Hear, Respond service, which offers targeted help to vulnerable

children, young people and their families affected by COVID-19 and the measures put in place to stop its spread. It also includes a £7.6 million joint fund between the department and the Home Office for national children's charities operating in England and Wales that offer services to safeguard vulnerable children and that have financially suffered due to the impact of COVID-19. We have also provided funding to other charities working with vulnerable children, including Grandparents Plus, Family Rights Group, FosterTalk, the Care Leavers Association, Become, Drive Forward Foundation and Adoption UK.

This funding is in addition to the joint investment from the department and the Home Office in the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's helpline of £1.6 million and additional £310,000 to enhance Childline. In addition, approximately £10 million has already been committed to the Family Fund, helping families with children that have complex needs and disabilities through grants for equipment that makes their lives easier while implementing social distancing measures, including computers, specialist equipment and educational toys.

We know children and young people's wellbeing and mental health has been affected in various ways during the last 6 months. We have advised schools and colleges to place emphasis on pastoral and wellbeing support, provided new resources on mental health as part of the relationships, health and sex education curriculum and hosted national webinars for education settings and local partners. The government is investing £8 million to launch the new Wellbeing for Education Return programme, which will train experts in local authorities to provide schools and further education providers all over England with the knowledge and practical skills they need to support teachers, students and parents to help improve how they respond to the emotional impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The government is making available a catch-up package worth £1 billion, including a catch-up premium worth a total of £650 million to support schools to make up for lost teaching time. Alongside the universal catch-up premium, we are launching a £350 million National Tutoring Programme to provide additional, targeted support for those children and young people who need the most help.

We have also made a wide-ranging package of support available to the early years sector. Many settings have used the furlough scheme and we have also continued to pay local authorities by bulk-buying childcare places under our entitlements for free hours for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. We will continue to pay local authorities for those hours this autumn term even if fewer children are attending settings. We have asked local authorities to pass this funding on in full.

Our latest guidance on supporting vulnerable children and young people during the COVID-19 outbreak is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-childrens-social-care-services>.

Children: Day Care

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support women returning to work to access childcare as restrictions to address the COVID-19 pandemic are eased. [HL8546]

Baroness Berridge: The government funds a generous package of free and subsidised childcare. Parents can find out more about the support they can get at: <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>.

The government recognises the importance of childcare to families. Early years was one of the first sectors in which COVID-19 restrictions were eased. Since 1 June, early years providers have been able to open to all children, and since 20 July, they have been able to return to their normal group sizes.

We are providing extra security to nurseries and childminders that are open by 'block-buying' childcare places for the rest of this year at the level we would have funded before the COVID-19 outbreak, regardless of how many children are attending. We have also made temporary changes to ensure that eligible parents who experienced a reduction or increase in income as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak retain their eligibility for the entitlement to 30 hours of free childcare a week.

Local authorities are responsible for ensuring there are sufficient childcare places during the COVID-19 outbreak. Parents who are experiencing difficulties in obtaining childcare should contact their local authority directly.

China: Overseas Aid

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much Official Development Assistance was given to the government of China in the last 10 years; to list the projects that were funded; and what assessment they have made of providing aid to any country which has a space programme. [HL8500]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government no longer gives Official Development Assistance (ODA) directly to the Chinese Government. The UK ended its traditional bilateral aid programmes to China in 2011 and now offers the country expertise and skills to help tackle global issues like climate change and global health, which are also in the UK national interest. This includes working with government-affiliated organisations to positively influence Chinese policy and practice.

All UK ODA spend, including to China, complies with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD's) ODA rules. This also includes the ODA spend on costs related to UK diplomatic staff in

China, Chinese Chevening scholars and the British Council's ODA eligible activity in China.

Coronavirus: Disease Control

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bethell on 28 September (HL8106), how they will ensure that people will "limit social contact as much as possible" given that rules permit drinking in public houses with different groups of up to five others at different times. [HL8575]

Lord Bethell: From Monday 28 September, we increased the number of COVID-19 secure guidelines that have been placed into law and expanded the range of settings in which these laws will apply. The new 'rule of six' simplifies and strengthens the rules on social gatherings, making them easier to understand and easier for the police to enforce. Businesses will be legally obliged to prevent people mixing in groups larger than six, take appropriate measures to prevent mingling and to comply with the COVID-19 secure guidance already in place. Therefore, if venues are not COVID-19 secure then they could be liable for fines or closures.

Coronavirus: Health Services

Asked by *Baroness Sheehan*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to set up a working group to address the needs of people experiencing long-term health effects of COVID-19. [HL8209]

Lord Bethell: We have held discussions with interested stakeholders, including clinicians, academics and researchers, to better understand and mitigate the long-term impacts of COVID-19. Further discussions have been held between senior clinicians to review the different options to provide longer-term support of people who have had COVID-19.

To ensure the best use of National Health Service resources for clinical research during the acute phase of the pandemic, the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) established a single United Kingdom-wide process to prioritise COVID-19 research as Urgent Public Health Research. Through this process, the NIHR Clinical Research Network is providing support to expedite delivery of Urgent Public Health Research, by fast tracking the local set-up, management and delivery of studies to help understand, prevent and manage COVID-19. This includes the Post-Hospitalisation COVID-19 study, led by the University of Leicester, to understand and improve long-term outcomes for survivors following hospitalisation with COVID-19. The research currently underway will continue to inform future NHS service design and provision.

