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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN ANSWERS

Written Answers.....1

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<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
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 Answers

Wednesday, 28 October 2020

Administration of Justice: Recordings

Asked by *Lord Wasserman*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what proportion of hearings in courts and tribunals used audio or video technology either for the whole of the hearing, or in part, during September 2020. [HL9202]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The proportion of hearings in the criminal courts, that have taken place using video or audio in the month of September is 46% as shown in the HMCTS data below:

<i>Number of hearings in courts and tribunals by method for September 2020</i>	<i>Proportional Av.</i>
Total number of hearings held, mostly conducted face-to-face	39%
Total number of hearings held, mostly conducted using an audio platform	21%
Total number of hearings held, mostly conducted using a video platform	25%
Total number of other hearings conducted	15%
Total	100%

Afghanistan: Politics and Government

Asked by *Lord Kennedy of Southwark*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their latest assessment of the situation in Afghanistan. [HL9237]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We continue to assess that there is no military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. Only a political settlement negotiated between Afghans can bring lasting peace and stability to their country. The UK, therefore, strongly welcomes and supports the start of negotiations between the Afghan Government and the Taliban, currently taking place in Doha. We hope this historic opportunity leads to progress, and eventually to an inclusive political settlement and an end to the violence in Afghanistan.

However, we remain deeply concerned by continuing high levels of violence in Afghanistan, most notably the recent Taliban offensive in the southern province of Helmand. Thousands of families have been forced to flee their homes. The UK reiterates the urgent need for all sides to find a way to reduce violence. After decades of conflict, the people of Afghanistan want and deserve peace.

Africa: BBC Radio

Asked by *Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of BBC radio on (1) attitudes, and (2) lives, in Africa. [HL9233]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) strongly supports the BBC's mission to bring high quality and impartial news to African audiences, including where free speech is limited. FCDO investment into the BBC World Service via the World2020 programme has led to expansions in radio offerings for services in Nigeria, Eritrea and Ethiopia. In 2020, over 50% of Nigerians surveyed said that the BBC informs their world view, which demonstrates the impact of the World Service in one of its largest markets (GAM 2020*).

Our investment has also helped the BBC to produce its award-winning investigative programme, Africa Eye, which shines a light on issues that local journalists are unable to investigate. For instance, Africa Eye's 'Sex for Grades' investigation led to the Nigerian senate introducing a bill which would criminalise sexual harassment in universities.

*Source: BBC Global Audience Measure 2020

Aviation: Coronavirus

Asked by *Lord Empey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of potential new testing measures for Covid-19 for air travellers entering the United Kingdom; and whom they have consulted about this (1) nationally, and (2) internationally. [HL9183]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government is actively working on the practicalities of using testing to release people from self-isolation earlier than 14 days. The Global Travel Taskforce (GTT) is working at pace to consider how testing, technology and innovation can drive a recovery for international travel and tourism, without adding to infection risk or infringing on our overall NHS test capacity.

In its work, the GTT will therefore seek to consult representatives from across the travel sector.

Borders: Northern Ireland

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have with the Northern Ireland Executive about the preparedness of ports of entry in Northern Ireland for the end of transition period. [HL9438]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: Northern Ireland Office and Defra Ministers and officials continue to engage regularly with the Northern Ireland Executive as we get on with delivering the Protocol and preparing for the end of the transition period.

The Northern Ireland Executive and its relevant departments are critical partners and our engagement is intended to enhance understanding of approach and ensure appropriate planning.

We continue to support the Northern Ireland Executive on implementing the Northern Ireland Protocol in a way that minimises any frictions on the flow of agrifood trade and works for Northern Ireland businesses and citizens. This work includes providing support to deliver the sanitary and phytosanitary operational arrangements necessary post-transition, including all elements relating to the people, processes, IT and facilities at Northern Ireland Points of Entry.

We have already reached an in-principle agreement to fund the costs of implementing agrifood requirements in Northern Ireland, as part of our wider commitment in the New Decade, New Approach agreement to engage with the Executive on the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland and the Protocol as we examine funding options to support preparedness.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: NATO

Asked by Lord Lancaster of Kimbolton

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they are supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina's preparations for full membership of NATO. [[HL9300](#)]

Baroness Sugg: The UK supports Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) Euro-Atlantic trajectory. We welcomed the agreement by the Presidency to submit a tailored 'Reform Programme' to NATO in December 2019, which secured further NATO cooperation and unblocked defence reform. We are encouraging BiH to submit a further Reform Programme for 2020-2021 and to work with NATO - both in Brussels and through the NATO Office in Sarajevo - to draw on best practice. Bilaterally, the UK will continue to build on our strong defence relations and support capacity building and modernisation of the Armed Forces of BiH, including upgrading military training facilities, improving military selection and supporting gender integration. Such reforms will help BiH bring their defence and security sector in line with Euro-Atlantic standards.

Burkina Faso: Forced Marriage

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Burkina Faso on the issue of forced marriage. [[HL9234](#)]

Baroness Sugg: Whilst we have made no representations on this issue to the Government of Burkina Faso the UK is committed to supporting women and girls across the Sahel, ensuring they have access to the opportunities needed to participate in the social, economic and political life of their communities. Up to £30 million of our contribution to Education Cannot Wait, the global fund for education in emergencies, is earmarked for the Sahel and surrounding countries to help children (at least 50% girls) in fragile areas access education.

The UK Government strongly condemns forced marriage and has a dedicated Forced Marriage Unit leading efforts to combat it both at home and abroad. The Unit works with our High Commissions and Embassies overseas to support vulnerable British nationals who may be potential victims of forced marriage. The UK is also a leader in global efforts to end child marriage. Between 2015 and 2020 we invested £39m in UN and civil society programmes. This included over £26m to the UNICEF-UNFPA Global Programme to End Child Marriage, which operates in 12 countries including Burkina Faso. The programme supported development of the National Strategy to Prevent and Eliminate Child Marriage and the National Coalition Against Child Marriage, which brings together more than 60 civil society organisations to undertake advocacy and community mobilization, engaging opinion leaders, media, youth and women leaders at the national level.

Care Homes: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the reported complaint made by the chairman of the trustees of the Fairfield Residential Home in Oxford, that Covid-19 testing swabs were not delivered and that symptomatic carers who are self-isolating have to make a 120 mile journey in order to be tested. [[HL4375](#)]

Lord Bethell: The Department recognises that this occurred due to an error which has since been rectified. All failed deliveries were replaced and we now have more than 500 test sites around the United Kingdom with the median distance people travel to sites at just 3.3 miles.

The adult social care sector has been, and continues to be, one of our highest priorities for the rollout of testing, and care homes have been one of the first groups to be given access to repeat asymptomatic testing.

Asymptomatic testing in care homes testing has not stopped, while any care home resident or member of staff with symptoms will continue to be able to immediately access a free test.

We are issuing more than 120,000 tests a day to care homes across the country prioritising high priority outbreak areas.

Cats

Asked by Lord Black of Brentwood

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of unowned cats in the UK. [HL9177]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The Government continues to engage closely with cat welfare organisations, such as Cats Protection, to understand what can be done to improve the health and welfare of cats in the UK, including stray and feral cats. While we do not hold data on the size of the unowned cat population, Cats Protection is running the Cat Watch project which, among other things, aims to provide an estimate of the nation's unowned cat population.

