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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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

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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
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
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

Thursday, 22 October 2020

Financial Support for Local Authorities: Covid-19

[HLWS528]

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:

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on 12 October of new financial support for all local authorities, I wish to set out to the House how that support will be allocated to local authorities.

The allocation of this financial support, worth over £1 billion in total, consists of:

- £919 million in further un-ringfenced grant for all local authorities;
- £100 million package of support for public leisure services, to be administered by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

Government will once again be using the COVID-19 relative-Needs Formula to distribute the grant funding, as well as taking account of previous allocations. My approach also guarantees each authority gets at least £100,000 in additional funding – recognising that all areas continue to face pressures as we head into Winter. This approach will ensure the funds are distributed in a way that balances the need to support all areas across England, whilst maximising efficiency and targeting resources where they are most needed.

Un-ringfenced grant for local authorities

As with previous support, the great majority of this additional funding is un-ringfenced, recognising that local authorities are best placed to identify the specific pressures they are facing and to respond to local priorities. As with previous rounds of funding, local government should prioritise: adult social care, children's services, public health services, household waste services, shielding the clinically extremely vulnerable, homelessness and rough sleeping, domestic abuse, managing excess deaths and support for re-opening the country.

The grant funding also includes an amount from the Department of Health and Social Care's PPE fund to support councils in relation to PPE expenditure.

Package of funding for leisure centres worth £100 million

To address the ongoing challenges council leisure centres are facing, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport will introduce a new £100 million fund to support centres which are most in need. This complements the existing Sales, Fees and Charges scheme established by the Government which supports leisure

centres run directly by local councils. Further details on the scheme will be set out in due course.

Overall position

This brings the total direct funding provided to councils through this pandemic to £6.4 billion, comprising £4.6 billion in un-ringfenced funding, £1.1 billion from the Infection Control Fund, £300 million to support Test and Trace as well as funding allocated to councils from the new Local Alert Level system and a number of grants to support communities and vulnerable people.

The funding announced today is in addition to the up to £465 million that the Government has already announced for local authorities moving up to a higher local alert levels - this will ensure that councils, working alongside NHS Test and Trace can take the additional steps needed to contain the virus.

The Government has always been clear that we will stand behind local councils, and this funding demonstrates that the Government is taking the necessary steps, so that local government can continue to fulfil its pivotal role in the response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation on Operation in 2018 of Terrorism Acts

[HLWS527]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: My rt hon Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

In accordance with section 36 of the Terrorism Act 2006, Jonathan Hall QC, the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, has prepared a report on the operation in 2018 of the Terrorism Acts, which was laid before the House on 19 March 2020.

I am grateful to Mr Hall for his report and have carefully considered the recommendations and observations included within. I am today laying before the House the Government's response to the report (CP 310). Copies will be available in the Vote Office and it will also be published on GOV.UK.

Istanbul Convention Ratification: 2020 Report on Progress

[HLWS525]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: My hon Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Safeguarding (Victoria Atkins) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The Government has today laid before Parliament and published the fourth annual report on the United Kingdom's progress toward the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Combatting Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (the "Istanbul Convention"). The UK signed the Istanbul Convention in 2012, signaling our strong commitment to tackling

violence against women and girls (VAWG) and this Government remains committed to ratifying it as soon as we possibly can. The report sets out the work undertaken by the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations to tackle VAWG since the 2019 Report on Progress, as well as the remaining steps required as we progress towards ratification.

Our measures to protect women and girls from violence are already some of the most robust in the world, and in most respects, we comply with, or go further than the Convention requires. Since signing the Convention in 2012, we have significantly strengthened our legislative framework; introduced a range of new protective tools and issued new guidance for professionals to better protect victims.

This year, the Covid-19 pandemic has placed those at risk of violence against women and girls in an even more vulnerable situation. In response to this, the Government announced enhanced support for victims, including £76 million of funding to ensure that victims and survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence and modern slavery, as well as vulnerable children and their families, receive the support they need during the pandemic.

On 3 March 2020 we reintroduced the landmark Domestic Abuse Bill in Parliament, which includes a package of measures to transform our response to domestic abuse. The Bill was passed by the House of Commons in July and has now moved to the House of Lords. The Bill (together with the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill currently before the Northern Ireland Assembly) includes the necessary legislative measures to ensure all parts of the UK are compliant with Article 44 of the Convention, which requires that criminal courts in the UK have extraterritorial jurisdiction over certain violent and sexual offences.

The Northern Ireland Executive had not been restored at the time of the last progress report, so the Domestic Abuse Bill as originally introduced in July 2019 contained a provision for a new domestic abuse offence which would criminalise psychological violence in Northern Ireland, as required by Article 33 of the Convention. Following the restoration of devolved government in Northern Ireland, provision for this new offence was omitted from the re-introduced Westminster Bill and placed in the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill, which was introduced into the Northern Ireland Assembly on 31 March 2020. As this is a devolved matter, the timetable for the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill is for the Assembly to set. Nevertheless, I know that Ministers in the Northern Ireland Executive share my desire for ratification of the Convention to proceed as swiftly as possible and that they will do all that they can to enable swift implementation of the new offence once the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill is enacted.

The issue of support for migrant victims of domestic abuse was raised by the Joint Committee on the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill and we committed to undertake a review into the Government's overall response to migrant

victims of domestic abuse. This review has been completed, and the findings were published on gov.uk on 3 July 2020. More detailed evidence is needed to demonstrate which cohorts of migrant victims are likely to be most in need of support, the numbers involved and how well existing arrangements may address their needs.

In response to the review, the Government therefore committed to launch a £1.5 million Support for Migrant Victims (SMV) pilot scheme to address these evidence gaps, which will then enable us to take well-grounded and evidence-based decisions on how best to protect these victims in the long term. Details of the pilot scheme were published on 19 October. We have therefore recorded Articles 4(3) (to the extent that it relates to non-discrimination on the grounds of migrant or refugee status) and 59 as "under review" this year pending the evaluation and findings from the SMV scheme.

The publication of this report fulfils the requirement of section 2 of the Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Ratification of Convention) Act 2017. I will lay before Parliament the report required by section 1 of that Act when our timescale for ratification is clear.

Copies of the 2020 progress report will be available in the Vote Office and it will be published on the Government's website at GOV.UK.