In July, we launched the new 'Your COVID Recovery' service, which forms part of NHS plans to expand access to COVID-19 rehabilitation treatments for those who

have survived the virus but still have problems with breathing, mental health problems or other complications. Alongside bringing back non-urgent services in a safe way and maintaining a high state of readiness for any future increase in COVID-19 cases, local health leaders are currently working with councils and voluntary groups to plan how they will meet the additional ongoing demand for rehabilitation services post-COVID-19.

Coronavirus: Quarantine

Asked by The Earl of Clancarty

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether an individual is legally required to remain in quarantine between taking and receiving the results of a COVID-19 test. [HL8111]

Lord Bethell: If an individual arrives in England from a non-exempt country, territory or region, or has departed from or transited through a non-exempt country, territory or region at any time in the period beginning with the 14th day before the date of their arrival, and they are not exempt, they must self-isolate for 14 days subject to certain limited exceptions when they may leave or be outside their place of self-isolation. The requirement to self-isolate in these circumstances is not dependent upon taking a COVID 19 test or the outcome of a test.

National Health Service guidance states that if someone has the main symptoms of COVID-19, they should get a test as soon as possible. Unless someone is self-isolating after returning from a country, territory or region that is not on the travel corridors list, it is not a legal requirement to remain in self-isolation between taking a test and receiving the result. However, it is advised that they should stay at home and not have visitors until they get the result. It is recommended that they only leave their home to get the test.

Coronavirus: Travel

Asked by Baroness McGregor-Smith

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the efficacy rate of a single COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction test for international travellers upon their arrival in circumstances where no pre-departure test has been conducted. [HL8128]

Lord Bethell: Scientific analysis conducted by Public Health England and approved by the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies showed that a single test on the day of arrival would reduce the number of infectious international travellers who enter the community by only 7% compared to a no self-isolation, no test scenario. This is compared to an estimated 99% reduction in the number of infectious international travellers entering the community for a 14-day self-isolation approach.

Crown Court: St Albans

Asked by Lord Wasserman

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of trials that are waiting to be heard at St Albans Crown Court; and when they estimate that the present backlog will be cleared. [HL8566]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The outstanding trial volume at St Albans Crown Court, as of Q2 (Apr-Jun) 2020, was 704 cases. This is 10% above the pre-COVID baseline of 640 cases in Q1 (Jan-Mar). Case receipts, finalisations and outstanding data is provided in the quarterly Criminal Court statistics published online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-court-statistics>

In line with the Criminal Courts Recovery Plan, published in September 2020, HMCTS is increasing capacity to maximise the number of hearings that can be carried out in the context of social distancing. It is not possible at this stage to give a date for when the backlog at St Albans will return to pre-COVID levels, as it is dependent on the volume of receipts received, and the number of cases which can be dealt with within social distancing constraints.

The coronavirus pandemic has impacted HMCTS's ability to list trials. Jury trials resumed at St Albans Crown Court on 14 September 2020. Currently, the court is able to hear jury trials in two of its six courtrooms while ensuring adherence to social distancing measures. HMCTS is looking to increase this to three courtrooms by the end of November. HMCTS is also utilising Huntingdon Law Courts and will continue to sit two jury trials there, dealing with work from St Albans Crown Court, so that by the end of November there will be five courtrooms running jury trials for St Albans.

Education: Standards

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to close the attainment gap for (1) disabled children, and (2) children from (a) disadvantaged, and (b) BAME, communities. [HL8545]

Baroness Berridge: The government is taking steps to close the attainment gap for disabled and disadvantaged children.

We have announced £780 million additional funding in 2020-21 for children and young people with the most complex needs, bringing the total funding for high needs to £7.2 billion.

Since 2018, we have commissioned a programme of work to embed special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) into school improvement practice and to equip the workforce to deliver high-quality teaching across all types of SEND. The department provided funding of £3.9 million for the first 2 financial years and have extended the contract until March 2021 for a further £2.18 million.

On 19 May, the government announced that the Family Fund will receive funding of £37.3 million in the financial year 2020-21 to provide grants to families on low incomes who have disabilities or severe medical conditions. This funding includes £10 million which has been allocated to help families in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. More details are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/37-million-to-support-children-with-complex-needs>.

To help close the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils, our £1 billion COVID-19 catch-up package will provide additional funding to schools to support pupils whose education has been negatively affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. Part of this package includes the National Tutoring Programme (NTP), which is providing £350 million of targeted support focused on disadvantaged pupils. This will give schools access to subsidised tuition and in-house academic mentor to help disadvantaged pupils make up for lost learning time. The NTP sits alongside our £650 million universal catch-up premium funding for the current academic year, which will enable schools to prioritise support for specific groups of pupils in line with their level of need.

The ongoing provision of pupil premium funding, which is worth £2.4 billion this financial year, aims to close the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. It allows school leaders to tailor the support they provide, based on the needs of their disadvantaged pupils, with the aim of accelerating their progress and improving their attainment.

To help schools support pupils with particular characteristics, including ethnicity, we have commissioned an independent research and assessment agency to consider catch-up needs and monitor progress over the course of the year, to help us target support across the system. This research will make use of existing assessments that schools already choose to use and are typically taken by over a million children each year. This will allow the department to assess how a range of groups are performing over this year, including the most disadvantaged and those with historically poor outcomes.

Expert Trade Advisory Groups

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the membership of the trade advisory groups established in July includes trade union representation; and if not, why not. [HL8692]

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the creation of trade advisory groups, what plans they have to carry out consultation on trade agreements with (1) civil society, (2) trade unions, (3) consumers, and (4) the general public. [HL8695]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The Trade Advisory Groups (TAGs) do not include trade union representation. TAGs have been created to access strategic and technical

expertise from within specific sectors that are vital to the British economy.