China: Uighurs

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 14 October (HL8617), what prosecutions for breaches of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, in connection with Uighur slave labour, are either under way or being prepared; what assessment they have made of the United States' Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act; and what plans, if any, they have to introduce similar rules as contained in that Act on imports from China. [HL9168]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires certain businesses with a turnover of £36m or more, equating to approximately 16,000 businesses, to report annually on the steps they have taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.

The prevalence of modern slavery and complexity of global supply chains means that it is highly unlikely that any company is immune from the risks of modern slavery. Section 54 therefore does not require organisations to certify that their global supply chains are 'slavery free' or that the Government verifies the content of modern slavery statements.

The Government continues to strengthen its approach and following an Independent Review of the Modern Slavery Act, the Home Office ran a public consultation on a range of proposals to strengthen Section 54. On 22 September 2020, the Government published its response to this consultation and announced plans to strengthen the Act and develop options for civil penalties for non-compliance in line with the ongoing development of the Single Enforcement Body for employment rights. The Government has committed to implementing these changes when parliamentary time allows.

The Government has serious concerns about the situation in Xinjiang, with credible reports of the use of forced labour. It has always been the case that, where we have concerns, we raise them, as we did on this issue at the UN Third Committee on 6 October.

We advise businesses with supply chain links in Xinjiang to conduct appropriate due diligence to satisfy themselves that their activities do not support, or risk being seen to be supporting, any human rights violations or abuses.

We do not currently have plans to ban imports from Xinjiang.

Coronavirus: Ethnic Groups

Asked by Lord Pendry

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address any racial inequalities which have occurred as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. [HL7983]

Baroness Berridge: The Government has implemented significant measures to reduce the spread of the virus in all communities, especially for people who may be at higher risk. This includes ensuring that those in high-contact professions get targeted testing and taking appropriate and proportionate steps to risk assess NHS ethnic minority staff.

The Minister for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch MP, is also working with the Race Disparity Unit and the Department for Health and Social Care to take forward work on the findings of the Public Health England Report "Covid-19: review of disparities in risks and outcomes". This includes reviewing the effectiveness and impact of current actions being undertaken by government departments and their agencies to directly lessen disparities in infection and death rates of Covid-19.

Coronavirus: Intensive Care

Asked by Lord Newby

To ask Her Majesty's Government what are their planning assumptions for the maximum number of critical care beds that will be required for Covid-19 patients in Nightingale Hospitals in (1) Manchester, (2) Sunderland, and (3) Harrogate. [HL9308]

Lord Bethell: The maximum number of Nightingale beds in Manchester is 633, in Sunderland it is 460 and in Harrogate it is 495 beds.

These numbers will augment existing critical care beds in each region to provide surge capacity.

All Nightingale hospitals have the ability to care for ventilated patients, however, clinical models can adapt to local need. The local clinical leaders will plan how to use the Nightingale capacity based on local conditions, considering the needs of all patients requiring National Health Service care.

Coronavirus: Schools

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to provide schools in England with access to Covid-19 tests. [HL8336]

Lord Bethell: We are committed to supporting schools to stay open and as part of this, we are continuing to improve the testing system to ensure teaching staff can get priority access when they have symptoms. It is important that teachers who experience potential Covid-19 symptoms quickly get clarity on whether they have the virus so those without it can safely return to their classes.

All schools in England have also been provided with a small number of home testing kits to be offered in the exceptional circumstance that a school believes a pupil or importantly, a staff member who is experiencing Covid-19 symptoms, will not be able to access a test by another route. Schools are now able to re-order a small number of kits, proportionate to their size, should they be running low or have run out of kits. They are able to place these orders every 21 days.

Coronavirus: Screening

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many confirmed Covid-19 cases were recorded under (1) pillar 1, and (2) pillar 2, testing in (a) each London Borough, and (b) the City of London, on each day since records began. [HL6356]

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many confirmed Covid-19 cases were recorded under (1) pillar 1, and (2) pillar 2, testing in the City of Bradford on each day since records began. [HL6357]

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many confirmed Covid-19 cases were recorded under (1) pillar 1, and (2) pillar 2, testing in the City of Leeds on each day since records began. [HL6358]

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many confirmed Covid-19 cases were recorded under (1) pillar 1, and (2) pillar 2, testing in Nottingham on each day since records began. [HL6359]

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many confirmed Covid-19 cases were recorded under (1) pillar 1, and (2) pillar 2, testing in Coventry on each day since records began. [HL6360]

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many confirmed Covid-19 cases were recorded under (1) pillar 1, and (2) pillar 2, testing in Birmingham on each day since records began. [HL6361]

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many confirmed Covid-19 cases were recorded under (1)

pillar 1, and (2) pillar 2, testing in Derby on each day since records began. [HL6410]

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many confirmed Covid-19 cases were recorded under (1) pillar 1, and (2) pillar 2, testing in Wolverhampton on each day since records began. [HL6411]

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many confirmed Covid-19 cases were recorded under (1) pillar 1, and (2) pillar 2, testing in Sunderland on each day since records began. [HL6412]

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many confirmed Covid-19 cases were recorded under (1) pillar 1, and (2) pillar 2, testing in Liverpool on each day since records began. [HL6413]

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many confirmed Covid-19 cases were recorded under (1) pillar 1, and (2) pillar 2, testing in Manchester on each day since records began. [HL6414]

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many confirmed Covid-19 cases were recorded under (1) pillar 1, and (2) pillar 2, testing in Southampton on each day since records began. [HL6415]

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many confirmed Covid-19 cases were recorded under (1) pillar 1, and (2) pillar 2, testing in Portsmouth on each day since records began. [HL6490]

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many confirmed Covid-19 cases were recorded under (1) pillar 1, and (2) pillar 2, testing in Brighton and Hove on each day since records began. [HL6491]

Lord Bethell: All upper tier local authorities have access to record level (including sex, age, occupation and postcode) test and case data.

We also publish public dashboards at a national, regional and local authority level and the Middle Layer Super Output Area (MSOA) map, which allows individuals to type in a postcode to find their MSOA and see how many cases there are in small areas of around 7,000 people.

Data on the 7 day average for the number of people with Covid-19 identified through an NHS lab (Pillar 1) or from commercial swab testing (Pillar 2) back to March 2020 is available as part of the NHS Digital Progression Dashboard to upper tier local authority level and is

available in an online only format through the NHS Digital website.

Asked by Lord Beecham

To ask Her Majesty's Government why they have not published data on the results of community testing for Covid-19; and whether they plan to publish this data. [HL6345]

Lord Bethell: The Department regularly publishes the results of our community testing programmes.

Community testing for research purposes falls within Pillar 4, and the number of tests processed is available on the Testing tab of the Coronavirus Data page on GOV.UK, with positive cases reported on the Cases tab of the same webpage.

This data brings together various studies which are outlined in the Covid-19 Surveillance guidance page of GOV.UK, with specific data and analysis from each study available for download.

