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

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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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
Earl of Courtown	Deputy Chief Whip
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
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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

Tuesday, 20 October 2020

Covid-19: Vaccines

[HLWS522]

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

Today, I am announcing new initiatives the Vaccine Taskforce has invested in to ensure that a successful COVID-19 vaccine is available as soon as possible.

I can inform the House that we are establishing human challenge trials for possible COVID-19 vaccines in the UK.

In human challenge studies, the vaccine is given to a small number of healthy adult volunteers, who are then exposed to the virus. Medics and scientists then closely monitor the effect to see exactly how the vaccine works and identify any side effects. These studies are conducted under strict health and safety conditions – the safety of all volunteers is paramount.

The first stage of this project will be delivered by a partnership between Imperial College London, the Royal Free London Hospital's specialist and secure research unit in London and industry-leading clinical company hVIVO, which has pioneered viral human challenge models. The aim will be to discover the smallest amount of virus it takes to cause a person to develop COVID-19. This is known as a virus characterisation study and will be backed by £33.6m of government investment. If approved by regulators and the ethics committee, the studies would start in January with results expected by May 2021.

I can also announce that the Government is investing £19.7m in Public Health England (PHE) to expand their state-of-the-art laboratories at Porton Down.

This will allow PHE to run crucial tests on blood samples taken from participants of the COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials to monitor the effectiveness of the vaccines. These tests are essential in supporting the development and regulatory approval of vaccine candidates. Scientists at PHE's laboratory in Porton Down have been working on developing this testing capability since the start of the pandemic. The investment in these world-leading facilities and expertise will enable scientists to provide critical testing support for vaccine trials taking place in the UK. It will also ensure that the UK has access to a centralised laboratory to test the samples. This will give us a greater understanding of how potential vaccines work and compare against one another.

The funding announced today for these ground-breaking studies marks an important next step in building on our understanding of the virus and accelerating the development of our most promising vaccines.

Energy Tariff Cap: Effective Competition Decision

[HLWS518]

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

I am today announcing that the price cap on standard variable and default energy tariffs will remain in place for 2021.

The independent energy regulator, Ofgem, has carried out an assessment into whether the conditions are in place for effective competition in domestic supply contracts. Ofgem have been transparent in how they made their assessment. As required by the legislation, Ofgem have made a recommendation as to whether the price cap should be extended. The Government values the expertise and insight of Ofgem, and I have considered that report and recommendation in reaching my decision.

As set out in the relevant legislation, the price cap can be extended for a year at a time up to the end of 2023 at the latest.

While there have been some improvements across the market in recent years, such as increased consumer engagement, rising switching levels and progress with the smart meter rollout, there is still more to do to ensure consumers will not face unfair prices in its absence.

More than half of energy consumers are still on standard variable or default tariffs, where in the absence of the cap they would likely be paying excessive charges for their energy use.

Extending the cap means that 11 million households will continue to be protected from overcharging in the energy market. The cap will continue to safeguard these consumers, while other initiatives such as faster switching, the smart meter rollout and consumer engagement programs continue to contribute to a more competitive market.

Pandemic Preparedness Exercise: Report

[HLWS519]

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

Today, I am publishing the report into Exercise Cygnus.

Exercise Cygnus was a national exercise that took place in 2016. It looked at how well prepared the UK was to respond to a serious flu pandemic. The aim was to test systems to the extreme, to identify strengths and weaknesses in the UK's response plans, which would then inform improvements in our resilience.

The Department of Health and Social Care (known as the Department of Health at the time) 12 other Government departments, NHS England, Public Health

England, local public services, several prisons, and staff from the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland governments took part in the exercise. Overall, it involved more than 950 people and culminated in a 3-day national level tier 1 exercise in October 2016.

Exercise Cygnus was not designed to consider other potential pandemics, or to identify what action could be taken to prevent widespread transmission.

The report was commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care and produced independently by Public Health England.

The government accepted all 22 recommendations from the report and has acted on each to improve pandemic response plans. For example, developing a free-standing Pandemic Influenza Bill. This meant the Government was ready with legislative proposals that could rapidly be tailored to form the basis of what became the Coronavirus Act 2020.

Many of these workstreams have provided a good foundation during the current COVID-19 pandemic, helping speed up our response and save lives. I will deposit copies of the report in the libraries of both Houses and it will be available on gov.uk.

Parole Reform

[HLWS520]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: My honourable friend the Minister of State for Justice (Lucy Frazer QC) has made the following Written Statement.

"Protecting the public from harm is the first duty of any government. The parole system is one of the key mechanisms for keeping the public safe by ensuring that dangerous criminals are not released when they still pose a danger to the public. As such, it is essential that this system is as robust, effective and transparent as possible. The government is determined to address fully the transparency and confidence issues highlighted by the John Worboys case, and also to make proactive improvements to the way that the end-to-end parole system works. We want to ensure that the public is not only properly protected by a robust and effective system for assessing the risks presented by the most serious offenders, but also that it understands and has confidence in that process and the decisions taken.

Over the last two years, we have worked hard to improve the public understanding and confidence in the Parole Board. Today I am pleased to launch a Root and Branch Review of the parole system, as committed to in our manifesto. Moving beyond looking solely at the Parole Board itself, this review will ensure that the entire system delivers in the most effective way possible its primary function of keeping the public safe by releasing offenders only when it is safe to do so.

This Root and Branch Review will be concluded by summer 2021, by which point a final report will be published summarising the findings and next steps. Terms of reference have today been published online, explaining that it will consider:

- the effectiveness of the reforms we have implemented since 2018;
- whether the Parole Board for England & Wales, as currently constituted, remains the most effective model for making independent judicial decisions about the continued detention of prisoners;
- how best to improve the public's understanding and confidence in the parole system; and
- measures to further improve the openness and transparency of the parole process.

In support of this, I am today launching a public consultation – the first step in our review – that will explore options for increasing the transparency of the parole system. The consultation seeks views on the possibility of allowing victims to observe parole hearings and on whether the media and wider public should also be given greater access to hearings where it is appropriate to do so. The consultation will be open until 1 December 2020 and I anticipate publishing our response before the end of the year.

The Root and Branch Review will build upon the programme of reform, already delivered last year, which amended the Parole Board Rules to increase transparency, and to improve the way victims are engaged with. For example, we now have a system where victims and others are provided with summaries explaining the reasons for the Parole Board's decisions, and a new reconsideration mechanism which allows applications to be made for decisions to be looked at again if they are thought to be legally flawed.

Concurrently, the Tailored Review of the Parole Board has been underway, the outcome of which is also being published today. The Tailored review was undertaken in accordance with the Cabinet Office requirement that all public bodies are reviewed at least once each parliament. This Review focused predominantly on operational changes within the current legislative framework, making recommendations to further improve collaboration within the parole system to ensure that cases progress in a timely manner, and highlighted existing legal powers that the Parole Board can use to compel the production of evidence and the attendance of witnesses. I commend the recommendations to the Board, which have the potential once implemented to bring real improvements to the parole system.

Together with the significant reforms we set out in the Sentencing White Paper on 16 September, I am confident that the measures outlined above and the wider examination of the parole system we are now launching,

will continue to keep the public safe, as well as ensure that the most serious offenders spend time in prison that properly reflects the gravity of their crimes."

Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee Meeting

[HLWS521]

Lord True: My Rt Hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for Cabinet Office (Michael Gove), has today made the following Written Statement:

The Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee met on 19 October 2020 in London, with delegations attending in person and by video conference.