The TAGs are just one part of HM Government's external engagement on international trade though. The Department for International Trade continues to engage regularly with a wide range of interested parties, including one-to-one meetings and roundtables.

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government which, if any, of the Expert Trade Advisory Groups continue to exist; and how the remaining Groups will work alongside the trade advisory groups announced in July. [HL8693]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The following "Expert Trade Advisory Groups" continue to exist at the present time: Continuity; Customs; Financial Services; Intellectual Property; Procurement; Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs); Sustainability; and Trade for Development.

The review of how these groups will continue to operate within the Department for International Trade's broader engagement is ongoing.

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government how the trade advisory groups will interact with the Strategic Trade Advisory Group; and what the remit of each group is. [HL8694]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The two groups serve different purposes.

The Strategic Trade Advisory Group (STAG) provides a forum for high-level strategic discussions between HM Government, and a cross-section of interests from all parts of the UK on trade policy matters.

The Trade Advisory Groups' principal purpose is to provide the blend of strategic and technical expertise required to ensure the United Kingdom's trade negotiations are able to progress at pace.

Exports: Trade Agreements

Asked by Lord Rose of Monewden

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the remit of the new expert panel established to support UK trade negotiations includes the assessment of the impact of a policy change by leading emerging markets to reduce their dependence on imports; and if so, when the panel is expected to report the results of this assessment. [HL8547]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The Department for International Trade (DIT) has convened a panel of academic experts in trade to advise on how we develop and use cutting-edge economic models and analytical techniques in our trade modelling. The purpose of the review is to examine DIT's current approach to trade modelling and to consider how best to incorporate wider

global economic developments and the latest academic thinking on measuring trade impacts in its modelling framework. The panel will advise on analytical methods and tools to capture the impact of changes in trade policy in general, it will not assess specific policy questions. Once the panel has made recommendations to improve DIT's modelling capability, DIT will explore how best to incorporate these in our analysis in support of trade policy questions.

Fixed Term Parliaments Act 2011

Asked by Lord Wallace of Tankerness

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to announce the arrangements for a committee to carry out a review of the operation of the Fixed Term Parliaments Act 2011, in pursuance of section 7(4)(a) of the Act. [HL8565]

Lord True: The Government has made a commitment, in the manifesto and the Queen's Speech, to take forward work to repeal the Fixed Term Parliaments Act. Announcements about the statutory review Committee will be made in due course.

Future High Streets Fund

Asked by Lord Rose of Monewden

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have (1) to provide additional resources to the Future High Streets Fund, and (2) to increase the current cap of £25 million per applicant to this fund. [HL8548]

Lord Greenhalgh: The £1 billion Future High Streets Fund forms a central pillar of our £3.6 billion Towns Fund Programme. A competitive round of the High Streets Fund is underway currently. The parameters of this competition have been agreed and set out in the published Future High Streets Fund Prospectus, and subsequent local authority guidance. A further competitive round of funding for towns and high streets is planned to follow. Details of that further competition will be published in due course.

Gambling: Young People

Asked by Baroness Finlay of Llandaff

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the long-term effects of (1) gambling advertising in sport, and (2) loot boxes, on young people. [HL8667]

Asked by Baroness Finlay of Llandaff

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have received about gambling company adverts and sponsorships displayed on the kit of professional sports teams. [HL8668]

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the long-term effects of gambling advertising on young people and their future participation in gambling activities. [HL8688]

Baroness Barran: Gambling advertising and sponsorship, including around sport, must be socially responsible and must not be targeted at children. The government assessed the evidence on advertising in its Review of Gaming Machines and Social Responsibility Measures, the full response to which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-proposals-for-changes-to-gaming-machines-and-social-responsibility-measures>.

Since then, in March this year, the charity GambleAware has published the final report of a major piece of research into the effect of gambling marketing and advertising on children, young people and vulnerable people. That study found that exposure to advertising was associated with an openness to gamble in the future amongst children and young people aged 11-24 who did not currently gamble. It also found that there were other factors that correlated more closely with current gambling behaviour amongst those groups, including peer and parental gambling. It did not suggest a causal link between any of these and problem gambling in later life.

The government takes concerns raised about loot boxes in video games very seriously. On 23 September 2020 we launched an 8 week call for evidence which includes a focus on whether loot boxes cause harm and, if so, the nature of the harm. This will put us on the best footing to take any action that is necessary. We expect to publish a Government response to the call for evidence early next year.

Ministers and officials regularly engage with stakeholders on a wide range of issues. Ministers have not recently received representations from either the gambling or the sports sectors about gambling advertising or sponsorship of professional sports teams. The House of Lords Select Committee on the Economic and Social Impact of the Gambling Industry and Gambling Related Harm All Party Parliamentary Group have made recommendations to Ministers in both these areas.

Health Services: Equality

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase NHS funding to address (1) ethnic, and (2) gender, inequalities in the diagnosis and treatment of patients. [HL8211]

Lord Bethell: The Government is providing an extra £33.9 billion in funding to support the NHS Long Term Plan. Implementation of the NHS Long Term Plan is one of the five priorities the Government has set for the National Health Service in the Accountability Framework to NHS England and NHS Improvement.

The NHS Long Term Plan sets out the clear action the NHS will take to strengthen its approach on health inequalities, which includes tackling inequalities on the protected characteristics of sex and race. NHS England and NHS Improvement have based their funding allocations to local areas on a more accurate assessment of health inequalities and unmet need. As a condition of receiving NHS Long Term Plan funding, all major national programmes and every local area across England will be required to set out specific measurable goals and mechanisms by which they will contribute to narrowing health inequalities.