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government how tests for Covid-19 taken at Lighthouse Laboratories are linked to an individual's NHS number. [HL6689]

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government what percentage of tests for Covid-19 taken at Lighthouse Laboratories are linked to an individual's NHS number. [HL6690]

Lord Bethell: An individual provides demographic information when booking a test (e.g. name, date of birth, gender, postcode and can input their NHS Number too). Once this is matched with a result in the National Pathology Exchange (NPEX), NPEX looks up this information in NHS Digital's Personal Demographics Service to find a match to an NHS Number. If there is a match, then an approved piece of software is used to push these results into that individual's general practice record. If this fails, then NHS Digital will attempt to match the data using the Master Patient Service instead.

The vast majority of tests taken for English citizens at Lighthouse Laboratories are linked to NHS Numbers using the demographic information that is provided (name, date of birth, gender and postcode). The devolved administrations are responsible for ensuring this happens in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Asked by Lord Warner

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many Covid-19 laboratory tests, excluding antibody tests, in England were completed in each calendar month of 2020, up to and including August. [HL7909]

Lord Bethell: The Government does not publish data in the format requested. The Government publishes information, from 20 March onwards, on daily tests processed and daily testing capacity at GOV.UK. We provide data on daily testing capacity by swab tests, using polymerase chain reaction assay, within pillars 1, 2, and 4

to show if someone has Covid-19; and antibody testing of a blood sample within pillar 3 and pillar 4 to show if people have antibodies from having had Covid-19.

Courts: Video Conferencing

Asked by Lord Wasserman

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many (1) magistrates' courts, (2) crown courts, (3) civil courts and (4) family courts were using the Cloud Video Platform as of 1 October 2020. [HL9203]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook:

<i>Number of courts by jurisdiction that have reported using CVP as of 1 October 2020</i>	<i>No.</i>
Civil	75
Crown	45
Family	8
Magistrates'	103
Multi-jurisdictional court centres	51
Tribunals	37
Total	319

Caveats:

- Data are taken from a live management information system and can change over time.
- Data are taken off manual returns.
- Data are management information and are not subject to the same level of checks as official statistics.
- Data provided are the most recent available and for that reason might differ slightly from any previously published information.
- Data has not been cross referenced with case files.
- Although care is taken when processing and analysing the data, the details are subject to inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale MI system. It is the best data that is available and is subject to significant underreporting and some duplication.
- The data only looks at data between 18 May 2020 and 01 October 2020.

Cryptography

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the status of technical capability notices in the light of the international statement End-to-end encryption and public safety, signed by the Home Secretary on 11 October. [HL9252]

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether any technical capability notices have been issued under

section 253 of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016; if so, (1) how many, and (2) over what period; and whether any such notices have had the desired effect in each circumstance. [HL9253]

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether a technical capability notice would be unsuitable in the cases cited in the international statement End-to-end encryption and public safety, signed by the Home Secretary on 11 October. [HL9254]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Investigatory Powers Act 2016 allows the Government to place obligations on telecommunications operators or postal operators through a Technical Capability Notice.

The Act governs these notices and provides extensive privacy safeguards and a robust oversight regime, including approval of notices by an independent Judicial Commissioner.

The respective Codes of Practice for the Interception of Communications, Communications Data and Equipment Interference set out that the Secretary of State may give a relevant telecommunications operator or postal operator a Technical Capability Notice, the purpose of which is to maintain a technical capability to ensure when a warrant is served or authorisation or notice is given, companies can give effect to it securely and quickly.

For reasons of national security, it would not be appropriate to disclose the number of Technical Capability Notices, or the specific circumstances in which they may be issued.

The UK Government has set out, in detail, how these particular powers can be used, including through the Written testimony of the Director of National Security to the US Senate Judiciary Committee on 10 December 2019. This Testimony can be read in full here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-letter-to-mark-zuckerberg/written-testimony-of-chloe-squires-director-national-security-home-office>

The Testimony details the potentially catastrophic impact on public safety where companies deploy end-to-end encryption in such a way that precludes access to the content of their users' communications under any circumstances. It makes clear that we believe that the only way to make progress on this shared challenge is to engender ongoing, detailed dialogue with tech companies that focuses on reasonable proposals. We believe such engagement is likely to identify opportunities that, without compromising the wider safety and security of systems for lawful users, can provide ways to gain specific, targeted and lawful access to information about what terrorists, child sex abusers and the perpetrators of other serious crimes are doing online.

The international statement on end-to-end encryption and public safety, published on 11 October, affirms this position. It calls on tech companies to work with governments to find solutions to ensure the safety of our citizens without eroding user privacy or cyber security.

Customs Officers

Asked by Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of how many officials have been (1) recruited, and (2) redeployed to deliver the Government's planned customs and border arrangements with the EU; and, if they have made such an assessment, how this compares with the number of officials employed by the European Commission. [HL9186]

Lord True: Structured recruitment and training plans are ongoing to ensure that officials will be in place to deliver the planned customs and borders arrangements with the EU, once we leave the customs union on 31 December 2020.

The European Commission does not have operational responsibility for customs and borders and so a meaningful comparison between UK and European Commission officials cannot be made.

Debts: Developing Countries

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the risk of countries defaulting on repayments as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. [HL9236]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Government is closely monitoring the impact of the crisis on the debt situation in developing countries, including through our membership of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and Paris Club. It is clear that the Covid-19 pandemic is placing extraordinary pressures on the finances of low and middle income countries. Recognising this, the G20 has taken action to support these countries, agreeing the landmark DSSI (Debt Service Suspension Initiative). The DSSI provides a suspension of debt repayments to eligible countries so they can focus resources on their coronavirus response. The UK is also pleased with the in-principle agreement by the G20 to a Common Framework for debt restructuring. This is crucial to ensuring coordinated debt relief to countries which require it on a case-by-case basis, with fair burden sharing between all official and private creditors.

Doctors Laboratory: Conditions of Employment

Asked by Lord Adonis

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have received, if any, about poor employment practices at The Doctors Laboratory. [HL5575]

Lord Bethell: At present the Department has not received any representation with regards to employment practices at The Doctors Laboratory. The employment

practices of The Doctors Laboratory are not a matter the Department can comment on, as neither the Department nor the National Health Service employ the staff working at The Doctors Laboratory.

The Doctors Laboratory is a private laboratory that provides pathology testing capacity to a number of hospitals in the London 2 path lab network.

Asked by Lord Adonis

Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to conduct a review of employment practices at The Doctors Laboratory. [HL5576]

Lord Bethell: The employment practices of The Doctors Laboratory are not a matter the Department can comment on, as neither the Department nor the National Health Service employ the staff working at The Doctors Laboratory.

The Doctors Laboratory is a private laboratory that provides pathology testing capacity to a number of hospitals in the London 2 path lab network. As such we are not involved in their employment practices and would not have protocols in place about how they manage their staff.

Duty Free Allowances

Asked by Lord Allen of Kensington

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on (1) jobs, and (2) public finances, of the ending of participation in the VAT Retail Export Scheme; and what action they plan to take to offset any such impact. [HL9165]

Asked by Lord Allen of Kensington

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the ending of air-side tax free concessions on (1) jobs, and (2) public finances; and what action they plan to take to offset any such impact. [HL9166]

Asked by Lord Allen of Kensington

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the benefit to the UK economy of tax-free shopping being available to non-EU visitors, and (2) the impact of ending participation in (a) the VAT Retail Export Scheme, and (b) air-side tax free concessions, on (i) the number of tourist visits to the UK, (ii) the total shopping spend of tourists visiting the UK, and (iii) the viability of the UK retail sector. [HL9167]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Ahead of the end of the transition period, the Government has announced the VAT and excise duty treatment of goods purchased by individuals for personal use and carried in their luggage arriving from or going overseas (passengers). The following rules will apply from 1 January 2021:

- Passengers travelling from Great Britain to any destination outside the United Kingdom (UK) will be able

to purchase duty-free excise goods once they have passed security controls at ports, airports, and international rail stations.