Joint Committee on Human Rights Reports: Detention of Young People with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism, Human Rights and Implications of Government Covid-19 Response

[HLWS524]

Lord Bethell: My Hon Friend the Minister for Care (Helen Whately) has made the following written statement:

Today we have published the Government's formal response to the recommendations made by the Joint Committee on Human Rights in its report 'The detention of young people with learning disabilities and/or autism' published on 1 November 2019 and those made in its report 'Human Rights and the Government's response to COVID-19: The detention of young people who are autistic and/or have learning disabilities' published on 12 June 2020. A copy of the response will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

We welcome the Joint Committee on Human Rights' (JCHR) reports and their recommendations. Protecting the rights of people with a learning disability and of autistic people is a matter of the utmost importance to the Government. Rights must be upheld regardless of wider circumstances, no matter how unprecedented. This is especially so for those who may be at a particularly vulnerable time in their lives, in crisis or receiving treatment in specialist mental health inpatient settings. The Government's manifesto committed to improve how people with a learning disability/and or autistic people are

treated in law and to make it easier for them to be discharged from hospital in recognition of some of the challenges faced by this group of people.

The JCHR made recommendations for Government and its system partners to improve the care and support of people with a learning disability and/or autism which was not found to always meet the high standard we would expect for each and every individual.

We have carefully considered these recommendations and are accepting in full or in principle the vast majority, including:

- The JCHR have specifically recommended that a legal duty is introduced on Local Authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups to ensure the availability of sufficient community-based services. We have accepted this recommendation in principle and plan to consult on new duties to ensure an adequate supply of community services for people with learning disabilities and autistic people.

- In response to the recommendation that families should not be prevented from speaking out about poor care, we will introduce guidance on the use of injunctions to stop the inappropriate use of injunctions and ensure that families are able to speak out, driving up the standard of care for people with a learning disability and/or autism.

- This guidance will require health bodies to notify the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care of their intention to seek an injunction. This will enable us to monitor these instances and take further action such as following up with the body in question to seek additional information on the grounds seeking the injunction if required.

We propose to take forward a number of recommendations made by the JCHR through reform of the Mental Health Act and more detail will be provided in a Mental Health Act White Paper in due course. Reforming the Mental Health Act will help to ensure that when someone is admitted to hospital, the care they receive is therapeutic and beneficial and will have a positive impact for people with a learning disability and/or autistic people who are admitted for assessment or treatment. The White Paper will provide an opportunity to consult on changes as recommended by the JCHR including:

- Placing Care, Education and Treatment Reviews (CETR) on a statutory footing. This would help to ensure that the CETR process is more robust and that there is greater involvement, where appropriate, of families. This should ensure that the process for resolving problems that keep people in hospital for longer than they should is improved along with improving current and future care planning, including plans for leaving hospital.

- Reforming the detention criteria and the detention process should reduce inequalities by making sure inpatient care for people with a learning disability or autistic people is only used when it offers clear benefits. For those who need inpatient care, having a say in the care they receive and requiring care to be therapeutic

should ensure that people with a learning disability or autism are treated with the same dignity and respect that we would all expect.

- Enforcing and enhancing the rights of individuals and families to advocacy will be addressed, including through recommendations on improving access to Independent Mental Health Advocates, which would expect to have a positive impact in supporting individuals with learning disabilities and autistic people and their families.

The action we are taking in responding to these recommendations will help to ensure that people with a learning disability and autistic people are supported to live fulfilling lives in the community and that if they are admitted to hospital, the care they receive is both therapeutic and beneficial. The steps we are taking will also ensure that where appropriate family members will have a greater input into the care and support their loved ones receive. We must remain committed to delivering on our existing plans and on the new steps set out in this response.

Points-based Immigration System

[HLWS526]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: My hon Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Future Borders and Immigration (Kevin Foster) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

My Rt Hon Friend the Home Secretary is today laying before the House a Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules.

In February and July 2020, we published our Policy Statements on the UK's Points-Based Immigration System. This set out how we would fulfil our commitment to the British public to take back control of our borders by ending free movement and introducing a single, global immigration system. The Points-Based System will cater for the most highly skilled workers, skilled workers, students and a range of other specialist work routes including routes for global leaders in their field and innovators.

The changes to the Immigration Rules are a crucial part of the Future Points-Based Immigration System. They also introduce the new Hong Kong British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) route for a BN(O) citizen who wants to live and work in the UK and will extend the Afghan Interpreter ex-gratia scheme.

The rules also represent a significant further step in our commitment to simplify the rules, implementing many of the recommendations of the Law Commission to ensure we provide greater clarity to migrants, employers and all other users of the rules.

At the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020, free movement will end and newly arriving European Economic Area (EEA) and Swiss citizens will come within the scope of the new global immigration system. These rules will generally commence between 1 December and 1 January, but EEA nationals will not be

granted permission until after 1 January as they are able to rely on free movement right until then.

I have set out in a separate document, attached, the details of the changes we are making to the Immigration Rules, which should be read together with this statement.

The Statement includes the following attached material:

details of changes [Immigration Rules detailed changes.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2020-10-22/HLWS526/>

Rohingya Donor Conference and Funding Announcement

[HLWS523]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is co-hosting a donor conference today for the Rohingya refugee response, alongside the United States, European Union and UN Refugee agency (UNHCR).

Bringing together donor countries and partners from the region, this conference will rally international support for the Rohingya humanitarian response in Bangladesh, Myanmar and other countries hosting Rohingya refugees in the region. Our aim is to ensure sustained support for Rohingya refugees and displaced populations, while working towards long-term durable solutions.

Maintaining international funding will become increasingly difficult over time - yet three years on from the terrible violence that erupted in August 2017, the Rohingya remain one of the world's most vulnerable populations. I pay tribute to the resilience, courage and tenacity of the Rohingya people. I also express our gratitude to the Government and people of Bangladesh for hosting the 860,000 refugees currently living in Cox's Bazar district.

The UK continues to support the Rohingya on both sides of the Myanmar-Bangladesh border while we push for a long-term solution that enables their voluntary, safe, and dignified return to Myanmar. This includes advocating for the implementation of the Rakhine Advisory Commission recommendations, including reform of citizenship laws and freedom of movement. The UK is clear that there must be accountability for atrocities. This will be fundamental to give the Rohingya people confidence that it is safe to return.

The UK is already one of the biggest donors supporting the Rohingya. The crisis remains a priority and we have worked hard to prioritise resources to maintain assistance in Myanmar and Bangladesh.

I am therefore pleased to announce that this Government is committing a further £37.5m to the Rohingya response operation in Bangladesh to continue our life saving support, a total of £293.5m committed to the crisis since 2017. This funding supports refugees in Cox's Bazar with protection, food, healthcare, water and sanitation, counselling, and will help mitigate the impact of natural disasters and disease, in addition to supporting local communities.