Health Services: Reciprocal Arrangements

Asked by Lord Bowness

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether any agreement in principle has been reached on continuance of the European Health Insurance Card scheme for UK citizens visiting the EU after 31 December 2020. [HL8659]

Lord Bethell: From January 2021, people protected under the Withdrawal Agreement will continue to be entitled to a United Kingdom-issued European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). For those not covered by the Withdrawal Agreement, their EHIC may not be valid from January 2021.

For people not covered by the Withdrawal Agreement, the future of reciprocal healthcare arrangements between the UK and European Union are subject to negotiations, which are ongoing.

The UK has set out that it is ready to work to establish practical, reciprocal healthcare provisions with the EU for the future. The UK is open to arrangements that provide healthcare cover for tourists, short-term business visitors and service providers. These arrangements could benefit UK nationals and EU citizens travelling or moving between the UK.

Hospitality Industry: Job Support Scheme

Asked by Baroness Doocey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the economic impact on employers in the hospitality sector of the process of making payments through the Job Support Scheme in arrears. [HL8515]

Baroness Barran: My Department is in regular contact with Her Majesty's Treasury to closely assess the impact of COVID-related support measures on the hospitality industry.

When it launches in November, the Jobs Support Scheme will help protect jobs within businesses facing lower demand due to COVID-19.

Alongside this, hospitality businesses can continue to make use of the Government's comprehensive support

package. This includes the various loan schemes, a significant cut to VAT until the end of March, plus business rates relief for eligible hospitality, retail and leisure businesses.

We continue to engage with stakeholders through the Visitor Economy Working Group to assess how we can most effectively support employers and employees within the hospitality sector.

Immigrants

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many people have been granted pre-settled status; and of these people, (1) how many are now eligible to apply for settled status on the basis of five years' continuous residence in the UK, (2) how many will be eligible to apply for settled status before 30 June 2021, and (3) how many will be eligible to apply for settled status in each of the 12 months following 30 June 2021. [HL8519]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The latest published information shows 3.88 million (3,880,400) EU Settlement Scheme applications had been concluded up to 30 September 2020, of which 1,641,600 have been granted pre-settled status. The latest figures can be found on the Home Office's 'EU Settlement Scheme statistics' web page available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/eu-settlement-scheme-statistics>.

A person granted pre-settled status can apply for settled status as soon as they qualify for this. They will be eligible for settled status once they have completed five years' continuous residence or where other criteria for eligibility for settled status without that length of continuous residence are met. The Home Office cannot assess a person's eligibility for settled status until they make an application to the scheme.

Influenza: Vaccination

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the delivery of the flu vaccine this autumn has been delayed in reaching GP surgeries. [HL8267]

Lord Bethell: It is usual for flu vaccine deliveries from manufacturers to be phased throughout the vaccination period.

General practitioners and pharmacies are responsible for ordering the flu vaccine for adults directly from manufacturers, and decisions about volume and delivery dates are made by the manufacturer.

Asked by Baroness Goudie

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to their announcement on 24 July that the "most comprehensive

flu programme in UK history will be rolled out this winter”, what steps they took to ensure that a supply of flu vaccines would be available; and what assessment they have made of the reported shortage of such vaccines for autumn 2020. [HL8582]

Lord Bethell: There is no national shortage of the flu vaccine. We have sufficient vaccine for up to 30 million people to be vaccinated in England this winter.

General practitioners and pharmacists are directly responsible for ordering flu vaccine from suppliers which are used to deliver the national flu programme to adults, with deliveries phased through the season.

In addition, the Department has procured additional doses of seasonal flu vaccine to ensure more flu vaccines are available from November.

Internet: Safety

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they intend to introduce an online harms bill. [HL8766]

Baroness Barran: The Government is firmly committed to making the UK the safest place to be online, and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, as well as the Home Office are working at pace to introduce this legislation. We will publish a Full Government Response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation later this year, and we will follow this with legislation, which will be ready early next year.

Maternal Mortality: Ethnic Groups

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had, and with whom, about reducing the number of maternal deaths among Black, Asian and minority ethnic women. [HL8603]

Lord Bethell: Discussions regarding reducing the number of maternal deaths among black, Asian and minority ethnic women have been addressed at two recent roundtables. The Minister of State for Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health, (Ms Nadine Dorries MP), chaired a Ministerial roundtable on Inequality in Maternity, and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Equalities (Kemi Badenoch MP) led a discussion between frontline midwives, medical experts, academics, and regional health representatives.

Mubarak Bala

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Coventry

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Nigeria about the arrest and ongoing detention without trial of Mubarak Bala. [HL8623]

Baroness Sugg: The UK Government remains concerned by the continued detention of Mubarak Bala

and we are monitoring his case closely. Our High Commissioner raised the case earlier this year with the Inspector General of the Nigerian Police Force and has recently raised it with the Kano State Governor and Attorney General. The Minister for Africa also discussed the case with the Nigerian Minister of Foreign Affairs in May. We continue to stress to the Nigerian Government the importance of a transparent investigation that respects Mr Bala's human rights, the rule of law, and the Nigerian constitutional right to freedom of religion or belief.

Defending freedom of religion or belief for all remains a UK Government priority and we will continue to use our voice internationally to protect this human right.

Music: GCE A-level and GCSE

Asked by Lord Black of Brentwood

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many students took (1) GCSE, and (2) A Level, music in each year from 2010 to 2020. [HL8507]

Baroness Berridge: This information is not yet available for the academic year 2019/20. It will become available once we release our provisional publications between November and December 2020. For GCSEs this will be available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/entries-for-gcse-november-2020-exam-series>.