The meeting was co-chaired by the UK Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, and European Commission Vice President, Maroš Šefčovič, and attended by the alternate Joint Committee co-chairs; the First Minister and deputy First Minister of the Northern Ireland Executive; and Member State representatives.

The Committee undertook a stocktake of Specialised Committee activity since the last meeting on 28

September. The Committee also updated on implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement, with particular focus on the Northern Ireland Protocol and citizens' rights.

The UK reiterated its commitment to upholding obligations under the Withdrawal Agreement and protecting the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in all respects. The UK further emphasised commitment to EU citizens in the UK and UK nationals in the EU, ensuring they have their rights under the Withdrawal Agreement protected.

The Committee adopted the citizens' rights joint report on residency and agreed to its publication.

The UK reiterated its commitment to implementing the Protocol in full so the people of Northern Ireland can be given the fundamental legal assurances they need, and will not face the damaging prospect of the unmitigated defaults of the Protocol under any circumstances.

The Committee considered the remaining WAJC tasks during the rest of the transition period.

The UK took the opportunity provided by this meeting to underline its commitment to continued constructive engagement with the EU through Joint Committee processes.

Written Answers

Tuesday, 20 October 2020

Bovine Tuberculosis: Disease Control

Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the success of badger tuberculosis vaccine trials; what impact the outcome of those trials had on their decision making process as to whether to extend and expand the badger cull; and how they intend to monitor the effects of that cull on future vaccination trials. [HL8904]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The effects of badger vaccination by injection have been evaluated in several captive experimental studies and during a four-year field study in Gloucestershire. Although vaccination with BCG will not guarantee protection from infection, meaning some badgers may still become infected, these studies provide evidence of beneficial effects. In particular, they provide evidence that vaccination reduces the likelihood of badgers developing lesions or excreting TB bacteria and the rate of new infections. The studies also indicate that vaccinating more than one third of adults in a badger social group reduces new infections in unvaccinated badger cubs. It is therefore reasonable to assume that badger vaccination will reduce transmission from badgers to cattle.

Government policy has enabled farmers and landowners to apply for licences to cull or to vaccinate badgers. In its response to the Godfray Review, the Government has set out its ambition to move from badger culling to wider deployment of vaccination, with culling only taking place where surveillance in badgers and cattle indicates re-emerging or persistent infection. In areas where culling has been successfully deployed to reduce the amount of TB infection, we are now proposing to increase deployment of badger vaccination.

Care Homes: Coronavirus

Asked by **Lord Warner**

To ask Her Majesty's Government on what dates any guidance on COVID-19 was issued to care homes by (1) Public Health England, (2) the Care Quality Commission, and (3) any other public body, between 1 February and 30 June; and whether any such guidance has been made available to Parliament. [HL6739]

Lord Bethell: Public Health England, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and the Department have all published guidance relevant to care homes.

Due to the fast-moving situation with the pandemic, all guidance has been published online in order to reach target audiences quickly. The CQC has also released their guidance through a regular weekly bulletin.

A table listing the guidance with dates of issue, and showing those documents shared with Parliamentarians, is attached due to the size of the data.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Table for HL6739 [TABLE FOR HL6739.docx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-07-10/HL6739>

Asked by **Lord Willis of Knaresborough**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what (1) guidelines they have published, and (2) advice they have provided, about priority COVID-19 testing for care home staff. [HL8492]

Lord Bethell: Essential workers continue to be able to access testing as a priority through the online portal and have been able to since April 2020.

The *Coronavirus (COVID-19): getting tested* guidance, which is available in an online-only format, shows the list of key workers which includes social care staff and specifically says they are being prioritised for testing.

Essential workers and members of their households who display symptoms of COVID-19 should book tests by visiting the COVID-19 online test booking portal on GOV.UK. This is set out in the *Coronavirus (COVID-19): getting tested* guidance.

From 6 July, we rolled out weekly retesting of care home staff in care homes. The announcement was published on 3 July. We are continuing to prioritise care home testing, where we are issuing more than 120,000 tests a day to care homes across the country.

Care Homes: Visits

Asked by **The Lord Bishop of London**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of visiting restrictions at care homes on the wellbeing of residents; and what plans they have to review their policy on visiting arrangement at care homes during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL8737]

Lord Bethell: The Government is aware that limiting visits in care homes has been difficult for many families and residents who want to see their loved ones. Our priority is to prevent infections in care homes.

We recognise how important it is to allow care home residents to safely meet their loved ones, especially for those at the end of their lives. We appreciate the particular challenges visiting restrictions pose for people with dementia, people with learning disabilities and autistic adults, amongst others, as well as for their loved ones.

Care homes can now develop visiting policies based on a local dynamic risk assessment. This approach is based on the circumstances and needs of the individual care setting, including both residents and staff, and the external COVID-19 environment.

In the event of an outbreak in a care home and/or evidence of community hotspots or outbreaks, care homes may rapidly impose visiting restrictions to protect vulnerable individuals.

Children: Food

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take to ensure that vouchers granted through any future programme providing meals for schoolchildren during school holidays are only used to purchase food. [HL8831]

Baroness Berridge: The free school meal national voucher scheme has now closed.

As schools and their kitchens are now open, they should provide healthy, nutritious meal options for all children who are in school, and meals should be available free of charge to all infant pupils and pupils who meet the benefits-related free school meals eligibility criteria.

Schools should work with their existing suppliers to provide meals or food parcels to pupils eligible for benefits-related free school meals where they are self-isolating.

Guidance on food parcels has been produced by the Lead Association for Catering in Education, Public Health England and the department. It sets out some general principles for putting together a food parcel which will allow parents/carers to prepare simple and healthy lunches for their children at home. This can be found here:

<https://laca.co.uk/laca-view/free-school-meals-guidance-producing-food-parcels>.

Our latest guidance for schools is set out here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools>.

Commonwealth: Business

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what proportion of Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office development funding has been allocated to advance the Commonwealth Digital Connectivity Agenda for digital trade. [HL9095]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is working through a number of programmes to promote inclusive digital access for the most vulnerable populations, to ensure we leave no one behind in a digital world. One example is the cross-government Digital Access Programme, which works at multiple levels to catalyse affordable, inclusive, safe and secure digital access for marginalised and underserved communities in the Commonwealth countries of Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa, as well as Brazil and Indonesia.

Further information on the UK Government's wider work in partnership with other Commonwealth countries and intergovernmental and affiliated organisations can be found in the recently published report, *UK Commonwealth Chair-in-Office report 2018 to 2020: delivery of Commonwealth Summit commitments*.

Community Development: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by Locality, Communities Work: How community organisations can lead the post-Covid jobs recovery, published on 16 September. [HL8820]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Communities Work: How community organisations can lead the post-Covid jobs recovery report by Locality on local and national recovery is clearly timely. It is a reminder of the importance of working with local partners to address the challenges we will face as we recover from the economic effects of the pandemic. We remain committed to gaining a clear picture of how local economies are impacted by Covid-19 and how we can effectively enable local areas to recover. We will continue working closely with community organisations as we work through this.

Coronavirus: Contact Tracing

Asked by Lord Bradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what proportion of the resources committed to NHS Test and Trace have been allocated (1) to the public sector, and (2) to the private sector. [HL8019]

Lord Bethell: The Government launched its new NHS Test and Trace service on 28 May 2020. This brings together testing, contact tracing and outbreak management into an end-to-end service.

The information requested is not held.