- Personal allowances will apply to passengers entering Great Britain from a destination outside of the UK, with alcohol allowances significantly increased.

- The VAT Retail Export Scheme (RES) in Great Britain will not be extended to EU residents and will be withdrawn for all passengers.

- The concessionary treatment on tax-free sales for non-excise goods will be removed across the UK.

The Government published a consultation 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 Government is also continuing to meet and discuss with stakeholders following the announcement of these policies.

The detailed rationale for these changes are included in the written ministerial statement and summary of responses to the recent consultation. A technical note has also been issued to stakeholders to expand on this document and to respond to issues raised by stakeholders.

HMRC estimate that VAT RES refunds cost around £0.5 billion in VAT in 2019 for around 1.2 million non-EU visitors. In 2019 the ONS estimate there were substantially more EU visitors (24.8 million) than non-EU passengers (16.0 million) to the UK. This implies an extension to EU residents would significantly increase the cost by up to an estimated £0.9 billion. This would result in a large amount of deadweight loss by subsidising spending from EU visitors which already happens without a refund mechanism in place, potentially taking the total cost up to around £1.4 billion per annum.

The concessionary treatment on tax-free sales currently affects airports that fly to non-EU destinations. The extension of duty-free sales to EU bound passengers will be a significant boost to all airports in England, Scotland and Wales, including smaller regional airports which have not been able to offer duty-free to the EU before.

HMRC estimate that around £150 million of VAT is not charged as a result of tax-free airside sales. As with the VAT RES, extending the relief to the EU would significantly increase the cost of the scheme and result in a large amount of deadweight loss by subsidising spending from EU-bound passengers which already happens.

The final costings will be subject to scrutiny by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility and will be set out at the next forecast.

The Government also recognises the challenges the aviation sector is facing as it recovers from the impacts of Covid-19 and has supported the sector throughout the pandemic, and continues to do so, including schemes to raise capital, flexibilities with tax bills, and financial support for employees.

Elections: Coronavirus

Asked by *Baroness Eaton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that members of the public who have been instructed to self-isolate due to the Covid-19 pandemic on polling day will still be able to vote in the 2021 local elections. [HL9182]

Lord True: The Government is working with the electoral community and Public Health England to identify and resolve challenges involved in delivering the May 2021 elections, including supporting Returning Officers to ensure that polling stations are safe and Covid-secure places to vote. People will be able participate in the polls safely, and in a way of their choice, whether by post, proxy or in-person. We are considering options to support voters who are instructed to self-isolate shortly before and on the day of the poll, and will update Parliament in the usual way.

Electoral Commission

Asked by *Lord Kennedy of Southwark*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment, if any, they have made of the effectiveness of the Electoral Commission. [HL9190]

Lord True: The Electoral Commission is independent of Government and accountable to Parliament via the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission.

The Government is committed to making sure that elections are secure and fit for the modern age. As part of this, we keep the Electoral Commission's role and powers under review to ensure it is able to discharge its responsibilities effectively.

Equality: Impact Assessments

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of the Public Sector Equality Duty in respect of (1) undertaking, and (2) publishing, Equality Impact Assessments on Government policies. [HL8544]

Baroness Berridge: The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) is a world leading policy that places a proactive equality duty on public bodies, and those exercising public functions, to consider the potential effects of key decisions on groups with protected characteristics. Government departments are each individually responsible for ensuring their compliance with the PSED.

Assessments of significant policy and operational changes are routinely undertaken by Departments and other public bodies as part of PSED compliance. There is however no statutory requirement to publish assessments and decisions on publication are a matter for the public body concerned, given the particular circumstances.

Ethnic Groups: Coronavirus

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to address the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on BAME communities. [HL8541]

Baroness Berridge: The Government has implemented significant measures to reduce the spread of the virus in all communities, especially for people who may be at higher risk. This includes ensuring that those in high-contact professions get targeted testing and translating key public health messages into different languages.

The Minister for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch MP, is also leading cross-government work on the findings of the Public Health England Report "Covid-19: review of disparities in risks and outcomes". This includes reviewing the effectiveness and impact of current actions being undertaken by government departments and their agencies to directly lessen disparities in infection and death rates of Covid-19. She will shortly be submitting her first quarterly report to the Prime Minister updating him on progress with this work.

Ethnic Groups: Equality

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the research published by Ageing Better as part of their Who is at risk of missing out? project in relation to the inequalities between older BAME and white communities. [HL7721]

Baroness Berridge: This Government is committed to tackle prejudice, racism and discrimination - and to improve the quality of data and evidence about the types of barriers faced by people from different backgrounds to help drive effective and lasting change. That is why we have established a new Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities. This cross-government commission will examine all aspects of continuing racial and ethnic inequalities in Britain.

In addition, following the publication of the report 'COVID 19: Review of disparities in risks and outcomes', Minister for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch was asked by the Prime Minister to act on its findings. As part of this the Cabinet Office's Race Disparity Unit is working closely with academics, scientists and analysts, to establish emerging data patterns and trends in regards to the impact of Covid-19 on ethnic minority communities.

Factors that are being considered include age and sex, occupation, obesity, comorbidities, geography, and ethnicity.

Freezing of Assets: Myanmar

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of Burma Campaign's response to the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation Annual

review April 2019 to March 2020, published on 9 October, in particular, the concerns of that Campaign that sanctions targeting 16 individuals from the Burmese military and security services have not resulted in any reported assets being frozen; whether they intend to publish details of any assets frozen as the result of those sanctions; and if not, why not. [[HL9213](#)]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: HM Treasury received correspondence from Burma Campaign UK regarding the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI)'s Annual Review on 13 October 2020, and will respond directly to the Campaign in due course.

Gender Recognition

Asked by Lord Lucas

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Ministerial Statement by Baroness Berridge on 22 September (HLWS457), what steps they are taking to ensure that the policies of all (1) departments, (2) police forces, (3) schools, (4) NHS trusts, and (5) other public bodies, align with the outcome of the review of the Gender Recognition Act 2004; what plans they have to ensure that (a) such policies define sex and gender reassignment as protected characteristics, and (b) the exemptions under the Equality Act 2010 are used in the interests of those having such protected characteristics. [[HL8417](#)]

Baroness Berridge: The Government announced its response to the consultation on the Gender Recognition Act via Written Ministerial Statement, and published the analysis report on 22 September. The announcement was that there will be no changes to the GRA legislation, but that we will be making the process less bureaucratic by digitising the application process and reducing the fee. There is therefore no need to review policies of all departments, police forces, schools, NHS trusts or other public bodies as the law will not change.

The Government believes that the protection of single-sex spaces, as provided for in the Equality Act, is important. The Government reiterated in their recent response to the Gender Recognition Act consultation that the Equality Act provides crucial protections for sex and gender reassignment as protected characteristics.