COVID-19 has created an additional dimension to the adversity Rohingya communities have faced. So far, UK aid has added more than 2,400 handwashing facilities in the camps and created capacity for over 600 beds for treating refugees and locals alike suffering from severe respiratory infections. I am happy to announce that we are also committing £10m support for Bangladesh to help the country respond to coronavirus and natural disasters nationally.

In the meantime, providing education for Rohingya children and livelihood opportunities for adults is fundamental to equipping Rohingya with the essential knowledge and skills for their future in Myanmar and to prevent a lost generation. It is also the best guard against rising domestic violence, criminality and tensions between the refugee and host communities. Significant material support will be needed for the foreseeable future to uphold basic standards of living.

The UK also provides significant support to the Rohingya in conflict-affected Rakhine State in Myanmar. This includes over £25m since 2017 for Rohingya communities for nutrition, water, health and sanitation, protection, skills and livelihoods support. UK aid is also working hard to respond to the additional health and humanitarian needs brought on by COVID, amidst access restrictions.

We hope that the international community will continue to demonstrate its strong commitment to the humanitarian response and find solutions for the Rohingya that will enable them to return home voluntarily, safely and with dignity. We will continue to push for regional and international attention and support in helping manage and resolve the crisis.

Written Answers

Thursday, 22 October 2020

ARM: NVIDIA

Asked by **Lord Broers**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the acquisition of Arm by NVIDIA, and (2) whether such an acquisition is in the national interest. [HL9116]

Baroness Barran: Arm is an important part of the UK's technology sector and makes a significant contribution to the UK economy. The Government monitors acquisitions and mergers closely. When a takeover may have a significant impact on the UK we will not hesitate to investigate further and take appropriate action. We are examining this deal carefully.

Asylum: Children

Asked by **Lord Risby**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many unaccompanied child asylum seekers have entered the UK this year; and whether they plan to make the National Transfer Scheme compulsory for all local authorities. [HL8948]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The number of unaccompanied children who make asylum claims is published in the quarterly immigration statistics. The latest statistics can be found at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-june-2020/how-many-people-do-we-grant-asylum-or-protection-to>

We are very grateful to local authorities who have pledged places to support the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) and we need more to come forward and do their bit for vulnerable children.

We recognise a need to achieve a more equitable distribution of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) and have therefore worked with local government partners to develop proposals to further improve the scheme which we have recently consulted on. We are grateful to local authorities for their responses to that consultation which we are carefully considering in order to develop a more sustainable long-term future model for the NTS. The consultation also sought views on a potential mandatory approach should participation in the voluntary scheme not achieve a more proportionate distribution of UASC.

Asylum: Evictions

Asked by **Lord Boateng**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on the numbers of street

homeless people of the Home Office's decision to restart asylum evictions from 15 September in England; and what plans they have to delay the proposed extension of this policy to Scotland and Wales until the data to permit such an assessment is available. [HL8967]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: We have worked, and continue to work, with colleagues at the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to understand rough sleeping pressures within Local Authorities in England. We have considered guidance from MHCLG on the aforementioned pressures as part of the phased resumption of negative asylum support cessations.

Cases continue to be triaged for cessation in a manner that considers feedback and guidance from colleagues at MHCLG but above all considers that those receiving a cessation notification will have a route of return as well as access to assistance to leave the country through a Voluntary Returns Service without impacting on Local Authority rough sleeping pressures.

Discussions are ongoing with colleagues in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as to when negative asylum support cessations will resume in there.

Aviation: Insolvency

Asked by **Baroness Randerson**

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they will bring forward the proposed airline insolvency legislation announced in the Queen's Speech. [HL8943]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Government has considered the recommendations of the Airline Insolvency Review to identify the reforms needed to ensure a strong level of consumer protection and value for money for the taxpayer.

The Government is also mindful of the need to consider the challenges faced by the aviation sector as a result of COVID-19. We are keeping under review the scope and timing of any future reforms in this policy area.

Companies: Meetings

Asked by **Lord Kennedy of Southwark**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of annual company meetings being closed to physical attendance on the ability of small shareholders to hold companies to account. [HL8935]

Lord Callanan: BEIS officials have worked closely with colleagues in the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) which, on 6 October, produced a report entitled, "AGMs: An Opportunity for Change". The report examines the impact the coronavirus pandemic has had on company behaviour and shareholder experience over the course of the 2020 AGM season.

Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan 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 Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme. [HL8933]

Lord Callanan: As part of the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme application process lenders undertake fraud checks, including Know Your Customer and Anti Money Laundering checks as required. In addition, the application form is clear – any individual who knowingly provides false information is at risk of criminal prosecution. We are working across Departments, and with lenders and law enforcement agencies, to tackle fraudulent abuse of the scheme.

Details of how we expect the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme to perform is set out in our accounts for 2019-20, a copy of which has been placed in the Libraries of the House. At this early stage, such estimates are naturally highly uncertain as reflected in the explanatory notes of the Accounts.

Coronavirus: Disease Control

Asked by *Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what lessons they have learned from (1) New Zealand, and (2) Germany, with regard to handling the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL8911]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The UK has followed closely policy measures taken by other countries over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In particular, given the global nature of the pandemic, the International Comparators Joint Unit (ICJU) was established in April 2020 as a joint unit between the FCDO and the Cabinet Office. The ICJU works closely with the FCDO's overseas network to understand how other countries, including New Zealand and Germany, are responding to the Covid-19 pandemic to identify possible lessons learned and to help inform UK policy decisions. ICJU includes analysts, data scientists, economists, and social researchers. Analysis by the ICJU is shared widely across government departments making decisions on the UK's Covid-19 response as well as the Devolved Administrations.

We have also engaged with counterparts in New Zealand and Germany on a wide range of Covid-19 issues. The Foreign Secretary worked with German Foreign Minister Maas to help shape a strong G7 response to the initial Covid outbreak. Both the Foreign and the Health Secretaries have been in contact with their German counterparts throughout the Covid crisis. There have been virtual meetings between both countries' health ministries and there continue to be regular official level interactions with state health ministries and local public health

authorities, as well as a regular exchange between the Robert-Koch-Institute and Public Health England. The Foreign Secretary has also spoken to New Zealand's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Peters to discuss our Covid-19 response.

Courts: Video Conferencing

Asked by *Lord Wasserman*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Keen of Elie on 5 August (HL7251), whether Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service or the judiciary were among the interested parties with whom the findings of the final evaluation report of the Video Enabled Justice Programme were shared; and, if so, when any responses will be made public. [HL8953]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The final draft of the evaluation report was shared with HMCTS and judicial representatives engaged with the Video Enabled Justice Programme following its release in May 2020. HMCTS noted the findings to be included in a literary review of the use of video across the criminal justice system.