Coronavirus: Disclosure of Information

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to share complete details of COVID-19 cases with Directors of Public Health in local authorities as soon as cases are identified. [T] [HL6657]

Lord Bethell: All upper tier local authorities have access to record level (including sex, age, occupation and postcode) test and case data. Directors of Public Health are also receiving fully identifiable test, case and contact tracing data where the case data includes, address, postcode, sex, age, NHS Number, occupation, test date, and additional data describing progress through the NHS Test and Trace contact tracing process. Public Health England (PHE) provides access to this data via a secure platform to Directors of Public Health to enable them more flexible access to test, case and contact tracing data

to support their outbreak management responsibilities, as is routine. This data is currently updated on a daily basis.

PHE began providing record level positive test data, including postcodes, to local authorities (including Directors of Public Health) on 24 June.

Coronavirus: Disease Control

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many times, and on what dates, the R rate for COVID-19 went above 1 for each region that is recorded in England between 30 June and 10 August. [HL8035]

Lord Bethell: The information requested is not held as the margin for error in the estimates cannot give a precise estimation of how many times the 'R' number was above 1.

Asked by Baroness Meyer

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the scientific basis for their current rules on the maximum number of people allowed to attend (1) christenings, (2) weddings, and (3) funerals. [HL8745]

Lord Bethell: Infections are rising across the United Kingdom, and the seven-day average number of cases has nearly quadrupled from 21 August to 21 September, and that is why the Government has to provide restrictions to limit transmission.

We recognise that weddings, christenings and funerals are significant events for different reasons in difficult times. From 28 September, there should be a maximum of 15 attendees at a wedding or civil partnership ceremony or wedding reception with a sit down meal in a COVID-secure setting. Allowing funerals up to 30 will balance the needs of the bereaved to mourn appropriately while minimising the spread of the virus.

We understand that people may want to gather in larger groups, however we have to balance this against the risk of transmission in large groups.

These measures are continually under review.

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, if any, of the implications for the response to COVID-19 in the UK of the open letter from medical doctors and health professionals to Belgian authorities and media on 5 September concerning global COVID-19 public health measures. [HL8929]

Lord Bethell: The Government has made no specific assessment of the letter referred to.

Asked by Baroness Masham of Ilton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have in place to ensure a supply of medicine and

COVID-19 test equipment in the event of any shortage of such supplies. [HL8982]

Lord Bethell: As part of our concerted national efforts to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, we are doing everything we can to ensure patients continue to have access to COVID-19 test equipment and medicines in all scenarios. This includes holding stockpiles of a variety of medicines currently and potentially used in treating patients with COVID-19, to help ensure there is uninterrupted supply over the coming months.

The Department has well-established procedures to deal with shortages and works closely with industry, the National Health Service and others in the supply chain to address supply disruption events that arise, regardless of the cause.

Asked by Lord Balfe

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the statement made by the Deputy Chief Medical Officer on 11 October that "we are at a tipping points similar to where we were in March", and (2) the efficacy of the measures they have taken since then to address the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL9012]

Lord Bethell: The Government welcomes the honest and impartial view of senior medical and scientific advisers. Throughout this crisis, they, and the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, have provided robust scientific evidence and advice to guide decisions regarding the measures taken to address the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government has also undertaken significant wider analysis and evaluation to inform decisions. This analysis includes consideration of economic impacts, the level of compliance with measures, amount of enforcement needed and impacts felt by local authorities.

The measures taken have been effective at slowing the virus while balancing the need to protect the economy. Ahead of what will be a challenging winter, the Government will continue to take swift action to combat the spread of the virus.

Coronavirus: Religious Buildings

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the evidence base for regulations permitting six people to sing in public houses but banning six people from singing in churches and other places of worship. [HL8634]

Lord Bethell: The regulations place specific obligations on business premises to stop customers from singing on the premises in groups of more than six. Singing in general within hospitality premises is advised against in guidance due to the increased risk of transmission. This is in line with the guidance on churches.

Coronavirus: Screening

Asked by Lord Willis of Knaresborough

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the statement by Lord Bethell on 23 September (HL Deb, cols 1919–32), what steps they are taking to ensure that care home staff receive (1) priority testing for COVID-19, and (2) COVID-19 test results within 24 hours. [HL8491]

Lord Bethell: The adult social care sector has been, and continues to be, one of our highest priorities for access to COVID-19 testing. Care homes have been prioritised for repeat asymptomatic testing. Care homes are provided with tests so they can test staff weekly and residents every 28 days. We are issuing more than 120,000 tests a day to care homes across the country.

There has been a high demand for tests and our laboratories continue to turn test results around as quickly as possible. We are bringing in new capacity, technology and staff to process tests faster. This includes increasing the number of permanent staff at existing lighthouse labs, announcing four new laboratory facilities that will join our network as well as surge labs to process more tests in the short-term.

Coronavirus: Vaccination

Asked by Lord Dobbs

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to offer a COVID-19 vaccination to the entire population if such a vaccine is developed. [HL9124]

Lord Bethell: Whilst there is a desire for all of the United Kingdom population to be vaccinated, there may need to be an element of prioritisation, based on vaccine availability and scientific evidence (when available from clinical trials) on the safety and efficacy of the vaccine within different population groups.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise Government on prioritisation at a population level. Based on scientific analysis and modelling data, the JCVI will advise on which cohorts of the UK's population will be eligible for vaccination, should a safe and effective vaccine be found. This will depend on factors such as the properties of the vaccine, those most at need (including frontline health and social care workers) and the unique medical circumstances of individuals.

The committee's interim advice is that the vaccine should first be given to care home residents and staff, followed by people over 80 and health and social workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and risk. Further work is being undertaken to understand more about the groups most at risk of serious disease and death from COVID-19 infection. Any advice will need to be modified depending on the characteristics of the vaccines, when these become available.

We will consider the Committee's advice carefully as we continue to plan for a vaccination campaign.

Coronavirus: Wales

Asked by Lord Wigley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to publish any correspondence with the Welsh Government relating to the cancellation by Roche Diagnostics of orders for supplies relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL5956]

Lord Bethell: The response to COVID-19 is a national effort and we are committed to working closely with the devolved administrations to align and coordinate testing efforts, where possible. This includes ensuring Wales receives its fair share of proprietary test kits.

We do not recognise the claim that there were any cancellations of orders placed with Roche by the Welsh Government. The arrangement with Roche was designed as a whole United Kingdom approach, and individual orders from devolved administrations would not be accepted on this basis.

Councillors: Vacancies

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many council seat vacancies are currently being held over by principal local authorities in England; and, of these, how many are in seats where the term of office would in any case end next May. [HL8927]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Government does not hold records detailing council seat vacancies in England; each local authority is responsible for ensuring vacancies are filled. Legislation has postponed all local polls in England until May 2021.

Covid-19 Response School Stakeholder Advisory Group

Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many members of the COVID-19 Response School Stakeholder Advisory Group have signed personal confidentiality agreements. [HL8954]

Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many (1) personal confidentiality agreements; and (2) non-disclosure agreements, the Department for Education has signed with stakeholders and third parties advising the department on its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL8955]

Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie

To ask Her Majesty's Government who are the members of the COVID-19 Response School Stakeholder Advisory Group. [HL8956]

Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many meetings of the COVID-19 Response School Stakeholder Advisory Group have taken place in 2020. [HL8957]

Baroness Berridge: All members of the Department's Recovery Advisory Group signed personal confidentiality agreements. None of the DfE's other COVID-19 advisory groups have signed either personal confidentiality agreements or non-disclosure agreements. This includes members of the COVID-19 Response School Stakeholder Advisory Group.