For A Levels this will be available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/a-level-and-other-16-18-results-2019-to-2020-provisional>.

Information on the number of entries in music GCSEs[1][2][3][4][5] and A Levels in England for the academic years 2009/10 to 2018/19[6] inclusive is provided in the tables below.

Number of GCSE entries in music by pupils at the end of key stage 4

2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
45,433	43,157	40,761	41,256	42,446	43,698	41,650	38,897	34,709	34,580

Source: Key stage 4 attainment data

Information on the number of entries in music A Levels in England for the academic years 2009/10 to 2018/19[7][8] inclusive is provided in the tables below.

Number of A level entries in music by pupils at the end of key stage 5 [9]

2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
8,841	8,709	8,203	7,655	7,184	6,709	6,155	5,585	5,440	5,120

Source: Key stage 5 attainment data

[1] Pupils are identified as being at the end of key stage 4 if they were on roll at the school and in year 11 at the time of the January school census for that year. Age is calculated as at 31 August for that year, and the majority of pupils at the end of key stage 4 were age 15 at the start

of the academic year. Some pupils may complete this key stage in an earlier or later year group.

[2] Discounting has been applied where pupils have taken the same subject more than once and only one entry is counted in these circumstances. Prior to 2014, best entry discounting, where the pupil's best result is used was in place in performance tables. From 2014 onwards, first entry rules were introduced, where a pupil's first entry in that subject is used in performance tables. For more information on discounting and early entry, see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-4-qualifications-discount-codes-and-point-scores>.

[3] All schools includes state-funded schools, independent schools, independent special schools, non-maintained special schools, hospital schools, pupil referral units and alternative provision. Alternative provision includes academy and free school alternative provision. Since September 2013, general further education colleges and sixth-form colleges have been able to directly enrol 14 to 16 year-olds. The academic year 2014/15 was the first year in which colleges have pupils at the end of key stage 4. From 2016 onwards, entries and achievements for these pupils are included in figures as state-funded schools.

[4] Total number of entries include pupils who were absent, whose results are pending and results which are ungraded or unclassified.

[5] Includes GCSE full courses, level 2 equivalents, GCSE double awards and AS levels.

[6] 2009/10 to 2017/18 results taken from final data; 2018/19 results taken from revised data.

[7] 2009/10 to 2017/18 results taken from final data; 2018/19 results taken from revised data and includes all schools and colleges in England.

[8] Covers students aged 16 to 18 at the beginning of the academic year, i.e. 31 August.

[9] This is the number of entries, rather than the number of students, so may include resits.

Musicians: Coronavirus

Asked by Baroness Pinnock

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to publish guidance on how solo singers can perform in a COVID-19-safe way either (1) inside, or (2) outside. [HL8827]

Baroness Barran: The existing guidance for the performing arts provides guidance for performances by solo singers in both indoor and outdoor settings. Since 15 August, live indoor performances in front of a socially distanced audience have been able to take place provided the performance space is COVID-19 secure and groups of up to 6 in the audience are kept separate from one another to ensure they do not mix and do not exceed the new legal limits.

Nigeria: Abduction and Churches

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they intend to have with the government of Nigeria about (1) the abduction of Ezra Bako, Miracle Saitu Danjuma, Favour Danjuma, Happiness Odoji, and Christiana Madugu, from a school in Kaduna, and (2) Christian churches being attacked in Nigeria; and what assessment they have made of the reasons for those occurrences. [HL8797]

Baroness Sugg: The UK Government condemns the reported attack on the village of Damba-Kasaya in Kaduna State and abduction of students and a teacher from the Prince Academy School. Attacks on schools and abductions of children are abhorrent and must stop. We call on the Nigerian Government to establish the full facts of the incident and to take urgent action. Our High Commission is following up urgently with the Nigerian authorities.

We also condemn attacks on places of worship. We are aware that churches have been targeted in incidents of intercommunal violence that predominantly occur in Nigeria's Middle Belt. We do not currently have sufficient information to establish the motives for the reported attack on the Baptist Church in Damba-Kasaya nor the identity of the perpetrators. We recognise that religious identity is often invoked in conflict, even where the root causes relate to other issues. Religious tensions are frequently stoked by the media and politicians, fueling reprisal attacks. The UK will continue to play a constructive role in calming these tensions and supporting solutions which meet the needs of all affected communities.

In North East Nigeria, churches have frequently been attacked by Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa. These groups target both Christians and Muslims who do not subscribe to their extremist views. We are committed to helping Nigeria tackle the terrorist threat. We provide a comprehensive package of security, humanitarian and stabilisation assistance to help tackle the threat and support affected communities. We are firmly committed to standing up for freedom of religion or belief around the world. People should be able to worship freely and in safety regardless of their religion.

Nigeria: Overseas Aid

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Coventry

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment, if any, they have made of the rule of law in Kano State, Nigeria, and what financial and technical assistance they are providing to strengthen the rule of law and the protection of freedom of religion or belief in the region. [HL8625]

Baroness Sugg: The UK Government is monitoring a number of legal cases in Kano State, about which we have raised concerns over human rights, including the

constitutional right to freedom of religion or belief. This includes the cases of Mubarak Bala and Yahaya Sharif-Aminu. We continue to engage the federal and state authorities to stress the importance of transparent investigations that respect human rights and the rule of law.