Courts and Prisons: Video Conferencing

Asked by *Lord Wasserman*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Keen of Elie on 5 August (HL7250), when they expect to be able to share the results of the pilot for the "book a video link" service with stakeholders. [HL8952]

Asked by *Lord Wasserman*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Keen of Elie on 5 August (HL7250), whether they plan to roll out the Book a Video Link Service to further prisons and courts; and if so, (1) to list the sites, and (2) to provide information on when the system will go live in each site. [HL8997]

Asked by *Lord Wasserman*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Keen of Elie on 5 August (HL7250), what plans they have to publish the data and feedback from all users of the Book a Video Link Service pilot at HMP Wandsworth. [HL8998]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: Since the pilot 'book a video link' service commenced at HMP Wandsworth and all associated courts on 31 March 2020, some 7,000 bookings have been made by court users.

Now that the first phase has been completed, user feedback from prison and court staff has indicated some minor refinements to the tool are necessary, in particular to improve the amend/cancel appointment function. Otherwise, the pilot has been judged a success, and the intention is to introduce the service more widely once the tool has been refined in line with user feedback.

HMPPS will be writing to prisons, courts and other stakeholders to advise them of the proposed plans for further roll-out. Subject to consultation with the prisons and courts involved, the initial expansion of the service is likely to be as part of the new video conferencing centres (VCCs) at HMPs Hewell and Thameside due to go live early in the new year. We are also looking to introduce the service in prisons that already have VCCs.

Crime: Coronavirus

*Asked by **Baroness Manzoor***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many fixed penalty notices have been issued to those refusing to comply with any restrictions put in place to address the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL8977]

*Asked by **Baroness Manzoor***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the enforcement of the restrictions put in place to address the COVID-19 pandemic have been targeted (1) in areas with lower compliance, and (2) where COVID-19 infections are rising; and if so, where are those areas. [HL8978]

*Asked by **Baroness Manzoor***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many (1) individuals, and (2) businesses, there are with more than one fixed penalty notice for refusing to comply with the restrictions in place to address the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL8979]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: On 30 September, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) published its latest report on the police use of Covid-19 enforcement notices issued under all emergency health protections. The data showed that between 27 March and 21 September, 18,912 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) were issued by police forces in England and Wales between 27 March and 21 September.

The data in the report provides an analysis of the rationale for issuing a FPN and a breakdown of issuance by police force. Data related to those individuals or businesses in receipt of more than one fixed penalty notice, for any reason, is not provided by the NPCC in its report and is not held by the Home Office.

Each force is operationally independent and will respond accordingly to local needs as part of a multi-agency approach with partners including PHE and local authorities. Any region-specific enforcement activity is a matter for individual police forces.

Debts: Coronavirus

*Asked by **The Lord Bishop of St Albans***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they intend to respond to reports of a low-income debt crisis emerging in the UK as a result of redundancies and income loss during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL8988]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Government has delivered unprecedented support for living standards during this challenging time, protecting livelihoods with the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, and temporary welfare measures amongst other support.

With the resurgence of COVID-19, the Government has announced further targeted support via the Winter Economy Plan, including the Job Support Scheme, which will provide employees who work at least 33% of their normal hours with at least 77% of their salary.

The Government has provided Local Authorities with £500 million to support people who may struggle to meet their council tax payments this year. The Government expects that this will provide all recipients of working age local council tax support with a further reduction in their annual council tax bill of £150 this financial year.

The Government recognises that some people are struggling with their finances at this challenging time. To help people in problem debt get their finances back on track, an extra £37.8 million support package is being made available to debt advice providers this financial year, bringing this year's budget for free debt advice in England to over £100 million.

In May, the Government also announced the immediate release of £65 million dormant assets funding to Fair4All Finance, an independent organisation that has been founded to support the financial wellbeing of people in vulnerable circumstances. The funding is used to increase access to fair, affordable and appropriate financial products and services for those in financial difficulties.

From May 2021 the Breathing Space scheme will offer people in problem debt a pause of up to 60 days on most enforcement action, interest, fees and charges, and will encourage them to seek professional debt advice.

In addition, at the Budget in 2018, the Government announced that it would undertake a feasibility study into a no-interest loans scheme in the UK. The Government has been examining the possibility of a no-interest loans scheme to help some of the most financially vulnerable access credit when they need it and welcomed the feasibility study conducted by London Economics which was published in March this year.

Devolution

*Asked by **Lord Empey***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to appoint a 'territorial minister' to answer for the Government in the House of Lords on matters relating to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. [HL8924]

Lord True: Viscount Younger of Leckie speaks for the Northern Ireland Office and the Scotland Office, and Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist speaks for the Wales Office.

A full list of Government Ministers and Lords Spokespersons can be found here:

<https://www.lordswhips.org.uk/government-spokespersons>

Domestic Abuse: Older People

Asked by Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that the Domestic Abuse Bill includes a requirement that data on domestic abuse is gathered on those aged 74 years old and over. [HL8970]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government fully recognises that those aged 74 and over can be victims of domestic abuse, and we are committed to protecting and supporting all victims of this devastating crime. The new statutory definition of domestic abuse in Part 1 of the Domestic Abuse Bill does not contain an upper age limit.

Testing carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) supported raising the upper age limit of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) from 59 to 74 years, which was implemented from April 2017.

However, this testing also showed that self-completion (whereby the respondent completes the survey questions on a tablet computer) declined as age increased, with the proportion of people completing the modules being much lower for those aged 75 and over. The ONS concluded that the lower response rate for those aged 75 and over would prevent the production of sufficiently robust data, while increasing the burden on respondents.

The methodology used by the CSEW is not a matter for legislation. That is why ministers have raised this issue directly with the National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, Professor Sir Ian Diamond. The ONS Centre for Crime and Justice has committed to test whether it is possible to further increase the upper age limit in a future review. We welcome this commitment.

Drugs: Organised Crime

Asked by Lord Risby

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address the transportation of illegal substances through county lines. [HL8947]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: This Government is determined to crack down on the county lines gangs who are exploiting our children and have a devastating impact on our communities.

That is why we are investing £25m to boost law enforcement efforts to put a stop to these ruthless gangs – this includes funding to tackle activity on the road and rail network, expand the National County Lines Co-ordination Centre (NCLCC), boost operational activity in the three major exporting force areas (the Metropolitan Police, Merseyside, West Midlands), and increase support for victims.