To date, there have been 6 meetings of the COVID-19 Response School Stakeholder Advisory Group. Members of the COVID-19 Response School Stakeholder Advisory Group are:

- National Association of Headteachers (NAHT)
- NASUWT
- National Education Union (NEU)
- Unison
- Unite
- GMB
- National Society for Education in Art and Design (NSEAD)
- Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP)
- Prospect
- TUC
- Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)
- Confederation of School Trusts (CST)
- Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS)
- Local Government Association (LGA)
- National Governance Association (NGA)
- Chartered College of Teaching (CCoT)
- Catholic Education Service (CES)
- Church of England Education Office (CofEEO)
- Independent Schools Council (ISC)
- Institute of School Business Leadership (ISBL)
- Voice
- University and College Union (UCU)
- Sixth Form College Association (SFCA).

Credit Unions

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the resilience of the credit union sector. [HL8936]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Credit unions play a vital role in the financial wellbeing of their communities, providing an ethical home for their members' savings, and affordable loans to those who may otherwise have to

resort to high-cost lenders. The Government is committed to seeing a strong and resilient credit union sector. That is why the Chancellor announced at Budget 2020 that the Government will bring forward legislation to enable credit unions to offer a wider range of products and services.

HM Treasury officials are working closely with the Prudential Regulation Authority, Financial Conduct Authority and sector representatives to monitor the impact of the disruption caused by COVID-19 on credit unions and their members.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury has also engaged regularly with representatives from the credit union sector through the Consumer Finance Forum and Financial Inclusion Policy Forum, which are bringing financial services and consumer group representatives together to discuss how to best support people through this period.

Crime: Borders

Asked by Lord Hay of Ballyore

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the steps being taken to address cross-border crime involving (1) people, and (2) fuel smuggling, between the UK and the Republic of Ireland. [HL8811]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The UK's approach to the Common Travel Area (CTA) is that there are no routine immigration controls on journeys to the UK from Ireland and the Crown Dependencies. Both the UK and Irish Governments are committed to taking all necessary measures to continue to protect this joint agreement and secure the CTA.

The Home Office, Ireland's Garda National Immigration Bureau and Border Management Unit, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and other police forces work together to tackle abuse of the Common Travel Area by conducting intelligence-led checks and enforcement operations.

Our priority will always be to keep the British public safe and we are determined to remove foreign criminals from the UK wherever it is legal and practical to do so.

The Government remains committed to tackling all forms of tax evasion and avoidance. The estimated tax gap for diesel in Northern Ireland remains at 6% maintaining an all-time low.

Extensive multi-agency, cross border cooperation is a key element of the operational response to fuel fraud. HMRC chairs a multi-agency cross border Smuggling Group, a sub-group of the NI Organised Crime Task Force. The group shares intelligence and information, and coordinates targeted joint operations to tackle criminals who deal in illicit fuel and cheat the exchequers in the UK and Ireland.

HMRC has maintained its capacity for fuel testing and investigation of fuel fraud in NI. HMRC activity focuses on detecting and deterring outlets facilitating the supply

of illicit fuel, with special units performing risk-based interventions throughout the fuel supply chain; at fuel retailers, wholesalers, and at “huckster” sites.

Department of Health and Social Care: Senior Civil Servants

Asked by *Baroness Kramer*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many BAME civil servants there are at the Department for Health and Social Care at (1) SCS1, (2) SCS2, (3) SCS3, and (4) SCS4, grade. [[HL9048](#)]

Lord Bethell: In total, there are 10 people who have declared themselves as black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) senior civil servants (SCS) in the Department. The following table shows the breakdown split by the different SCS grades as requested and is accurate as of 30 September 2020.

The ethnicity data provided in the table is based on self-declaration and the declaration rate for ethnicity at SCS level is 62%. In addition, the data below excludes civil servants loaned out to other Government departments, civil servants who are currently on loan to the Department, and contractors.

Grade	BAME	Total
SCS 1	9	145
SCS 2	1	45
SCS 3	0	6
SCS 4	0	1
Grand Total	10	197

Duty Free Allowances

Asked by *Baroness Randerson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government why their Consultation on the potential approach to duty- and tax-free goods arising from the UK's new relationship with the EU: summary of responses, published in September, did not invite responses on the impact of the removal of the Extra Statutory Concession on VAT on goods supplied at duty-free and tax-free shops; what assessment they have made of the impact of that removal on the operating profits of individual airports; and what estimate they have made of the total impact of that change (1) on GDP, and (2) on the number of job losses that may result from it. [[HL8882](#)]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Government published a consultation on the potential approach to duty-free and tax-free goods following the transition period which ran from 11 March to 20 May. During this time the Government held a number of virtual meetings with stakeholders to hear their views and received 73 responses to the consultation.

The consultation document discussed the Government's concerns with the operation of tax-free airside sales under

the extra statutory concession, and asked about the impacts of abolishing them. In particular, paragraph 4.26 was an open question about whether the Government should extend airside tax-free sales, and paragraph 4.27 was a question specifically about views and impacts of abolishing airside tax-free sales.

The Government continues to meet and discuss the change with stakeholders following the announcement of these policies.

Educational Visits: Coronavirus

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to protect jobs lost as a result of the ban on residential school trips. [[HL8898](#)]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Government has announced a package of targeted measures in the Winter Economy Plan that will continue to support jobs facing reduced or uncertain demand through the months ahead as we tackle the spread of Coronavirus. The package includes a new Job Support Scheme, which from 1 November will ensure that for every hour an employee cannot work in the current economic context, employers and the Government will each pay one third of the employee's usual pay. Employees using the scheme will receive at least 77% of their pay where the government contribution has not been capped. The Winter Economy Plan also includes the extension of the Self Employment Income Support Scheme through to the end of April 2021, and an extension of the 15% VAT cut for the hospitality and tourism sectors through to March 2021. The Government will keep its support for jobs and the economy under review.

Energy: Meters

Asked by *Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect the rollout of the latest version of smart meters to be completed. [[HL8859](#)]

Lord Callanan: In June 2020, the Government confirmed that from July 2021 a new four-year policy framework will be implemented with fixed annual installation milestones for energy suppliers that will drive continued investment and support the cost-effective delivery of net zero and our clean economic recovery. The framework seeks to achieve high levels of overall smart meter coverage across Great Britain over the four-year period.

Fleet Solid Support Ships

Asked by *Lord MacKenzie of Culkein*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the new Fleet Solid Support Ships for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary will be built in UK shipyards. [[HL8875](#)]

Asked by Lord MacKenzie of Culkein

To ask Her Majesty's Government what are the planned in-service dates for each of the new Fleet Solid Support Ships. [HL8876]

Baroness Goldie: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence said during Defence Oral Questions in the House of Commons on Monday 21 September 2020, the procurement timetable for the warships will be announced in due course, after market testing has been completed. We are open to the principle of international partners working alongside UK firms for the bid.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Warships [Hansard Extract 21 September 2020.docx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-10-07/HL8875>

Asked by Lord MacKenzie of Culkein

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many Fleet Solid Support Ships capable of supporting a Carrier Strike Group are currently in service with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. [HL8877]

Baroness Goldie: The Royal Fleet Auxiliary currently has one Fleet Solid Support ship capable of supporting a Carrier Strike Group; RFA FORT VICTORIA.

Future Homes Task Force

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Future Homes Task Force. [HL8888]

Lord Greenhalgh: This Government is improving building standards and overhauling our outdated planning system as a priority. By putting communities in control of what is built locally we will deliver better designed, more sustainable buildings and the homes that are needed for the next generation.