Gender Recognition Act 2004

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the Gender Recognition Act 2004 on trans people. [[HL8600](#)]

Baroness Berridge: We want transgender people to be free to live and to prosper in modern Britain. We have looked carefully at the issues raised in the consultation, including the impact of the Gender Recognition Act 2004 on trans people. It is the Government's view that the balance struck in this legislation is correct, in that there

are proper checks and balances in the system and also support for people who want to change their legal sex.

We will make the gender recognition certificate process kinder and more straightforward. We will cut bureaucracy by enabling applications via gov.uk and will reduce the fee from £140 to a nominal amount. We know from our research that improving healthcare support is a priority for transgender people. That's why three gender clinics will become operational this year, which should see waiting lists cut by around 1,600 patients by 2022 and why the GEO is providing funding for Dr Michael Brady, the UK's National LGBT Health Advisor, and working with him and the NHS to improve transgender people's experience.

Gender Recognition: Children

Asked by Lord Lucas

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Ministerial Statement by Baroness Berridge on 22 September (HLWS457), what plans they have to commission research on how to support children with gender identity issues. [[HL8418](#)]

Baroness Berridge: The NHS has already started a series of long-term studies to better understand the outcomes of children and young people who are referred to gender identity services. NHS England are also currently reviewing the evidence base related to young people on the gender dysphoria pathway, including the evidence base that underpins the use and administration of puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones.

Dr Hilary Cass, OBE, is leading an independent review into gender identity services for children and young people. This will examine the recent rise in the number of children seeking treatment and how care can be improved for children and young people. The review will report back with recommendations next year.

General Practitioners: Folkestone

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many GP surgeries in the Folkestone area are not delivering a full range of services; whether this is occurring in other parts of the country; and whether such surgeries not delivering a full range of services is pursuant to any NHS strategy. [[HL9205](#)]

Lord Bethell: General practitioner (GP) practices in Kent and elsewhere across the country have been allowed to reduce delivery of some services as part of the health system's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Some contractual requirements were suspended from March 2020 onwards to free up time in general practice, with GPs advised that they could defer some types of routine care, where needed. To reduce pressures on GPs we have simplified requirements for medical evidence and found alternative ways to provide information required for various services.

Georgia: NATO

Asked by *Lord Lancaster of Kimbolton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they are supporting Georgia's preparations for full membership of NATO. [HL9298]

Baroness Sugg: The Government supports NATO's Enlargement process. The UK plays an active role in the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP), a set of initiatives aimed at strengthening Georgia's defence capabilities and developing closer security cooperation and interoperability with NATO Allies. We will continue to provide substantial support, both bilaterally and through NATO. A recent example includes facilitating a NATO-level evaluation of the Georgian Coast Guard on board Royal Navy vessel HMS Dragon.

Green Homes Grant Scheme: Greater London

Asked by *Lord Krebs*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of households in London that are unable to insulate their lofts under the Green Homes Grant scheme due to a shortage of qualified contractors. [HL9193]

Lord Callanan: The Department is working closely with industry to ensure there are enough installers to meet demand. More than 1,000 companies are registered with TrustMark and are able to carry out measures under the Green Homes Grant Scheme, with more registering every day. We have changed the way the Simple Energy Advice website displays installers so that consumers can find increased numbers of registered tradespeople that can deliver work in their area.

Officials are working actively with TrustMark scheme providers and certification bodies to support installers to get certified as quickly as possible. They are also surveying installers who have not signed up to the scheme to understand what may be holding them back so we can address those issues.

The Department recently launched a £6.9m skills competition to provide training opportunities for the energy efficiency and low carbon heating supply chains to deliver works and scale up to meet additional consumer demand.

Health Services: Counter-terrorism

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by Medact *False Positives: the Prevent counter-extremism policy in healthcare*, published on 2 July, particularly its finding that there is evidence that Prevent undermines key duties of health professionals, including (1) confidentiality, (2) duty of care to the patient, and (3) consent. [HL9354]

Lord Bethell: The Department has noted the concerns raised in the report by Medact *False Positives: the Prevent counter-extremism policy in healthcare*. Healthcare professionals have a duty of care to safeguard patients who may be vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. Prevent is a statutory duty for National Health Service trusts and foundation trusts, whose staff may need to share personal information to ensure that a person at risk of radicalisation is given appropriate support. Information sharing is governed by legislation and assessed on a case-by-case basis, which considers whether the informed consent of the individual can be obtained and that the proposed sharing is necessary, proportionate and lawful.

HIV Infection

Asked by *Lord Black of Brentwood*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many new HIV infections have been recorded in each of the last ten years, broken down by age group; and what proportion of those infections were a clinical late diagnosis. [HL9178]

Lord Bethell: The number of HIV diagnoses in the United Kingdom and the proportion made at late stage of infection by age group for the past 10 years are presented in the national HIV tables which are attached due to the size of the data.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

National HIV tables [FORMATTED HIV_National_Tables_2019 (1).xls]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-10-14/HL9178>

Hong Kong: National Security

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether their view has changed as to whether the national security legislation in Hong Kong constitutes a breach of the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration; and why British judges are permitted to serve in Hong Kong courts that have responsibility for the implementation of that legislation. [HL9212]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As the Foreign Secretary said in Parliament on 1 July, the enactment of this legislation, imposed by the authorities in Beijing on the people of Hong Kong, constitutes a clear and serious breach of the Joint Declaration. The UK Government continues to make clear our concerns to the Chinese and Hong Kong authorities.

The UK judiciary is independent of the UK Government. The President of the Supreme Court issued a statement on 17 July noting "The Supreme Court supports the judges of Hong Kong in their commitment to safeguard judicial independence and the rule of law. It

will continue to assess the position in Hong Kong as it develops, in discussion with the UK Government. Whether judges of the Supreme Court can continue to serve as judges in Hong Kong will depend on whether such service remains compatible with judicial independence and the rule of law."

Housing: Construction

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

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Lord Greenhalgh on 1 October (HL8296) and on 19 October (HL8828), what assessment they have made of the impact of tackling the practices of 'land banking' and 'intentional delay' on the market absorption rates in the housing market. [HL9442]

Lord Greenhalgh: Sir Oliver Letwin's 2018 independent Review of Build Out was clear that developers will only build new homes at a rate that the market can absorb. That is why our planning white paper sets out proposals to revise national policy to encourage masterplans and design codes for substantial development sites to see a variety of development types by different builders come forward at once. This will help speed up build out by ensuring new development can appeal to a broad range of market needs. We are also exploring further options to speed up the build out of residential development as part of the implementation of the white paper.

Immigration: Employment

*Asked by **Lord Green of Deddington***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of young workers overseas who would qualify as "new entrants" to the UK labour market under the planned criteria for their points-based immigration system. [HL9273]

*Asked by **Lord Green of Deddington***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of young workers from overseas who will be recruited by British employers to work in the UK as "new entrants" as part of their points-based immigration system. [HL9274]

*Asked by **Lord Green of Deddington***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to limit the number of "new entrant" workers permitted to migrate to the UK for work; and if so, what is that limit. [HL9275]

*Asked by **Lord Green of Deddington***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they plan for the proposed "new entrant" aspect of their points-based immigration system to interact with the Kickstart Scheme. [HL9277]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government set out its plans for the UK's Points-Based Immigration System in the February Policy Statement and the July Further Details document, including the salary requirement for new entrants to the UK's labour market, the definition of which is based on the advice of the Migration Advisory Committee.