We know that the transport network is used to facilitate county lines, and our £25m investment has enabled the British Transport Police (BTP) to establish a County Lines Taskforce which works with police forces and rail industry partners to deliver targeted activity on the rail network. This investment has also continued to improve availability and standardise the use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) data, allowing for further additional support to county lines investigations.

Our investment is already delivering results: as a result of the £5m we invested in 2019-2020, pilot forces and British Transport Police have closed nearly 140 deal lines, seized cash and drugs with a total value of over £3 million, and made over 100 weapons seizures between November 2019 and March 2020.

In addition, a recent county lines 'week of intensification' co-ordinated by NCLCC in September and involving all police forces, including BTP, resulted in over 1,000 arrests, drugs worth more than £1m seized and over 1,500 vulnerable individuals safeguarded.

Environment Protection

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the postponement of their autumn comprehensive spending review, what plans they have to accelerate measures to address (1) climate change, and (2) biodiversity loss. [HL8905]

Lord Callanan: Last week, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister set out his determination for the UK to be at the forefront of the green industrial revolution, as we accelerate our progress towards net zero emissions by 2050. This year, the government has set out billions in support for addressing climate change, including over £3 billion to transform energy efficiency in homes and public buildings. We will be bringing forward sectoral decarbonisation plans, such as an Energy White Paper, as part of our leadership on global climate action through our COP26 and G7 Presidencies. We are also continuing to deliver our ambitious agenda for adapting to climate change, outlined in the second National Adaptation Programme (NAP). This includes £5.2 billion over six years from April 2021 in a major upgrade to flood and coastal protection.

Our 25 Year Environment Plan marked a step-change in ambition for wildlife and the natural environment. We announced new funding at Budget this year – up to £25m Nature Recovery Fund and £640m Nature for Climate Fund, of which £40m has been brought forward under the recently opened Green Recovery Challenge Fund. These funds will kick start a programme of nature-based projects to address the twin challenges of halting biodiversity loss and tackling climate change.

The Environment Bill will drive the long-term action nature needs to recover, through legally binding targets in at least four priority areas: air, water, biodiversity, and waste and resources. We are also developing a new

Environmental Land Management scheme that will reward farmers and land managers for delivering environmental public goods as set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan, including thriving plants and wildlife.

Freedom of Expression

Asked by Lord Truscott

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they support the free expression of will on the status of (1) Nagorno-Karabakh, (2) Scotland, (3) Hong Kong, and (4) Crimea, by those who live there. [HL8996]

Baroness Sugg: Scotland regularly elects representatives to one of the most powerful devolved administrations in the world, as well as to the Parliament of the United Kingdom. The people of Scotland voted decisively to remain part of the UK in 2014 and the UK Government is committed to upholding and respecting that decision.

We consider that the Basic Principles for a settlement proposed by the Minsk Group co-chairs provide the basis for a reasonable compromise in this regard, taking due account of the relevant OSCE principles governing relations between member-states. This includes the return of territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijani control and future determination of the final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh through a legally binding expression of will.

Our position on Hong Kong is clear. The UK handed sovereignty for Hong Kong back to China in 1997 under the terms of the legally binding Sino-British Joint Declaration. We expect China to uphold Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and rights and freedoms as provided for in the Joint Declaration.

The UK, in common with the majority of the international community, does not recognise the 16 March 2014 Crimea referendum or its outcome as legitimate or of any credibility or value. UN General Assembly resolution 68/262 affirms Ukraine's territorial integrity and underscores the invalidity of the illegal referendum.

History: Curriculum

Asked by Baroness Eaton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of steps taken by some universities to decolonise the history curriculum; and what plans they have to issue guidance to universities on making the history curriculum as previously taught available to students. [HL8921]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: Universities are autonomous institutions and it is for them to determine the scope and content of their curricula. The government has therefore made no such assessment and has no current plans to issue any guidance on this issue.

However, the government maintains its commitment to upholding academic freedom – and the freedom of

speech, which universities and higher education institutions have a legal duty to uphold – so that people studying at them can engage with a wide range of ideas and arguments.

Immigration: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 7 October (HL8409), whether they will now answer the question put, namely what percentage of e-mails received by the Home Office Coronavirus Immigration Help Centre in August were answered within the usual reply period of five working days. [HL8908]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office does not collate the specific information requested, however, the progress of responses to questions directed to the Coronavirus Immigration Team is monitored regularly and remains a priority.

Influenza: Vaccination

Asked by Lord Porter of Spalding

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the programme of flu vaccinations is delivered successfully for this autumn and winter. [HL8759]

Lord Bethell: NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with local areas to ensure that regional teams have plans in place to increase coverage of the flu vaccination programme this winter. New models of delivery have been shared with regional commissioning teams to encourage innovation, such as mobile and mass vaccination models, and allow for increases in uptake safely, whilst observing social distancing and personal protective equipment requirements.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have introduced an enhanced call and recall system, so that those who are eligible are reminded to attend a vaccination session.

Alongside this, additional trained workforce is being made available to local providers to help them vaccinate more eligible people. Public Health England have also launched new marketing campaign to encourage uptake of flu vaccination amongst eligible groups.

Additional flu vaccine has been purchased by the Department, which will be available to providers from November to increase uptake in existing groups and facilitate expansion of the programme.

Infrastructure: Security

Asked by Lord Truscott

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to protect critical national infrastructure from potentially hostile states, particularly in the nuclear sector. [HL8993]

Lord True: Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) in the UK, including the Civil Nuclear sector, is subject to thorough scrutiny and must satisfy stringent sectoral regulatory and national security requirements. For the Civil Nuclear sector specifically, the Office for Nuclear Regulation independently oversees and enforces the UK's nuclear regulatory regime.

Iran: Arms Trade

Asked by **Baroness Eaton**

To ask Her Majesty's Government why the UK abstained on the US-sponsored UN Security Council resolution to extend the arms embargo on Iran. [HL8919]

Asked by **Baroness Eaton**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to prevent the arms embargo on Iran from expiring. [HL8920]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UN conventional arms embargo on Iran expired on 18 October. The UK, alongside our E3 partners (France and Germany), remain concerned about the impact of the expiry on the region. Despite E3 efforts to find a compromise in the UN Security Council, there was no consensus to extend the embargo. We abstained on the US draft resolution because it was clear that it would not attract the support of the Council. Ultimately, unless a resolution could pass, it would have no impact on Iran. We remain committed to countering Iranian proliferation to non-state actors in the region. The EU arms embargo and UN ballistic missile restrictions on Iran will remain in place, as will other prohibitions on the proliferation of weapons, including to Lebanese Hezbollah, Iraqi militia groups and the Houthis.