The Government looks forward to seeing the plans of the Future Homes Task Force later this year to support this exciting agenda as we work towards a cleaner, greener and more beautiful built environment.

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what financial resources have been allocated to the Future Homes Task Force from (1) 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, and (2) 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. [HL8889]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Future Homes Taskforce has been set up by the Home Builders Federation to provide sector leadership on climate change issues for housing. The Taskforce will produce a report later this year which will be sent to Government Ministers for consideration. No funding has been requested or allocated to their work

although officials from No 10, BEIS, MHCLG and HMT are working with the Home Builders Federation to help inform industry's discussions.

Global Positioning System

Asked by Lord Bowness

To ask Her Majesty's Government when is the Space-Based Positioning Navigation and Timing Programme due to report. [HL8804]

Lord Callanan: The Space-Based Positioning Navigation and Timing Programme (SBPP) will explore new and alternative ways to deliver vital satellite navigation services to the United Kingdom which are critical for the functioning of transport systems, energy networks, mobile communications, national security and defence. The new programme is developing its workstreams and a Request For Information has been sent to industry. Following this, the programme will conduct a number of assessments of potential options for a space-based position navigation and timing capability.

Grazing Land: Forests

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government what scheme they intend to establish to replace Natural England's Wood-Pasture Restoration Option within the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. [HL8829]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The Wood-Pasture Restoration option is still available for lowland farmers and land managers under the Countryside Stewardship (CS) scheme and has not been removed. Defra, Natural England and the Rural Payments Agency are currently considering how best to support wood pasture restoration through CS options for upland farmers and land managers. In the meantime Natural England advisers are working with this year's CS applicants to find alternative options to ensure this important habitat can be restored in the uplands.

Wood pasture is a valuable habitat that provides a new generation of scattered trees and scrub. This habitat allows flower-rich unimproved grasslands and mires to flourish for pollinators and provides benefits for both water management and the reduction of soil erosion.

Home Office: Senior Civil Servants

Asked by Baroness Kramer

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many BAME civil servants there are at the Home Office at (1) SCS1, (2) SCS2, (3) SCS3, and (4) SCS4, grade. [HL8864]

Baroness Williams of Trafford:

Black, Asian, Minority and Ethnic Senior Civil Service Staff

Grade	Headcount
SCS PB1	18
SCS PB2 & PB3	3

Data Source: Adelphi - Home Office Human Resources Record System.

Period Covered: Figures are as at 31st August 2020

Organisational Coverage: Home Office

Employee Coverage: In line with Cabinet Office guidelines on diversity and equality reporting, the data is based on headcount of current paid permanent civil servants. The data includes employees in SCS grade who have declared their ethnicity as Minority Ethnic.

Homosexuality: Convictions

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have received about extending by regulation the disregards and pardons for now abolished offences under section 166 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017. [HL8867]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government remains fully committed to considering any further representations regarding the disregard scheme and upholding its intent and purpose.

Work is ongoing across government to explore the feasibility of extending the scheme under Section 166 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 and to identify what further offences might be added to the list of offences currently eligible for a disregard under Part 5 of the Protections of Freedoms Act 2012.

In Vitro Fertilisation

Asked by Baroness Deech

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to publish the outcome of the consultation on egg, sperm and embryo storage limits. [HL9219]

Lord Bethell: The public consultation for Statutory Storage Limits for eggs, sperm and embryos completed earlier this year and received a large number of responses, with a wide range of views on this issue.

The Department is currently reviewing these responses and a Government response to the consultation is expected to be published in early 2021.

India: Rape

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they take to support victims of rape in India, and in particular, Dalit women in Uttar Pradesh. [HL9080]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The British High Commission in New Delhi and our network of Deputy High Commissions work closely with Indian non-governmental organisations that promote women's awareness of their rights and work to tackle gender-based violence. In 2016-18, we funded a project in Uttar Pradesh empowering 400 Dalit women human rights

defenders to challenge gender-based discrimination and violence against Dalit women. From 2016-2019, with the support of British businesses, we supported the training of over 33,000 garment sector workers across India on their legal rights to tackle sexual harassment in the workplace.

Infant Mortality

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made towards halving rates of stillbirths, neonatal and maternal deaths, and brain injuries occurring during or soon after birth from 2010 levels by 2025 as announced as part of their maternity strategy in November 2017. [HL7970]

Lord Bethell: Overall, the outcome data shows that maternity and neonatal services are making clear progress to achieve the Maternity Safety Ambition for a 20% reduction in these outcomes by 2020 and a 50% reduction by 2025. Since 2010, there has been a 25% reduction in the stillbirth rate, a 26% reduction in the neonatal mortality rate for babies born over the 24-week gestational age of viability and a 14% reduction in the maternal mortality rate.

According to a definition developed to monitor the ambition, the brain injury rate fell to 5.1 per 1,000 births in 2017, after rising from 4.9 to 5.4 per 1,000 births between 2012 and 2014. The rate of term infants with hypoxic ischaemic encephalopathy fell by 11.8% between 2014 and 2017.

Israel: Palestinians

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the demolition of Palestinian property by the government of Israel, and (2) the impact of any such demolitions on people living in such property, during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL8837]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is seriously concerned by the continued demolitions of Palestinian property by Israeli authorities, particularly at this time. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The practice causes unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians, is harmful to the peace process and weakens the capacity of Palestinians to withstand the impact of COVID-19. Under IHL, an occupying power has the duty of ensuring and maintaining public health and hygiene in the occupied territory to the fullest extent of the means available to it and with the cooperation of the local authorities. We call on both parties to avoid any provocative action which might undermine the cooperation that is so critical.

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of

Israel about reports that prominent Palestinian cultural and academic figures have been arrested by that government and are being held without charge. [HL8838]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We remain concerned about Israel's extensive use of administrative detention which, according to international law, should be used only when security makes this absolutely necessary rather than as routine practice, and as a preventive rather than a punitive measure. We continue to call on the Israeli authorities to comply with their obligations under international law and either charge or release detainees. We also continue to support the Palestinian cultural presence and identity throughout the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, as well as Palestinian physical presence there.

Jerusalem

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Turkey regarding President Erdogan's statement on 1 October that "Jerusalem is our city". [HL8799]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK recognises that Jerusalem holds particular significance for many groups around the globe, especially the three Abrahamic faiths of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The UK's position on the status of Jerusalem is clear and long-standing: it should be determined in a negotiated settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians. It must ensure Jerusalem is a shared capital of the Israeli and Palestinian states, with access and religious rights of both peoples respected.

Job Support Scheme: Fraud

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of (1) the number, and (2) the total cost, of fraudulent claims that have been made to the Job Support Scheme. [HL8932]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Job Support Scheme is designed to protect viable jobs in businesses that are facing lower demand over the winter months due to COVID-19, to help keep their employees attached to the workforce. This scheme will open on 1 November 2020 and will run for six months. The scheme will build on other support schemes announced by the Chancellor and administered by HM Revenue & Customs.

As the scheme is yet to open there is no information held on the number or cost of fraudulent claims made under the scheme. In line with the other payment-out regimes they administer, HMRC will, when the scheme opens, undertake pre-payment authentication and risking to identify and block fraudulent claims. HMRC will also carry out proportionate risk-based, post-payment

compliance checks to test the veracity of claims made using the normal compliance tools available.