For over a decade, we have worked to strengthen the rule of law and adherence to human rights requirements with the Nigerian Police Force, including in Kano State. A recent programme, which concluded in March, focussed on strengthening the capability, accountability and responsiveness of the police. This included the importance of fair, transparent, and respectful treatment of civilians. We are also supporting the Centre for Law Enforcement and Education to monitor the conduct of security forces during the coronavirus pandemic. The data collated by the Centre for Law Enforcement and Education is referred to the Police Service Commission and National Human Rights Commission.

The UK remains committed to promoting and protecting the rule of law and human rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief, around the world. We are a strong voice internationally in defence of this fundamental right.

Palestinians: Children

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that Palestinian children have been interrogated by the government of Israel in (1) the West Bank, and (2) East Jerusalem. [HL8564]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We remain committed to working with Israel to secure improvements to the practices surrounding children in detention and their treatment. We continue to call on the Israeli authorities to comply with their obligations under international law.

Palestinians: Elections

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Fatah and Hamas have agreed to hold elections in Palestine within the next six months. [HL8559]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Genuine and democratic national elections for all Palestinians, are crucial to the establishment of a viable and sovereign Palestinian State. We are supportive of Hamas-Fatah reconciliation attempts, and of the PA returning to resume government functions in Gaza, helping to improve the dire humanitarian and economic situation and restore effective and accountable governance. We continue to encourage the Palestinian leadership to work toward strong, inclusive, accountable and democratic institutions, based on respect for the rule of law and human rights.

Palestinians: Schools

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of Palestinian schools which have been demolished in the West Bank in each of the last five years. [HL8561]

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many Palestinian schools operated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East have been demolished by the government of Israel in each of the last five years. [HL8562]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Whilst we are unable to provide these exact figures, the UK is seriously concerned by the continued demolition of Palestinian property, including schools, by Israeli authorities. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The right to education is a basic right, and it is essential to have a strong and thriving Palestinian education system in order to provide opportunities for the next generation. The UK is a long-term supporter of UNRWA and we recognise UNRWA's unique mandate from the UN General Assembly, to protect and provide protection and core services to Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. This is why the UK is committed to providing support to education workers in the West Bank, and UNRWA education in the West Bank and Gaza.

Parking: Pedestrian Areas

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the number of gardens which would be paved over, and (2) the consequent loss of wildlife habitats, as a result of each of the three options set out in their consultation on reforming pavement parking. [HL8800]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: No such assessment has been made. However, the Department's consultation specifically asks respondents to describe the environmental impact of the new proposals.

Pension Credit

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government, following the report by Independent Age The cost of pensioner poverty and non-take up of Pension Credit, published on 14 September, whether they have developed a written strategy to increase the take-up of pension credit; and if not, whether they plan to prepare and publish such a strategy within this parliamentary session. [HL8532]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: Since its introduction in 2003, successive governments have attempted to promote Pension Credit but with limited results. For a number of years now, the take-up rate for Pension Credit has remained at around 60 per cent. Previous research by the Department suggested that the main reason for people not claiming is people believing they are not eligible, for example because they think they have too much money or own their own home.

While over 1.5 million pensioners currently receive Pension Credit, the Government wants to make sure that all pensioners eligible can claim the Pension Credit to which they are rightly entitled. That is why in February this year we launched a nationwide campaign to raise awareness of Pension Credit and help dispel some of the misconceptions that people might have about Pension Credit eligibility. We wanted to make it clear that having savings, a pension or owning a home are not automatic barriers to receiving Pension Credit. We also wanted to highlight that even a small award of Pension Credit can provide access to a range of other benefits such as help with rent, council tax reduction schemes, heating costs and for those aged 75 or over a free television license.

We are also continuing to work with our stakeholders to help spread the key messages from the campaign because we know that often the best ways to reach eligible pensioners is through trusted stakeholders working in the community. Our online Pension Credit toolkit has been updated with the recent awareness campaign materials to supplement the resources it already contains for those working with pensioners, such as guides to Pension Credit and information designed to help older people understand how they could get Pension Credit.

In May this year we launched an online claim service for Pension Credit to supplement the existing telephone and postal claim services. The new online service enables pensioners to apply for Pension Credit at a time that suits them. Around 50 per cent of new claims to Pension Credit are currently being made using the service and more than 34,000 online claims have been made since it was launched.

Prisons: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Browne of Belmont

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Keen of Elie on 6 August (HL7333), how many of the 20,000 prisoners and 10,000 staff at the 28 sites of the testing study have now taken up the invitation to carry out an antigen test. [HL8509]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: In July 2020, a Covid-19 testing study commenced in 28 prisons in England. The testing programme is being conducted to help understand the spread of Coronavirus in prisons and how it is transmitted within individual establishments and across the wider estate. It is being carried out in collaboration with the University of Southampton, Public Health

England, Department of Health and Social Care and National Audit Office.

The results will be used to aid the management of the virus, thereby protecting lives and reducing its spread, as well as to assist in managing any future pandemic in a prison custodial setting.

The study involves asking both prisoners and staff to volunteer to undertake antigen tests to ascertain if they are currently infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus responsible for Covid-19. The study is ongoing, however the first round of testing saw 12500 tests taken. 4400 of these tests were from staff and 8100 were from prisoners.

Prisons: Industrial Health and Safety

Asked by Lord Browne of Belmont

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent steps they have taken to ensure the safety of staff in prisons. [HL8511]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: We do not underestimate the challenges faced by everyone working in prisons. We are committed to making prisons a safe place to work and providing prison staff with the right support, training and tools to empower them to do their jobs.