Law and Order: Unmanned Air Vehicles

Asked by **Baroness Randerson**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to update legislation covering the use of drones by law enforcement agencies (1) to incorporate provisions for transparency, and (2) to allow the development of guidance. [HL8945]

Asked by **Baroness Randerson**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, if any, of (1) the increase of the use of drones by law enforcement agencies in England and Wales in the last four years, and (2) the reasons for any variation between police forces in their reliance on drones. [HL8946]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office does not currently have any plans to update legislation on the use of drones by law enforcement agencies. The use of drones by law enforcement agencies is guided by regulations set by the Civil Aviation Authority and the use of surveillance cameras by police is governed by the

General Data Protection Regulation (2018) and the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice (2013).

The use of drones is an operational decision for individual police forces who deploy drones based on their operational needs. The Home Office does not gather any data on the use of drones by law enforcement agencies.

Military Aircraft

Asked by **Lord West of Spithead**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the implications for the Tempest programme of the announcement of an American sixth generation fighter. [HL9207]

Baroness Goldie: The 2018 Combat Air Strategy confirmed the UK's commitment to a strong and sustainable Combat Air Sector. The Strategy reinforced the importance of effective international partnering in delivering next generation combat air and building on mutual strengths. The Strategy also confirmed that we will seek to maximise interoperability, especially with the United States, wider NATO, European and global allies and partners. The Department will shortly submit the future combat air outline business case, which will down-select the acquisition route.

Ministry of Defence: Senior Civil Servants

Asked by **Baroness Kramer**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many BAME civil servants there are at the Ministry of Defence at (1) SCS1, (2) SCS2, (3) SCS3, and (4) SCS4, grade. [HL9139]

Baroness Goldie: Defence has been working hard to achieve a more diverse workforce. However, progress in terms of the representative rates of our people – both military and civilian – has been too slow. It is clear there is still much further to go if we are to successfully attract and retain diverse talent both now and in the future. That is why we have renewed our levels of ambition at the highest levels in Defence as we work to fulfil the key objective in our 2018-2030 Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to eliminate discrimination and improve diversity throughout Defence. Work is ongoing to improve all aspects of diversity in the Ministry of Defence (MOD), including through reviewing Senior Civil Servant recruitment processes and better targeted marketing and communications.

As at 1 April 2020, in the MOD (Main), the sum total of Senior Civil Servants (SCS) self-declaring as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) was less than 10; of those, there were fewer than 10 SCS at Pay Band 1 and fewer than five at Pay Band 2. At the same date, the SCS in MOD Main was comprised of, respectively, 0.5 per cent and 0.8 per cent of the total MOD Main BAME and White workforce.

The MOD publishes biannual statistics on diversity declarations for Armed Forces personnel and MOD

civilian staff. The latest editions can be found at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-armed-forces-biannual-diversity-statistics-index>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mod-diversity-dashboard-2020>.

Monarch Airlines: Insolvency

Asked by Lord Myners

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they last communicated with Greybull Capital and Petrol Jersey Limited about the repayment of the costs to taxpayers of repatriating UK passengers of Monarch Airlines when that airline collapsed. [HL8941]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Greybull Capital is not itself a shareholder in Monarch Airlines but it does perform an advisory and management role for the principal shareholder, Petrol Jersey Limited. There is no formal legal mechanism we can use to oblige Greybull to contribute towards the cost of repatriating passengers.

Marc Meyohas, partner at Greybull, wrote to the Transport Select Committee on 24 October 2017 acknowledging a moral obligation (if they make a profit) to contribute and help to defray the costs incurred by the Government in repatriating Monarch customers.

The extent of any profit or loss from Greybull Capital and Petrol Jersey Limited's investment in Monarch Airlines will depend on the outcome of the administration process, which is not due to conclude until October 2020. Until then, we will not be able to confirm the final total that the Department has recouped.

Discussions with Greybull in relation to recovering the costs of the repatriation operation have been in writing. Ministers last wrote to Greybull on this matter on 5 December 2018.

Moorland: Fires

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what advice they have given, if any, to the owners and managers of grouse moors in relation to the current burning season; and whether they are monitoring the effects of such burning on (1) moorland peat, (2) CO₂ emissions, (3) wildlife, (4) potential run-off, and (5) other relevant matters. [HL8926]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The Government has always been clear of the need to phase out rotational burning of protected blanket bog to conserve these vulnerable habitats, and we are looking at options, including how legislation could achieve this. Real progress is being made in promoting sustainable alternatives. We have urged landowners to adopt these and continue to work with them constructively. We will be publishing the England Peat Strategy later this year

which will detail further how we intend to protect, restore and reduce damage to our peatlands.

Natural England continues to engage with landowners and managers on best practice and sustainable management with respect to managed burning, working with them to understand the impacts of their chosen land management techniques.

Natural England monitors the condition of SSSIs, which may be affected by burning, through its programme of SSSI condition monitoring. The monitoring of specific impacts (including CO₂ emissions) from burning is not done on a granular scale, however the Environment Agency and Natural England does monitor the overall condition of our rivers and moorlands.

Natural Gas

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have (1) to reduce and, if possible, (2) to eliminate, the flaring of surplus gas from production platforms and refineries before COP26. [HL8930]

Lord Callanan: The Government continues to support measures in place to continue the reduction in flared and vented gas, via both the individual actions of the relevant regulators and collaborative engagement to share learning and identify further improvements on this practice.

The Oil and Gas Authority (OGA) is taking a robust stance to reduce flaring and venting from oil and gas production platforms through its consents, field development process and project stewardship role. The OGA issues consents for flaring and venting of gas on extant licences, where necessary for safety purposes, and is exploring tougher measures as part of this process, to eliminate unnecessary flaring and venting. The OGA has also expanded its benchmarking activity to the flaring and venting of greenhouse gases on the UK Continental Shelf – detailing flaring and venting activity levels in the North Sea – to enable operators to learn from good examples set by others.

In 2018, the Environment Agency reissued its environmental permits for oil & gas refineries under the Environmental Permitting Regulations to reflect the revised European standard limiting the use of flares for safety reasons or for non-routine operational conditions only, alongside several techniques for reducing emissions to air when flaring is unavoidable.

Furthermore, the Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment and Decommissioning (OPRED) is responsible for developing, administering and enforcing the offshore oil and gas environmental regulatory regime. As the Regulator for the environment, OPRED is charged with protecting the environment, and issuing permits under the EU Emissions Trading Scheme which provides a fiscal regime for emissions reduction.