Kickstart Scheme

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential for 16 and 17 year olds to be disqualified from the Kickstart Scheme because they are unlikely to receive Universal Credit. [HL8830]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: We have considered the role that the Kickstart Scheme can play in supporting the employability of 16 and 17 year olds. The Kickstart Scheme is part of a wider range of employability support already on offer for 16 and 17 year olds – for example Mentoring Circles, which support young people aged 16-24, giving them an opportunity to build on their employability skills through facilitating an interaction with employers. Mentoring circles help to provide young job seekers with potential access to and interaction with role models in the workplace. Youth Hubs are also rolling out nationally, where young people can access wider support.

Liothyronine

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to commend the new liothyronine patient pathway agreed by the Norfolk and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group to other Clinical Commissioning Groups in England. [HL9040]

Lord Bethell: The Government has no plans.

Medical Treatments: Research

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the research published in the Journal of Molecular Epidemiology and Evolutionary Genetics of Infectious Diseases, Infections, Genetics and Evolution, A survey of genetic variants in SARS-CoV-2 interacting domains of ACE2, TMPRSS2 and TLR3/7/8 across populations, published on 26 August. [HL8776]

Lord Bethell: The Government recognises the need to research how genomic variants may impact COVID-19 severity. Genomics England has partnered with the University of Edinburgh Genetics of Mortality in Critical Care study and Illumina to deliver an ambitious programme of whole genome sequencing (WGS) to determine genomic factors influencing the severity of response to COVID-19, who responds best to which treatments, and to inform the development of novel therapies and vaccines. The study aims to perform WGS of up to 20,000 patients severely affected by COVID-19 and a matched control group of up to 15,000 with an asymptomatic or mild response to COVID-19.

Mortgages and Telecommunications: Prices

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that existing customers within the mobile, broadband and mortgage markets cease to pay more than new customers. [HL8790]

Lord Callanan: In December 2018 the independent Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) responded to a super-complaint by Citizens Advice on the "Loyalty Penalty". Since then Government and Regulators have taken significant action to tackle the loyalty penalty.

The FCA has also conducted a Market Study in the mortgages market to better understand the problem in that sector. In mobile and broadband, Ofcom has delivered agreements in both markets to benefit consumers. Consumers now receive Annual Best Tariff Notifications alerting them to their contract terms and the best offers their provider has. All major mobile providers, with the exception of Three, will reduce consumers' bills once their minimum contract period ends. Broadband consumers are benefitting from a range of voluntary measures agreed with major providers, and Ofcom is investigating whether there should be social tariffs in broadband.

The Government continues to support competitive markets that drive down prices and create better products and services for consumers. It is also committed to strong regulation, where necessary, to protect consumers and drive investment and fair competition by businesses, and looks forward to seeing the further outcomes of the ongoing work by Ofcom and the FCA.

NHS 111: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Beecham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to launch an inquiry into (1) the impact of the suspension of nurses and allied health professionals from taking calls to the NHS 111 COVID-19 Clinical Assessment Service, and (2) related safety issues identified through call audits of that service. [HL8702]

Lord Bethell: The Government has always been clear that there will be opportunities to look back, analyse and reflect on all aspects of the response to COVID-19. As the Prime Minister has said, this will include an independent inquiry at the appropriate time.

The COVID-19 Clinical Assessment Service is regularly monitored and audited to ensure its safety and to safeguard the quality of clinical advice given to patients.

OneWeb

Asked by Lord Bowness

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether their equity investment in OneWeb has been completed; and if not, whether there are any approvals from the

government of the United States which are required before any such investment is completed. [HL8803]

Lord Callanan: On Friday 2 October 20, the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York confirmed OneWeb's Chapter 11 plan of reorganisation, ensuring that the company remains on target to resume full business operations imminently.

This is a major step in OneWeb's reorganisation process, and toward HM Government's equity investment being completed.

Asked by Lord Bowness

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the announcement on 24 September that they "will explore new options for a UK satellite navigation and timing capability programme to support the nation's critical infrastructure", whether OneWeb can be used to provide such support. [HL8805]

Lord Callanan: The Space-Based Positioning Navigation and Timing Programme (SBPP) will explore new and alternative ways to deliver vital satellite navigation services to the United Kingdom which are critical for the functioning of transport systems, energy networks, mobile communications, national security and defence. Government investment in OneWeb was for a cutting-edge telecommunications capability based on market analysis. We have been clear that PNT service wasn't the rationale for this particular investment, but of course we are open to considering how alternative technologies including Low Earth Orbit constellations may be able to contribute to PNT resilience in the future.

Asked by Lord Bowness

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have agreed with their investment partners that OneWeb's manufacturing capability will be brought back from the United States to the UK. [HL8806]

Lord Callanan: The terms of the deal offer opportunities to bring future research and development and manufacturing to the UK.

OneWeb will consider any expansion of the company and its supply chain in the UK as part of their regular business planning process.

Asked by Lord Bowness

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to establish a launch mechanism for OneWeb satellites which is independent of Roscosmos. [HL8807]

Lord Callanan: The launch manifest and the chosen launch capabilities are commercial matters for OneWeb.

Patients: Medical Records

Asked by Lord Allan of Hallam

To ask Her Majesty's Government which systems are currently being used by NHS GP practices in England to provide patients with online access to their

medical records; and how many (1) registered patient users, and (2) active patient users, use each such system. [HL8223]

Asked by Lord Allan of Hallam

To ask Her Majesty's Government which systems are currently being used by NHS Hospital Trusts in England to provide patients with online access to their medical records; and how many (1) registered patient users, and (2) active patient users, use each such system. [HL8224]

Lord Bethell: The major providers of general practice systems are EMIS, TPP, Vision and Microtest. The following table shows the registered patients for practices with each system with access to online medical records, and the number of views in June 2020 (which can include multiple views by the same patient). A monthly report is published by NHS Digital which shows usage at practice and clinical commissioning group level, and includes online appointments and prescriptions.

<i>Supplier</i>	<i>Number of Patients with Access to Online Medical Records (000)</i>	<i>% of Patients with Access to Online Medical Records</i>	<i>Number of Views in June 2020</i>
EMIS	3,800	10.98%	398,928
Microtest	5	4.18%	5,651
TPP	1,900	7.95%	713,498
Vision	43	2.85%	-
Total	5,700	9.57%	1,118,077

Source: Patient Online Management Information Data - June 2020.

Records of the systems used by hospital trusts are not collected centrally as this is managed by individual trusts.

Protective Clothing: Local Government

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to require local authorities to maintain stockpiles of personal protection equipment. [HL8258]

Lord Bethell: The Government is not requiring local authorities to maintain stockpiles of personal protective equipment (PPE). Nevertheless, on 14 August the Department wrote to local resilience forums (LRFs) to advise on the management of COVID-19 stockpiles of PPE. The majority of LRFs have now been provided with stockpile deliveries of PPE. This will help create local reserves that can be used to manage any temporary increases in demand associated with any potential COVID-19 spike, winter pressures or any other temporary issues with distribution mechanisms. In the case where an LRF uses over 30% of its stock of any PPE item from their stockpile, the Department will arrange further deliveries from centrally managed supplies.

Public Expenditure

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask Her Majesty's Government when the Comprehensive Spending Review will conclude. [HL8812]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: As the Chancellor confirmed in July, the 2020 Comprehensive Spending Review will be published in the Autumn. Further details will be set out in due course.