We are giving officers PAVA pepper spray and body-worn cameras to make their jobs safer, as well as access to post incident care teams, occupational health support and counselling for those who need it. More widely, we are spending £100 million to bolster prison security, clamping down on the weapons, drugs and mobile phones that fuel violence and crime behind bars. This will fund tough airport-style security, body scanners and phone-blocking technology.

Violence against our hardworking prison officers is unacceptable, and we work closely with the police and Crown Prosecution Service to bring the perpetrators to justice. Additionally, as outlined in our Sentencing White Paper we will double the maximum sentence for assaulting an emergency worker from 12 months to two years.

Alongside these measures, to ensure staff are safe during the COVID-19 pandemic we are providing PPE and ensuring social distancing is in place where possible.

Prisons: Sanitation

Asked by Baroness Sherlock

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of staff at HMP Erlestoke who handle and process (1) evidence, and (2) contraband, who work in buildings without access to running water or toilet facilities. [HL8552]

Asked by Baroness Sherlock

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of Her Majesty's Prison

Service staff nationally who work in buildings without access to running water or toilets. [HL8553]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The number of staff at HMP Erlestoke who handle contraband and evidence is estimated at 10, who do so within a security portacabin. This includes staff who search for items for logging, and security staff who receive illicit items found during routine searches. The health and wellbeing of staff is a top priority, and staff have access to other facilities including toilets and running water in order to carry out their duties safely.

This information is held locally, and therefore could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Remote Working

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the case for a comprehensive review of any changes to the legal position of (1) employers, and (2) employees, as a result of an increase in home working arrangements. [HL8531]

Lord Callanan: On 28th September, the Government made changes to the legal position around self-isolation making it an offence for an individual to leave their place of self-isolation (normally home) during the isolating period (either following a positive Covid test, contact by NHS Test and Trace or if they have returned from abroad and are required to quarantine). In order to support this, we have also made it an offence for an employer to knowingly allow a person who has been told to self-isolate to work anywhere other than where they are self-isolating. Often the best solution when someone is self-isolating is for them to work from home.

When it comes to homeworking more generally, we are aware that the period of increased homeworking has raised numerous issues which employers and employees need to consider. ACAS has produced comprehensive guidance on the key employer considerations for when people are working at home during the pandemic. This covers health and safety, data protection and insurance – the link to the relevant section of the ACAS site can be found here <https://www.acas.org.uk/working-from-home>.

It is a statutory requirement for employers to put measures in place to ensure that a workplace is safe – wherever that workplace is – and to take steps to manage the relevant risks. The new self-isolation offence does not change this legal framework.

Smoking

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the level of smoking amongst the population in England during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL8455]

Lord Bethell: Public Health England (PHE) has produced an online monitoring tool 'Wider Impacts of COVID on Health' which is designed to allow users to explore the indirect effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the population's health and wellbeing. The tool presents a range of health and wellbeing metrics, including bringing together several indicators on smoking and alcohol consumption in England over the pandemic period.

Data from PHE's latest summary on the Wider impacts of COVID-19 on health published 24 September 2020 suggest considerable volatility in smoking behaviours.

Special Educational Needs: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Northern Ireland Executive about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and young people with special educational needs. [HL8741]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: Northern Ireland Office Ministers are in regular contact with Northern Ireland Executive Ministers regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As education is a devolved matter, the education Minister Peter Weir is rightly leading the response for education matters in Northern Ireland.

We are delighted to see that Minister Weir is determined to improve the current system of special educational provision and support pupils with special educational needs (SEN) to meet their full potential.

On 30 September, Minister Weir launched a public consultation which will improve the provision of education for children and young people with special educational needs. The Minister has also announced funding of £7.5m to deliver a new SEN framework which will provide additional resources for schools.

As a Government, we promised to do whatever it takes to get through this together - as one United Kingdom, and we will continue to work closely with the devolved administrations to ensure they have the funding and resources needed to tackle the impacts of COVID-19.

Students: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what risk assessment they undertook, prior to September, of the impact of students returning to universities on the transmission of COVID-19. [HL8557]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The safety and wellbeing of staff and students in higher education (HE) is always our priority and the government is doing all it can to minimise the risks to those working and studying in our HE institutions in this unprecedented situation, while mitigating the impact on education.

As with all educational settings, we continue to monitor the situation closely and follow the latest scientific advice, adapting policies as the situation changes. Our guidance for providers on reopening campuses takes account of the latest scientific advice from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, which has been considering the risks of reopening HE institutions. The guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campus/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campus>.

The government has drawn on the expertise of the HE taskforce that we set up for this purpose, and we have been providing robust public health advice and regular updates to the sector to help it to plan carefully to keep students and staff as safe as possible. As our guidance makes clear, we expect providers to conduct risk assessments and consider appropriate measures to ensure that they minimise risks to the wellbeing of staff and students while delivering the high quality education for which our HE providers are known.

We have worked with universities to ensure that they all have outbreak plans. These have been developed in conjunction with local Public Health Teams and all have been or are being agreed with local Directors of Public Health. The plans cover a range of scenarios and ensure providers are prepared to respond quickly to an outbreak in their educational setting or wider community.

Trade Agreements: Commonwealth

Asked by Lord Browne of Belmont

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the status of UK trade negotiations with Commonwealth countries; and in particular with (1) Canada, (2) Australia, and (3) New Zealand. [HL8512]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: Strengthening and enhancing our bilateral trading relationships with Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, are key priorities for HM Government's trade negotiations programme.

The Department for International Trade is committed to negotiating and securing ambitious free trade deals with Australia and New Zealand as soon as possible, harnessing the opportunity to negotiate a high-quality agreement with like-minded, liberal trading nations.