NHS: Females

Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase the number of women employed in senior NHS roles. [HL7996]

Lord Bethell: The National Health Service is the largest employer in the country and it is vital we make full use of all its talent. It is true that, while a large proportion of the NHS workforce is female, there is not equivalent female representation in senior roles. That said, there has been significant progress on improving gender equality in senior roles. Over the last three years the total number of women in senior roles has increased by 3,163 (19.3%) meaning 44.7% of Board, 48.8% of Executive Director and 46% of Chief Executive roles are now all held by women.

We are continuing to work towards even greater equality and inclusion as reinforced by actions set out in the NHS People Plan published in July. Employers, in partnership with staff representatives are overhauling recruitment and promotion practices to ensure staffing reflects the diversity of their community, regional and national labour markets. This will include agreeing diversity targets and addressing bias in systems.

Non-domestic Rates

Asked by **Lord Kennedy of Southwark**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to reform the business rates system in England. [HL8934]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: On 21 July, HM Treasury published a Call for Evidence for the fundamental review of business rates. The Call for Evidence invites stakeholders to contribute their views on ideas for reform on all elements of the business rates system and on alternative taxes.

As set out in the Call for Evidence, the fundamental review will conclude in Spring 2021.

The Call for Evidence can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/hm-treasury-fundamental-review-of-business-rates-call-for-evidence

Non-domestic Rates: Coronavirus

Asked by **Lord Kennedy of Southwark**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the future cost of business rates; and what plans they have to support businesses to afford any increase in those rates. [HL8939]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: As part of its package to support businesses affected by COVID-19, the Government has provided a business rates holiday for eligible properties in retail, hospitality and leisure, worth £10 billion this year.

The Government has also postponed the next business rates revaluation until April 2023, in order to ensure that the revaluation better reflects the impact of COVID-19.

In addition, HM Treasury is conducting a fundamental review of business rates and invites stakeholders to contribute their views on all elements of the business rates system, including any future reliefs.

Obesity

Asked by **Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of obesity in the UK; and what steps they are taking following that assessment. [HL8915]

Lord Bethell: Obesity rates are far too high which represents a huge cost to the health and wellbeing of the individual, the National Health Service and the wider economy.

We published *Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives* in July. The strategy demonstrates an overarching campaign to reduce obesity, takes forward actions from previous chapters of the childhood obesity plan and sets our measures to get the nation fit and healthy, protect against COVID-19 and protect the NHS.

In addition, Public Health England launched the Better Health campaign, which calls on people to embrace a healthier lifestyle and to lose weight if they need to, supported by a range of evidence-based tools and apps providing advice on how to reduce the waistline.

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

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Tackling Obesity [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/2020-10-08/HL8915>

Obesity: Children

Asked by **Lord Judd**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to propose urgent action nationwide to combat childhood obesity. [HL8734]

Lord Bethell: We published *Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives* in July. The strategy demonstrates an overarching campaign to reduce obesity, takes forward actions from previous chapters of the childhood obesity plan, including our ambition to halve the number of children living with obesity by 2030, and sets our measures to get the nation fit and healthy, protect against COVID-19 and protect the National Health Service.

In addition, Public Health England launched the Better Health campaign, which calls on people to embrace a

healthier lifestyle and to lose weight if they need to, supported by a range of evidence-based tools and apps providing advice on how to reduce the waistline.

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

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Occupational Pensions: Insolvency

Asked by Lord Sikka

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is (1) the number, and (2) the value, of Defined Benefit Pension Schemes rescued by the Pension Protection Fund after a pre-pack administration. [HL9156]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: This data is not readily available and so has been collated manually by the Pension Protection Fund for the last three years. From January 2020 to October 2020, the defined benefit pension schemes of 13 companies have undergone a pre-pack administration through the Pension Protection Fund. The aggregate value of the Section 75 debts of these pension schemes amounts to £196 million. Section 75 debt corresponds to the amount needed to secure a buyout for scheme members to receive their full benefits and provides a picture of the liability taken on by the Pension Protection Fund.

Oil

Asked by Lord Truscott

To ask Her Majesty's Government what preparations they have put in place to deal with any early onset of peak oil. [HL8994]

Lord Callanan: The UK was the first major economy in the world to legislate for net zero and as we move to a low carbon economy, oil and gas will play a smaller role in meeting the demand for energy over time.

The oil and gas sector has an important part to play now in sustaining our energy security of supply, and in the energy transition to support net zero, having many of the essential skills and capabilities in its world class supply chain to support emerging technologies such as carbon capture and storage, and hydrogen, and through its investment in infrastructure.

We will support this energy transition with a transformational North Sea Transition Deal, which we have committed to deliver within this Parliament. The focus of this deal will be on ensuring the sector can support the energy transition and anchor the supply chain to the UK.

The oil and gas sector supports tens of thousands of high-quality jobs across the UK. Safeguarding these jobs whilst creating new low carbon jobs will be a key consideration of the proposed North Sea Transition Deal.

Pensions: Ethnic Groups

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the ethnicity pension gap; and what steps, if any, they are taking to reduce it. [HL9198]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: Automatic enrolment has reversed the decline in workplace pension saving. Latest figures show that over 10 million workers have been automatically enrolled into a workplace pension by more than 1.7 million employers to date. By 2019/20 an estimated extra £18.8 billion a year was estimated to go into workplace pensions as a result of this policy.

The level of earnings at which workers are automatically enrolled (the earnings trigger) is subject to an annual statutory review. An analysis of the equalities impact always forms part of the review, as does an assessment of reducing the trigger to the National Insurance threshold. Analysis for the 2020/21 thresholds showed that 14 per cent of those made eligible by freezing the trigger were from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups.

Eligible employee participation continues to increase across all ethnic groups but gaps persist.

The White ethnic group has had the highest participation rate since the introduction of automatic enrolment in 2012 and had an average participation rate of 81 per cent over the period 2016/17-2018/19. This compares to the lowest, Pakistani and Bangladeshi group at 61 per cent. However, between the 2011/12-2013/14 period and 2016/17-2018/19 there were large increases among all ethnic groups. The Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic group shows the largest increase from 36 per cent to 61 per cent.

Our aim remains to help BAME workers and others achieve greater financial resilience for the long term. Our ambition, set out in the 2017 Automatic Enrolment Review: Maintaining the Momentum, is to remove the lower earnings limit and lower the age threshold for workplace pensions, in the mid-2020s, to increase the amount of savings people can build up for their retirement.