An impact assessment was published to accompany the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill, and a further impact assessment will be published to accompany the Immigration Rules for the new Skilled Worker route when they are laid. There will be no numerical limit on the number of new entrant workers who can be sponsored; however, the offer is limited in length and new entrants must meet mandatory Skilled Worker route requirements.

The Government encourages employers to look to recruit resident workers wherever possible. The Kickstart scheme offers financial support to employers who create jobs for young Universal Credit claimants. This support is not available for sponsoring migrant new entrants. Employers will need to meet the full wage costs of their sponsored new entrants, as well as paying the Immigration Skills Charge. This provides a double financial incentive to recruit unemployed young people who are already in the UK, rather than looking to overseas recruitment.

International Development Select Committee: Dominic Raab

*Asked by **Lord Judd***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs has been invited to attend a session of the House of Commons International Development Committee; if so, whether any such invitation has been accepted; and if not, why not. [HL9228]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs has been invited to attend a session of the House of Commons International Development Committee. He has informed the Committee of his intention to give evidence at the earliest opportunity.

Local Government: Coronavirus

*Asked by **Baroness Eaton***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of powers under the Coronavirus Act 2020 to enable councils to hold remote meetings; and whether they plan to change the Local Government Act 1972 to allow councils to retain these powers beyond the Covid-19 pandemic. [HL9181]

Lord Greenhalgh: Local authorities have responded magnificently to the challenge of ensuring vital council

business continues by conducting council meetings remotely during these unprecedented times.

It is widely acknowledged that the remote meetings regulations have helped local authorities to make business critical decisions in a democratic way whilst protecting the health and safety of their members, officers and the public.

Government will be considering carefully the case for extending these regulations as necessary in the coming months.

Migrant Workers: Interpreters and Teachers

Asked by Baroness Coussins

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the recommendations in the report by the Migration Advisory Committee Review of the Shortage Occupation List: 2020, published on 29 September, that (1) teachers of modern foreign languages in secondary schools, and (2) interpreters, should be included on that list; and what plans they have to implement those recommendations. [HL9179]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The independent Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) published its report on the Shortage Occupation List on 29 September. This can be found here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-the-shortage-occupation-list-2020.

We are considering carefully its recommendations before commenting on whether specific occupations will be included and taking any final decisions.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

SOL 2020 - Report Final [SOL_2020_Report_Final.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-10-14/HL9179>

Musculoskeletal Disorders: Surgery

Asked by Lord Willis of Knaresborough

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether there is interventional procedure guidance available on CE marked vertebral body tethering systems from (1) the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, or (2) the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency; and for what kinds of patients, if any, vertebral body tethering will be made available. [HL9341]

Lord Bethell: There is no current interventional procedure guidance available on CE marked vertebral body tethering systems from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) or the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency. NICE will be producing interventional procedures guidance on vertebral body tethering for scoliosis. The guidance will involve the evaluation of the procedure, rather than looking at any specific device or product, and will focus on the safety and efficacy of the procedure. The expected

date for the publication of the guidance is still to be confirmed.

Nagorno Karabakh: Armed Conflict

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they, and the OSCE Minsk Group, are taking to implement and verify the latest ceasefire between Azerbaijan and Armenia; and whether the UK will provide observers. [HL9418]

Baroness Sugg: Although the UK is not a member of the OSCE Minsk Group, we continue to support the work of the Group and its Co-Chairs of France, the United States and Russia. The UK has delivered four statements at the OSCE urging a return to negotiations and for the ceasefire to be adhered to. The UK also supports the calls by the Minsk Group Co-Chairs to agree on a verification mechanism. The UK continues to support the relevant OSCE mechanisms working on this conflict, including through our secondment of qualified personnel. There has not yet been any request for international observers to be deployed to the region. Although we will continue to monitor the situation closely, the UK does not have plans to deploy any at this time.

New Businesses: Females

Asked by Baroness Mone

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Covid-19 pandemic, what actions and changes the Rose Review Board intends to recommend (1) to support, and (2) to increase the number of, female entrepreneurs. [HL9144]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: In response to the Alison Rose Review on Female Entrepreneurship, the government set its ambition to increase the number of female entrepreneurs by 600,000 by 2030. The government is working closely with industry to implement the recommendations of the Rose Review and will engage with further actions proposed by the Board.

HM Treasury launched the Investing in Women Code in 2019 to promote greater transparency in UK funding allocation, and the Code now has over 60 signatories from a wide range of financial institutions. Other actions include the industry-led Council for Investing in Female Entrepreneurs who coordinate industry action to increase investments in female-led firms and the work of industry partners launching new investment vehicles to encourage UK based institutional and private investors to further support and invest in female entrepreneurs.

NHS and Public Health England: Computer Software

Asked by Lord Borwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government, following the WannaCry ransomware attack on the NHS, what

instructions were provided to (1) NHS, and (2) Public Health England (PHE), staff about the importance of software updates; what assessment they have made of whether the PHE Excel errors, resulting in Covid-19 cases being unreported, were related to a lack of software updates; and what plans they have to ensure that PHE uses appropriate database software to record and analyse Covid-19 data in future. [HL8849]

Lord Bethell: All health and care organisations that have access to National Health Service patient data must annually complete NHS Digital's Data Security and Protection Toolkit. The Protection Toolkit includes guidance on how to manage out of date software. To meet the standard required, organisations must operate on supported systems or have plans in place to mitigate the risk such as segregating those machines from the network. NHSX and NHS Digital are also supporting NHS organisations to upgrade their existing Microsoft Windows operating systems to Windows 10 and to deploy Advanced Threat Protection. This gives oversight of cyber activity at device level across the NHS and whether they have installed updated software to protect them from cyber threats.

Northern Ireland Government

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made on the implementation of The New Decade, New Approach, published in January. [HL9435]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: Despite the need to focus efforts on Covid-19, good progress has been made in a number of areas, including the ending of the nursing strike, implementing the immigration rules changes set out in the deal and releasing £553 million of the £2 billion of funding in the deal. In addition, a Veteran's Commissioner for Northern Ireland has been appointed, and the Executive has reached agreement on the funding for a new Northern Ireland Graduate Entry Medical School in Derry/Londonderry.

Furthermore, the Joint Board has met twice and are planning a third meeting to take place in early 2021. The best way forward for Northern Ireland lies in thriving devolved institutions that support the Executive and Assembly to deliver on the issues that matter to the people of Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland Office: Senior Civil Servants

Asked by Baroness Kramer

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many BAME civil servants there are at the Northern Ireland Office at (1) SCS1, (2) SCS2, (3) SCS3, and (4) SCS4, grade. [HL9424]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The Northern Ireland Office is a small department with less than 200 staff. As

there are fewer than five BAME SCS members in the total cohort of 16 SCS grades in the department, figures cannot be provided in order to protect the privacy and identity of individuals concerned.