Public Expenditure: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the response by Viscount Younger of Leckie on 6 October (HL Deb, col 510), when a fiscal council for Northern Ireland will be established. [HL8868]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The Fiscal Council is an important new part of the governance of Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Department of Finance is leading on developing the Terms of Reference for the Fiscal Council. This will subsequently be agreed through the UK Government-NI Executive Joint Board, which has been established under New Decade, New Approach. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland continues to emphasise the need to press ahead with an Independent Fiscal Council as a priority for the Executive. This was discussed at the first meeting of the Joint Board. The Joint Board will meet again shortly to discuss progress on the fiscal council, amongst other issues.

The Fiscal Council has the potential to make a huge contribution to fiscal sustainability in Northern Ireland over the long-term and strengthen Northern Ireland's fiscal performance.

The UK Government will continue to work with the Northern Ireland Executive to agree terms of reference that reflect our joint ambitions for this new institution and get it up and running as soon as possible.

Pupil Exclusions: Ethnic Groups

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Institute of Race Relations How Black Working-Class Youth are Criminalised and Excluded in the English School System, published on 28 September. [HL8834]

Baroness Berridge: To understand the disparities in school exclusion rates, the department is committed to working with the independent Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, established by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister.

Exclusions guidance is clear that all schools should consider what extra support might be needed to identify and address the needs of children from groups with

disproportionally high rates of exclusion, to reduce their risk of exclusion.

The department is taking forward an ambitious programme of action on school behaviour and is working to rapidly improve the availability of good Alternative Provision, so that permanently excluded children and children at risk of exclusion receive a high quality education suited to their individual needs.

In addition, the department is investing £10 million in Behaviour Hubs which will enable schools and multi-academy trusts, with exemplary behaviour cultures and practices, to work in partnership with those that want to improve their behaviour culture. We are also supporting staff through the Early Career Framework reforms, which will entitle all early career teachers to 2 years of professional development in 5 core areas, including behaviour management.

The department will revise guidance on exclusions to make it clearer and more consistent, so that head teachers have the information they need to use exclusion properly and proportionately. We will continue to engage with key stakeholders including academics, when revising guidance. We are also working with Ofsted to clamp down on off-rolling.

In addition, the department provided £7 million to the See, Hear, Respond service, led by Barnardo's which will deliver, amongst other things, street-based youth work to identify and support children at risk of harm outside of the home, including criminal exploitation. The £13 million Trusted Relationships Fund (2018-22) also funds 11 different local authorities across England delivering innovative approaches to supporting children and young people aged 10 to 17 at risk of child sexual exploitation or abuse, criminal exploitation and peer on peer abuse.

The department is also funding a £2 million Tackling Child Exploitation support programme to help safeguarding partners in local areas develop an effective response to extra-familial harms such as child sexual and child criminal exploitation.

Refugees: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 5 October (HL Deb, col 407), what criteria are being used by Public Health England to assess when it will be safe to restart refugee resettlement. [HL8794]

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 5 October (HL Deb, col 407), what discussions Public Health England has had with comparable public health bodies in other countries which have restarted refugee resettlement about how they assessed the public health implications of doing so in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL8796]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Due to coronavirus (COVID-19) related restrictions and pressures, both overseas and in the UK, it is not currently possible to undertake any refugee resettlement activity. We continue to evaluate how to respond given these restrictions and pressures, but we expect to resume refugee resettlement activity when safe to do so.

We are continuing to engage with international and domestic partners on plans to restart arrivals, including Public Health England who, in turn, are engaged with other Public Health bodies, both in the UK and in other countries.

To clarify, guidance from PHE is just one of the factors our plans to restart resettlement arrivals are dependent on. Other factors include the lifting of restrictions imposed by the governments of host refugee countries, local authority and central government capacity, and recovery of the asylum system from the impact of COVID-19.

Renewable Energy

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what role they envisage for the cooperative model in renewable energy. [HL8818]

Lord Callanan: The Government recognises the role that the cooperative model can play in the UK's renewable energy system and in helping to meet our target of net zero emission by 2050. The £10m Rural Community Energy Fund (RCEF) provides grant funding support to rural communities in England many of whom are co-operatives. RCEF grants cover the early development costs of local renewable energy projects that provide economic and social benefits to the community. There is also a range of support for power, heat and transport projects that are available to co-operatives who are developing net zero energy projects such as the Smart Export Guarantee, the Renewable Heat Incentive and the electric vehicle Workplace Charging Scheme.

Royal Lancaster Infirmary and Royal Preston Hospital

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much funding they have allocated for the development of proposals for the replacement of Royal Preston Hospital and Lancaster Royal Infirmary; to which body has the money been allocated, and who will carry out the work; what are the terms of reference of the work, and to what extent may it take into consideration the sites and services in other parts of the Lancashire Teaching Hospitals and Hospitals of Morecambe Bay Trusts; whether they can include proposals for any services currently provided by other NHS Trusts including the East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust; and when they expect these proposals and options to be published. [HL9033]

Lord Bethell: The Health Infrastructure Plan set out this Government's approach to long-term investment in the healthcare system to ensure both staff and patients continue to have access to world-class facilities. In line with this, the Department provided both the Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust with £3.7 million each of seed funding to kick-start their schemes and to support both trusts in their development of plans for improving facilities for the staff and patients of their communities.

The two neighbouring trusts have been, and continue to, work in close collaboration to develop different options for how to proceed that represent the best outcome for the area as a whole. These plans are in the early stage of their development and when developed further, will be subject to public consultation as an integral part in developing the collective and cohesive strategy.

Royal Sussex County Hospital: Accident and Emergency Departments

Asked by Lord Bassam of Brighton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what additional buildings and facilities on the Royal Sussex County hospital site will be covered by the Prime Minister's announcement on 11 August of £300 million being made available to NHS trusts to upgrade accident and emergency facilities. [HL8847]

Lord Bethell: As part of the £300 million announced for accident and emergency (A&E) department upgrades on 11 August, Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust has been awarded £3.7 million, of which Royal Sussex County Hospital will be receiving an £1.85 million for its A&E and same day emergency care capacity project.

Schools: Coronavirus

Asked by Baroness Pinnock

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to providing temporary additional funding to schools to help fund the increase in cleaning costs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL8826]

Baroness Berridge: The department is providing additional funding to schools, on top of existing budgets, to cover unavoidable costs incurred between March to July, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, that cannot be met from their existing resources.

Schools have been eligible to claim for: increased premises related costs associated with keeping schools open over the Easter and summer half term holidays; support for free school meals for eligible children who are not in school, where schools are not using the national voucher scheme; and additional cleaning costs required, due to confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases, over and above the cost of existing cleaning arrangements. We have published detailed guidance on the fund at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-schools>.

The first claims window for the fund closed on 21 July. All claims for funding within the specified cost categories and maximum limit have already been paid. We are assessing all other claims, which will be paid later in the autumn if approved.

There will also be a further opportunity in autumn for schools to claim for exceptional costs they faced between March to July. This second claims window will be available for schools who were unable to claim in the summer and will be for the same eligible cost categories.

As set out in our reopening guidance, schools should use their existing resources when planning to welcome all children back for the autumn. The guidance can be viewed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures#funding>.

Sewage: Coronavirus

Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with (1) the Environment Agency, and (2) water companies in England, about testing waste water for COVID-19; and what plans they have to use the results of such tests to detect early warning signs of community COVID-19 outbreaks. [HL8823]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Defra, the Environment Agency (EA) and the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) have been working together since April 2020 to establish a national monitoring programme to detect fragments of genetic material from the SARS-CoV-2 virus in waste water. The programme was announced by Defra in a press release on 12 June. Data from the programme is being used as an early warning system to detect the presence of the virus in the population. The programme could not have been established without close collaboration with the water companies. Defra, EA and JBC continue to work with water companies to further develop and refine the work programme.