Police and Crime Commissioners: Powers

Asked by Lord Risby

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to award greater powers and responsibilities to Police and Crime Commissioners, including powers which would grant them authority within the criminal justice system. [HL8950]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: On 22 July, the Government announced a two-part review into the role of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs). Part-one of the review, which is internal, is underway and focused on strengthening the accountability of PCCs in line with the Government's manifesto commitment.

Part-two of the review will commence after the PCC elections in May 2021. It will focus on longer-term reforms to the governance model, including the role PCCs play in tackling reoffending to help reduce crime.

Political Parties: Finance

Asked by Lord Mann

To ask the Leader of the House how much Cranborne money has been budgeted to (1) the Labour party, (2) the Liberal Democrat party, (3) the office of the Convenor of the Crossbench Peers, and (4) any other groups or parties in the House of Lords, in the current financial year. [HL9304]

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: For the 2020-21 financial year, the maximum amount available for financial assistance to opposition parties and the Convenor of the Crossbench Peers ("Cranborne money") is as follows:

- Labour - £656,948
- Liberal Democrats - £328,008
- Office of the Convenor of the Crossbench peers - £99,770

No other groups or parties are able to claim it.

Quintessentially: Bounce Back Loan Scheme

Asked by Lord Myners

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether any loans from the Bounce Back Loan Scheme have been made to members of the Quintessentially Group. [HL8940]

Lord Callanan: Details of awards under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme will be published where required on the European Commission's Transparency Aid Module in due course.

Railways: Construction

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the long-term case for new railway (1) lines, and (2) stations. [HL8912]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government is committed to enhancing the railway where a business case can be made for doing so. We have set a £10.4bn budget for rail enhancements in England and Wales in Control Period 6 (2019-2024), £500m of which is available for Restoring Your Railway schemes.

Railways: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment have they made of (1) the reliability of rail services under reduced service levels during the COVID-19 pandemic, and (2) the value of a future railway timetable which is set at less than theoretical maximum capacity levels. [HL8925]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government and the rail industry revised the train timetable to ensure passengers received a regular and reliable service throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We took early action to stabilise the industry, which enabled the continued operation of critical passenger and freight services. Throughout the pandemic, performance levels have increased substantially, with the number of recorded station stops arrived at on time being over 15% higher than in the same period in 2019. We continue to work closely with industry to make sure we strike the right balance between running the maximum levels of service that can be resourced reliably and protecting taxpayers' best interests.

Russia: Chemical Weapons

Asked by Baroness Eaton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the use of Novichok by, and (2) the efficacy of sanctions on, Russia; what plans they have to review those sanctions; and what plans they have to call for the suspension of Russia from international organisations. [HL8969]

Baroness Sugg: We have made clear that it is absolutely unacceptable that a banned chemical weapon has been used. The UK and its partners have agreed that there is no plausible explanation for Mr Navalny's poisoning, other than Russian involvement and responsibility. Russia must hold a full and transparent investigation into the poisoning of one of its citizens on its soil with a banned chemical weapon.

The UK continues to support a robust approach to sanctions in response to Russia's malign actions. Sanctions are an important tool in delivering targeted economic and political pressure in order to change Russian behaviour. The UK will carry over the EU's Russia sanctions regimes as an autonomous UK sanctions regime at the end of the Transition Period and it will be regularly reviewed. The sanctions set out clear conditions for Russia to meet including the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements and the withdrawal of troops from Ukrainian soil. Until this happens sanctions will remain in place. As a fellow Permanent Member of the UN Security Council, we will continue to engage with Russia on matters of international peace and security. But as long as Russia persists in its efforts to undermine our interests and values, we will work with our international partners to continue to deter and counter them.

Trials

Asked by Lord Wasserman

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many cases were awaiting trial in (1) the Crown Court, and (2) the Magistrates' Court, as of 30 June. [HL8951]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The table below provides the current number of outstanding cases awaiting trial in the Magistrates' courts and the Crown Court as of 30 June 2020.

Outstanding cases awaiting trial in the Magistrates' courts and the Crown Court as at 30 June 2020

Magistrates' Courts (1,2)	118,376
Crown Court (2)	34,142

1. The Magistrates' courts figure represents outstanding cases that are categorised as 'for trial' (Indictable-only and Triable-either-way). For example, this will include cases where defendants plead guilty and not guilty, and those where a warrant has been issued.

2. Though the outstanding figures for both Magistrates' Courts and the Crown Court includes 'for trial' cases (Triable-either-way and Indictable Only), we are unable to say at what stage of the court process these are.

The volume of outstanding cases at the Magistrates' Courts and the Crown Court are published as part of the National Statistics series 'Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly'. These were last published on 24 September 2020. The next publication covering the period July 2020 to September 2020 is provisionally planned for publication on 17 December 2020 by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).

Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Asked by Lord Adonis

To ask Her Majesty's Government how the Clandestine Channel Threat Commander assesses the threats for which they are responsible. [HL8962]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Clandestine Channel Threat Commander refers to threat assessments produced by intelligence experts from across law enforcement agencies and wider Government.

Asked by Lord Adonis

To ask Her Majesty's Government what additional measures the Clandestine Channel Threat

Commander will implement to reduce the number of migrant boats crossing the English Channel. [HL8963]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Clandestine Channel Threat Commander is focused on four key strategic objectives.

These include working with France to reduce the number of migrants in Calais seeking to cross the Channel; tackling the organised crime groups who facilitate many of the journeys; stopping attempts to cross the border illegally; and supporting reform of the asylum system, increased penalties and maximised returns – to remove the incentives for people to seek to reach the UK via small boat and other dangerous methods.

Universities: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have formed a COVID-19 response University stakeholder advisory group; and if not, why not. [HL8958]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: On 18 August, the government launched a Higher Education Taskforce comprising various representatives of the sector, initially to advise on higher education admissions and acceptances. Membership of the taskforce includes representatives from Universities UK, the Universities & Colleges Admissions Service and a wide range of groups representing the Vice-Chancellors of a broad range of higher education providers.

This group has continued to meet as the autumn term has begun and has discussed other challenges higher education providers are facing in light of COVID-19. We will look to review its terms of reference and membership in due course, in order to ensure that it remains the right means of advising on the challenges faced by higher education providers and students.

My hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Universities, has also chaired a number of sub-groups, looking at elements of the response to COVID-19 in more detail, including winter planning and student mental health.

Alongside the Higher Education Taskforce, my hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Universities has regularly been meeting other representatives of the higher education sector, including university Vice-Chancellors, the National Union of Students, and the Union for Colleges and Universities.

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