Similarly, both the United Kingdom and Canada agree on the importance of protecting and strengthening our trading relationship, now that we have left the EU and the Department is engaging constructively with HM Government of Canada on a seamless transition of our trading relationship beyond 1st January 2020, so that British and Canadian businesses and consumers can continue to benefit.

In addition, the United Kingdom is also seeking accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), of

which Canada, Australia and New Zealand are three members.

Trade Agreements: Human Rights

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to consult the Joint Committee on Human Rights when assessing prospective trade deals. [HL8576]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: We have provided extensive information to Parliament on our negotiations, including publishing our objectives and economic scoping assessments prior to negotiations beginning. We continue to engage closely with the relevant scrutiny committees, namely the International Trade Committee in the House of Commons and the International Agreements Sub-Committee in the House of Lords.

We have a strong history of safeguarding rights and promoting our values. While our approach to agreements will vary between partners, it will always allow HM Government to have open discussions on these issues.

Trade Agreements: Japan

Asked by Lord Browne of Belmont

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of their free trade agreement with the government of Japan on Northern Ireland. [HL8578]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The preliminary analysis from the published Scoping Assessment before negotiations began shows that a UK-Japan agreement could benefit Northern Ireland with output (measured by gross value added) estimated to increase by between 0.05% and 0.15% in the long run. This Scoping Assessment can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uks-approach-to-negotiating-a-free-trade-agreement-with-japan>.

A full Impact Assessment of the Free Trade Agreement itself will be published when the agreement is laid before Parliament.

Trade Agreements: USA

Asked by Lord Browne of Belmont

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the status of UK trade negotiations with the government of the United States. [HL8513]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The fourth UK-US Free Trade Agreement negotiating round took place from 8 September to 18 September 2020. A Written Ministerial Statement was published on 22 September 2020, updating parliament on the progress of the round.

Significant progress has been achieved since launching negotiations in May 2020, and most chapter areas are now in the advanced stages of talks.

Shortly before the fourth negotiating round both sides exchanged their first tariff offers, allowing a series of detailed market access discussions to be held during the round - a notable milestone which demonstrates momentum.

In parallel to the negotiations, my Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade held a series of key meetings with the United States Trade Representative, Ambassador Robert Lighthizer. They share an ambition for a comprehensive trade agreement. The UK has been clear there is no set deadline for agreeing a deal.

The fifth round of talks will take place in mid-October, with additional intersessional discussions taking place in the meantime.

Universal Credit: Coronavirus

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Stedman-Scott on 23 September (HL7973), how many Universal Credit applications were made between 16 March and 1 September; and how many of those were claims from couples. [HL8533]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: Between 16 March and 23 June, the latest date this information is available, 3,240,610 individual applications/declarations were made to Universal Credit (UC).

Between 16 March and 23 June, the latest date this information is available, 664,180 applications/declarations were made by couples to UC.

The Department published Management Information each week on the numbers of declarations to UC since the 1 March to 23 June. This information is available in the attached Annex A and can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-declarations-claims-and-advances-management-information>.

The Department publishes monthly statistics on the number of claims to UC and on the number of households, by family type, on UC. The next update will be on Tuesday 10 November 2020 at 9:30am.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL8533 ANNEX A [HL8533 ANNEX A.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-09-28/HL8533>

Veterans: Prison Sentences

Asked by Lord Browne of Belmont

To ask Her Majesty's Government further to the Written Answer by Lord Keen of Elie on 6 August (HL7330), how many British Armed Forces veterans are serving a custodial sentence as of 30 June. [HL8510]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service records previous service in the Armed Forces as part of the reception process for newly received prisoners. Information on previous service does not capture if an individual has served in the British Armed Forces or that of another nation. Those who choose to declare previous service may be referring to time spent with the UK forces or with those of another country.

As stated previously, as of 30 June 2019, there were 1,833 prisoners serving a custodial sentence in England and Wales who had declared former military service. The next estimated release on ex-Armed Service Personnel is scheduled for the end of October 2020.

Yemen: Bombings

Asked by Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the analysis by Oxfam, published on 18 August, that on average one air raid has hit civilian infrastructure in Yemen every 10 days since March 2015; what action they have taken to curb such air raids; and what assessment they have made of the implications of those air raids on their policy towards Yemen. [HL8525]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is deeply concerned by reports of damage to civilian infrastructure from airstrikes in Yemen. The FCDO has reviewed Oxfam's report as part of the export licensing process, which draws on wide range of information from NGOs, UN bodies and other sources. The Government takes its export responsibilities seriously and assesses all export licences in accordance with strict licensing criteria. We will not issue any export licences where to do so would be inconsistent with these criteria.

Yemen: Peace Negotiations

Asked by Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that peace talks in Yemen are inclusive of women, youth and civil society. [HL8524]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK champions and supports the important role women, youth and civil society can play in ending the conflict in Yemen. We are a global leader on the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and the penholder on UNSCR 1325 at the Security Council.

We continue to support the work of UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths, who is actively engaging women in the peace process. We also fund Senior Gender Advisor and Senior Inclusion Advisor positions in his office. Complementing the UN's efforts to deliver a durable and sustainable peace deal, the UK's Conflict Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) supports a range of Track II (Influential Figures) and Track III (Civil Society and

Local Groups) initiatives which promote a more inclusive political dialogue. We also support the Yemeni Women's Pact for Peace and Security (through UN Women), which aims to increase female leadership and inclusion in the peace processes, as well as a variety of projects aimed at supporting the work of grassroots women leaders and civil society organisations in communities across Yemen.

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