Offences Against Children: Internet

Asked by Lord Strasburger

To ask Her Majesty's Government what support and funding, if any, they are providing to (1) the Internet Watch Foundation, and (2) other organisations, working to prevent online sexual abuse; and when they plan to make any decisions about the future funding of the Internet Watch Foundation. [HL9255]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Nothing is more important than the safety of our children. The UK Government is committed to stamping out all forms of child sexual exploitation and abuse and continuing to be a global leader in tackling this threat.

The IWF acts as the UK's 'hotline' for online criminal content, including indecent images of children (IIOC), to which both members of the public and internet industry can report web pages containing such images. The IWF is funded by the UK internet industry, and also receives funding from the European Union. Officials regularly engage with the IWF, including on its funding position following the UK's exit from the EU. The Home Office supports the IWF's connection to the Child Abuse Image Database (CAID).

We support a range of organisations such as the Lucy Faithfull Foundation whose Stop It Now! campaign, signposting people concerned about their own behaviour, or the behaviour of others, towards effective and anonymous help provided by the Foundation, including through its confidential helpline and the recently launched webchat service.

We have also recently provided funding to South West Grid for Learning and Internet Matters to develop a new online hub, specifically designed to decrease the risk of online abuse, including child sexual abuse, perpetrated against children with vulnerabilities, including children with SEND, LGBTQ+ children, and looked after children.

Future decisions on Home Office spending are dependent on the outcome of the 2020 Comprehensive Spending Review.

Police: Ethnic Groups and Females

Asked by Lord Wasserman

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many police officers in England and Wales at the rank of Assistant Chief Constable or above are (1) female, and (2) from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background. [HL9339]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office collects and publishes data on the gender, ethnicity and rank of police officers in England and Wales by Police Force Area on an annual basis.

Data on the gender and ethnicity of Assistant Chief Constables and all officers holding more senior ranks are collected in an aggregate form as 'Chief Officer'. Chief officer includes Assistant Chief Constables, Deputy Chief Constables and Chief Constables, and their equivalents in the Metropolitan Police and City of London Police.

The latest available data, covering the situation as at 31 March 2020, can be found in of the Open Data Tables, published alongside the 'Police Workforce, England and Wales' statistics, available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-open-data-tables>.

We are in regular dialogue with policing partners about increasing the diversity of police leadership. We welcome the work being done by the College of Policing to prioritise improvements to leadership development.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Open Data Tables - 2020 - Police Workforce [open-data-table-police-workforce.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-10-19/HL9339>

Police: Video Conferencing

Asked by Lord Wasserman

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many police custody suites have been brought online since the introduction of the Cloud Video Platform. [HL9200]

Asked by Lord Wasserman

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of when all police forces in England and Wales will be connected to the Cloud Video Platform. [HL9201]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: In response to social distancing restrictions introduced due to Covid-19, the majority of Police Forces across England and Wales responded to the request from Her Majesty Courts and Tribunals Service to facilitate remote hearings via Cloud Video Platform. This was a short-term emergency response to allow hearings to continue to take place during the height of the pandemic and support court recovery.

The decision on the long-term use of Video to facilitate remote hearings from police custody suites remains an operational matter for police forces. However, we continue to engage with Criminal Justice partners on the long-term use of Cloud Video Platform as developments continue.

Political Parties: Finance

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment, if any, they have made of raising the recordable and

reportable donation thresholds for registered political parties in the UK. [HL9192]

Lord True: I refer the noble Lord to the answer given to PQ HL9043 on 26 October 2020.

Pregnancy: Screening

Asked by Baroness Stroud

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential impact of the national rollout of Non-Invasive Prenatal Testing on the prevalence of sex-selective abortion; and what plans they have to suspend the rollout of that scheme until they have carried out a review of that potential impact. [HL9326]

Lord Bethell: The United Kingdom National Screening Committee's (UK NSC) recommendation on the use of non-invasive prenatal testing (NIPT), is as a contingent test in the National Health Service Fetal Anomaly Screening Programme for Down's syndrome, Edward's syndrome and Patau's syndrome only.

NIPT has not been recommended for the use of any other genetic marker, including sex.

There are no plans to suspend the rollout of the NIPT screening programme. NIPT will be introduced as an 'evaluative roll out'. This means the programme will be able to monitor how the introduction of NIPT is working at each stage of the roll out and make any changes to the pathway and screening processes quickly and effectively. The UK NSC will be kept informed about progress with the evaluation.

Protective Clothing: Contracts

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they awarded any contracts for the provision of personal protective equipment to Hubei Haixin Protective Products Group Co., Ltd; if so, what plans they have to publish the details of those contracts; what was each contract's value; and what was supplied. [HL9264]

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government which companies that have been awarded contracts to supply personal protective equipment to the NHS have sourced stock from Hubei Haixin Protective Products Co., Ltd. [HL9265]

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether any personal protective equipment that was manufactured by Hubei Haixin Protective Products Group Co., Ltd has been bought by the NHS; and if so, how much (1) that equipment has cost in total, and (2) they have bought, to date. [HL9268]

Lord Bethell: The Department has no contract with Hubei Haixin Protective Products Group Co. Investigation of stocks of personal protective equipment (PPE) received from suppliers at the central distribution warehouse for PPE in Daventry show no record of items referring to this name.

NHS Supply Chain, which has its own framework contracts for the supply of PPE into the National Health Service, reports that it holds no contracts with Hubei Haixin Protective Products Group Co Ltd and that its records show that this company is not used by its existing suppliers.

Public Transport: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Bradshaw

To ask Her Majesty's Government what scientific evidence supports their advice to "avoid using public transport" in certain situations as part of their Covid-19 mitigation measures. [HL9356]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The evidence indicates increased risks of transmission at close quarters in enclosed spaces. SAGE advice has provided evidence of an enhanced risk of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 for both transport workers and passengers.

Due to indoor contact between a high number of users from different households, the overall weight of evidence across the board is towards a significant risk on public transport when social distancing is not possible. Mitigations to reduce the risk on the public transport network include:

- face coverings;
- social distancing, such as reduced capacity of vehicles and out-of-service seats;
- hand sanitation provisions in stations and on vehicles;
- regular cleaning and ventilation.

However, given the many variables to each physical setting and environment there is insufficient evidence on the extent to which these measures fully mitigate the risk in any given specific transport context. We have been clear that it is the responsibility of individual transport operators to ensure they are taking necessary mitigations to ensure they comply with health and safety regulations, for the wellbeing of both their passengers and their staff.

We are also asking members of the public to follow safer travel guidance to minimise the risk of transmission to themselves and others, which includes only travelling to access work, education or open amenities and services in areas subject to enhanced local intervention and guidance to avoid travelling into and out of Local Alert Level Very High areas unless for education, work or caring responsibilities.

Rail Review

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect to publish the outcome of the Williams Rail Review. [HL9248]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government is committed to bringing forward vital sector-wide reforms and commissioned Keith Williams to carry out the first root and branch review of the rail industry in a generation. The Review was in its final stages at the outbreak of Covid-19. The Government views the purpose of the reforms as important as ever, but further work needs to be done now to reflect the impact of Covid-19 on the sector and we continue to examine a range of options to reform the railways. The Government will publish a White Paper with details on the Government's plans for rail reform once the course of the pandemic becomes clearer.

Railways: Countryside

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential social benefits of reopening railways in the countryside. [HL9232]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: As part of the levelling-up agenda, the Government announced in January that it has pledged £500 million for the Restoring Your Railway fund to deliver its manifesto commitment and start reopening lines and stations, reconnecting smaller communities, regenerating local economies and improving access to jobs, homes and education.