Social Services: Compensation

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much has been paid out by local authorities as a result of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman investigations into adult care complaints each year in the last five years; and how they plan to support local authorities to improve adult care services. [HL8791]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Government does not monitor how much local authorities pay out as a result of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman investigations. Local authorities are independent bodies and ministers have no remit to intervene in their day to day affairs.

The Ombudsman recommends a range of outcomes to achieve justice for individuals. The individual case reports, as well as the focus reports, public interest reports, and annual reviews the Ombudsman publishes on his website set out wider service improvement recommendations.

Solar Power

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase the amount of energy generated from solar power; and how they plan to assist private and public sector businesses (1) to start, or (2) to increase, generating solar power on land they own or occupy. [HL8860]

Lord Callanan: Solar PV is a UK success story and a key part of the government's strategy for low cost decarbonisation of the energy sector.

Achieving our ambitious 2050 Net Zero target will require significant increases in renewable electricity generation, and we will need to increase deployment across a range of technologies, including solar PV. This is why government announced on 2 March 2020 that large scale solar PV projects will be able to compete in the next Contracts for Difference (CfD) allocation round. The round will open in late 2021 and aim to deliver up to double the renewable capacity of last year's successful round, potentially providing enough clean energy for up to 10 million homes.

Small scale solar PV generators can receive payment for the renewable electricity that they export to the grid under the Smart Export Guarantee (SEG), introduced in January 2020. Generators can choose from several tariffs, which in some cases are higher than the export tariff provided under the previous Feed-in Tariff (FiT) scheme.

Both public and private sector businesses are entitled to seek support for new and extension solar PV projects under the CfD or SEG scheme, provided they satisfy the relevant eligibility requirements.

Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that pupils with special educational needs can attend school while restrictions are in place to address the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL8897]

Baroness Berridge: Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, we have prioritised children and young people who are the most vulnerable and schools have remained open for them. This has included those with an education, health and care plan where it was safe for them to attend. We know that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families have been disproportionately impacted and that there are both educational and wellbeing benefits of being

in school. We also now have evidence that in general the risk to children is very low.

Therefore, we are clear that all children and young people with education, health and care plans should continue to have access to onsite education in the event that local restrictions are applied. This is made clear in the recently published 'Contain' framework. We will continue to work with the sector to ensure that children and young people with SEND are supported to attend school and college. The framework is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/containin-g-and-managing-local-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreaks/covid-19-contain-framework-a-guide-for-local-decision-makers>.

Where a pupil is not attending school as they are complying with clinical or public health advice, we expect settings to offer them access to remote education so they can continue their learning and development. We have set this duty out in the recently published Remote Education Temporary Continuity Direction, which is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/923539/Remote_Education_Temporary_Continuity_Direction_-_Explanatory_Note.pdf.

Syria: Fires

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government what (1) humanitarian, and (2) reconstruction, assistance they have provided in (a) Latakia, (b) Tartus, and (c) central Homs, Syria, following forest fires in those provinces. [HL9123]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are closely monitoring the situation in all three provinces, and are in touch with our partners on the ground. The UN Country Team and the Area Humanitarian Country Team in Tartous held emergency meetings on 10 and 11 October to discuss rapid interventions and actions. UN OCHA has also sent an assessment team to the areas to determine the level of damage caused. As this work is still ongoing, we are not able to judge if further humanitarian support is needed.

The UK will not provide reconstruction support in Syria without a credible, substantive and genuine political process firmly underway.

Taiwan: China

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the situation in the Taiwan Strait, following increased tensions and Chinese military activity during the visit of the United States Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment on 17–19 September. [HL8873]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are concerned by any action which raises tensions in the Taiwan Strait and risks destabilising the status quo. Her Majesty's Government considers the Taiwan issue one to be settled by the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait through constructive dialogue.

Tidal Power: Swansea Bay

Asked by *Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the decision not to proceed with the Swansea Bay tidal lagoon [HL8858]

Lord Callanan: There are no current plans to review the decision not to proceed with the Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon.

Transport for London Financial Review

Asked by *Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Baroness Vere of Norbiton on 16 September (HL7652) and (HL7653), when their review of Transport for London's future financial sustainability is due to report. [HL8813]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The review of TfL's future financial sustainability has now completed and reported to Government. The outputs of this review are informing ongoing discussions between Government, TfL and the Greater London Authority.

Ventilation: Coronavirus

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they made of (1) evidence of aerosol transmission of COVID-19, and (2) the adequacy of (a) current building regulations, and (b) guidance on provision of artificial and natural ventilation, particularly air exchange rates. [HL8966]

Lord Greenhalgh: SAGE (the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies) have considered evidence on aerosol transmission of SARS-CoV-2. SAGE provides scientific and technical advice to support government decision makers during emergencies. During the coronavirus pandemic, the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (NERVTAG) and the Environmental and Modelling Group (EMG) provided advice to SAGE on this matter.

SAGE EMG and NERVTAG have published a paper on aerosol transmission (attached) which includes comments on ventilation:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nervtagemg-role-of-aerosol-transmission-in-covid-19-22-july-2020>.

A paper on ventilation and COVID-19 is currently being prepared by SAGE EMG.

We are planning to consult on changes to the Building Regulations ventilation standards, including a number of measures to enhance the ventilation provision for non-domestic buildings to mitigate the risk of transmission of infectious agents. This work has been informed by discussions with public health and ventilation experts. The Building Regulations apply when a new building is constructed, or when significant work takes place on an existing building.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Role of aerosol transmission [201020 s0643-nervtag-emg-role-aerosol-transmission-covid-19-sage-48 - HL8966.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-10-09/HL8966>

Wind Power

Asked by *Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase the amount of energy generated from wind power; and how they plan to assist private and public sector businesses (1) to start, or (2) to increase, generating wind power on land they own or occupy. [HL8857]

Lord Callanan: Achieving our ambitious 2050 Net Zero target will require significant increases in renewable electricity generation, and we will need to increase deployment across a range of technologies, including wind.

We now have 14.2GW installed onshore wind (ONW) capacity and we are a world leader in offshore wind (OFW) with installed capacity of 10.1GW (which will rise to 19.5GW by the mid 2020s).

On 6 October 2020, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced new plans to Build Back Greener by building on the UK's success in wind energy. As part of this, we increased the offshore wind ambition to 40 GW by 2030, introduced a new target to deploy 1GW of floating wind by 2030, and to support up to double the capacity of renewable energy in the next Contracts for Difference (CfD) auction, which will open in late 2021.

This CfD allocation round will be open to both onshore and offshore wind (as well as other technologies) as announced on Monday 2 March 2020.

The Contracts for Difference scheme is the government's main mechanism for supporting new renewable generation projects in Great Britain and to this date has secured clean energy for 12 million homes. Both public and private sector businesses are entitled to bid into the Contracts for Difference scheme.

Yemen: Overseas Aid

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much foreign aid they sent to Yemen in (1) 2017, and (2) 2019. [HL8890]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As stated in DFID's publicly available Annual Reports and Accounts, the final

UK bilateral funding allocation to Yemen was £203 million for the 2017/18 financial year and £238 million for the 2019/20 financial year. This financial year (2020/21) we have committed to spend at least £200 million in aid to Yemen, the same amount we pledged last year, bringing the total UK commitment to over £1 billion since the conflict began in 2015.

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