We recognise that improved connectivity has social benefits that are hard to quantify and are therefore not explicitly reported in terms of social value.

Railways: North of England

Asked by Lord Adonis

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to proceed with the electrification of a Transpennine rail route from Manchester to Leeds; which towns and cities they plan to serve by such a route; and when such work would commence. [HL9208]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: In July 2020, the Government released £589m of funding for design and development work to upgrade and electrify the Transpennine main line from Manchester to York via Huddersfield and Leeds, under the Transpennine Route Upgrade programme (TRU). This will enable electrification designs to be worked up for the sections between Manchester and Stalybridge, Huddersfield and Leeds, as well as Church Fenton and York. The Integrated

Rail Plan also considers the case for TRU to deliver full Manchester to York electrification, with construction decisions to be taken once TRU's full business case is approved.

Rare diseases: Medical Treatments

Asked by Lord Sharkey

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford on 1 May 2019 (HL Deb, col 1020) that they intend to "ensure that the review takes into account the benefits offered by new treatments for severe life-threatening and rare diseases", what plans they have to provide assurances that NICE will not end the use of rarity as a decision modifier in its highly specialised technology appraisal process. [HL9379]

Lord Bethell: It is too soon to comment on the potential outcomes of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) methods review and any changes to that may be proposed, but issues around the use of modifiers are being explored.

NICE expects to consult on the case for change later this year, and there will be a second consultation in 2021 on the updated methods manual.

Refugees: Coronavirus

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 5 October (HL Deb, col 407), whether they have revised their aim of resettling 5,000 refugees in 2020/21 under the UK's new resettlement scheme as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic; and, if so, what is the revised aim for resettlement this year. [HL9220]

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 14 September (HL7752), what discussions they have held with local authorities about their capacity to restart refugee resettlement as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic; and whether any local authorities have confirmed that they are ready to restart resettlement. [HL9221]

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the final 232 refugees within the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme will be resettled in the UK when it is safe to do so. [HL9222]

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they will announce their long term refugee resettlement commitment beyond 2021. [HL9223]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The UK has a proud history of providing protection to those who need it and our refugee resettlement schemes enable us to give the opportunity of a new start to those who have been forced to flee their homes.

In June 2019, the Government reaffirmed the UK's commitment to refugee resettlement by announcing a new, global UK Resettlement Scheme. While we hoped to have both met our commitment to resettle 20,000 vulnerable refugees through the VPRS, and started the new scheme earlier this year, the unprecedented restrictions and pressures caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has meant this has not yet been possible. We continue to evaluate how to respond to these ongoing restrictions and pressures, but we expect to resume refugee resettlement activity when safe to do so.

We maintain regular dialogue with a variety of resettlement stakeholders, including local authorities, Strategic Migration Partnerships and other support providers. To date, our resettlement schemes have been supported by over 300 local authorities across the UK, and we are extremely grateful for this support.

Ultimately the number of refugees we resettle every year depends on a variety of factors including local authorities' capacity for supporting refugees and the extent to which Community Sponsorship continues to thrive. We look forward to working with local communities to welcome more of those in need in the years to come.

Russia and USA: Arms Control

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have had any discussions with (1) the government of Russia, and (2) the government of the United States, about a New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. [HL9204]

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the importance of limiting the number of nuclear warheads held by Russia and the USA. [HL9206]

Baroness Sugg: The Foreign Secretary holds regular discussions with his US counterpart on a range of issues, including on arms control and strategic stability. These discussions are reflected and supported by daily cooperation at official level between the UK and the US, as well as by wider cooperation with NATO Allies. As a fellow Permanent Member of the UN Security Council, we engage with Russia on matters of international peace and security, including arms control. Through our Embassy in Moscow we have had a number of discussions with the Russian authorities on this topic.

US strategic arms, along with those of Russia, are limited by the New START Treaty. We recognise the contribution New START has made to international security and strategic stability by increasing transparency

and mutual confidence among the two largest Nuclear Weapons States. However, New START does not include new Russian systems, nor does it place any limits on China's growing nuclear arsenal. We therefore support extension of New START while a successor agreement is negotiated.

Scoliosis: Children

Asked by Lord Willis of Knaresborough

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the National Institute for Health Research is funding any research into the use of vertebral body tethering for adolescents with advancing scoliosis. [HL9343]

Lord Bethell: The Department's National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including scoliosis. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality. The NIHR is not currently funding or supporting research into the use of vertebral body tethering for adolescents with advancing scoliosis.

Self-harm: Somerset

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of current levels of emergency hospital admissions related to self-harm in Somerset; and whether such levels are higher or lower than those for (1) South West England, and (2) England as a whole. [HL9313]

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

Sports Competitors: Eating Disorders

Asked by Baroness Parminter

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the BBC Panorama programme Sport's Hidden Crisis, broadcast on 19 October, what discussions they have had with UK Sport regarding (1) minimising the risks of competitors developing eating disorders, and (2) supporting those with them. [HL9377]

Baroness Barran: Athlete welfare is vitally important to all sports, and my department works closely with UK Sport to strengthen policy in this area wherever possible. UK Sport is committed to ensuring that athlete welfare is at the heart of all Olympic and Paralympic sports and the national governing bodies (NGBs) they fund. UK Sport has a dedicated integrity unit and conducts an annual Culture Health Check survey that monitors athlete welfare and enables any issues to be picked up and addressed.

In terms of providing care and support to individuals with an eating disorder, UK Sport works in partnership with the English Institute of Sport (EIS). In 2018 the EIS and UK Sport announced a Mental Health Strategy for the high performance system aimed at ensuring that all people within it have the best opportunity to have positive mental health, and high quality care when required. The Mental Health Referral Programme (MHRP) provides specialist primary and secondary care services to elite athletes who are struggling with a wide range of mental health issues including depression, stress, anxiety, eating disorders, obsessive compulsive disorders and addictions.

Ukraine: NATO

Asked by Lord Lancaster of Kimbolton

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they are supporting Ukraine's preparations for full membership of NATO. [HL9299]

Baroness Sugg: The Government supports NATO's Enlargement process. The UK played an active role in helping Ukraine achieve Enhanced Opportunity Partner status in June 2020, deepening Ukraine's interoperability with the NATO Alliance. As members of the G7 Ambassadors Group and Ukraine's Defence Reform Advisory Board, the UK continues to provide substantial support to assist Ukraine in pursuing the vital reforms needed to bring the country further in line with Euro-Atlantic standards.

Yulia Tsvetkova

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Russia about Yulia Tsvetkova. [HL9235]

Baroness Sugg: Though we have not made representations to the Russian Government about Ms Tsvetkova's case specifically, the UK is deeply concerned by the deteriorating human rights situation in Russia, including the persecution of LGBT rights campaigners and others who speak out against the Russia Government.

The UK Government continues to raise our concerns about the human rights situation with the Russian Government. We have made clear that Russia must fulfil its international commitments as a Council of Europe and OSCE member to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to freedom of expression. On 17 June 2020, Minister Morton raised our concerns with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Titov. In addition, the British Embassy in Moscow continue to raise our concerns, including at Ambassadorial level with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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