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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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Lord Ashton of Hyde	Chief Whip
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Baroness Berridge	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education and Department for International Trade
Lord Bethell	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care and Whip
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Lord True	Minister of State, Cabinet Office
Baroness Vere of Norbiton	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
Baroness Williams of Trafford	Minister of State, Home Office
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Whip

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Written Statements

Tuesday, 3 November 2020

Coronavirus Update

[HLWS542]

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

The Prime Minister has announced tougher national restrictions in England from Thursday. These restrictions will apply nationally for four weeks up to Wednesday 2 December. At the end of the period, we will look to return to a local and regional approach, based on the latest data.

The Regulations will be debated in Parliament on Wednesday.

Subject to approval, from Thursday 5 November, everyone must stay at home, and may leave only for a limited set of reasons. These include:

- For education;
- For work, if you cannot work from home;
- For exercise and recreation in an outdoor public place, with your household, support bubble or on your own with one person from another household (children under school age, as well as those dependent on round-the-clock care, such as those with severe disabilities, who are with their parents will not count towards the limit on two people meeting outside);
- For all medical reasons, appointments and to escape injury or harm;
- To shop for food and essentials;
- To visit members of your support bubble;
- And to provide care for vulnerable people, or as a volunteer.

In support of the regulations being laid in parliament, we will be expanding our existing guidance to ensure the rules are clear for individuals and businesses. Single-adult households will still be able to form an exclusive support bubble with one other household, and children can move between homes if their parents are separated.

Non-essential shops, leisure and entertainment venues will be closed. Click and collect services can continue and essential shops, including supermarkets, will remain open.

People should work from home wherever possible. Workplaces should stay open where people cannot work from home – for example, in the construction or manufacturing sectors.

Shielding as practised in the spring will not currently be reintroduced. Those who are clinically extremely vulnerable should not only minimise their contacts with others, but also not go to work if they are unable to work from home.

The clinically vulnerable and those over the age of 60, should be especially careful to follow the rules and minimise contacts with others.

Overnight stays away from primary residences will not be allowed, except for specific exceptions including for work. This means people cannot travel internationally or within the UK, unless for work, education or other legally permitted exemptions.

Inbound international travel will continue to be governed by the travel corridor approach, and those currently on a domestic holiday will be allowed to finish their holidays, but are still subject to the requirements in England not to go out without a reasonable excuse.

Public services, such as job centres, courts, and civil registration offices will remain open.

Elite sport will be allowed to continue behind closed doors as currently.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, known as the furlough scheme, will remain open until December, with employees receiving 80% of their current salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500. The cost for employers of retaining workers will be reduced compared to the current scheme, which ends today.

To reflect the recent changes to the furlough scheme, the UK-wide Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) will be made more generous – with self-employed individuals receiving 80% of their average trading profits for November.

As the Prime Minister and Education Secretary have said, keeping young people in education is a national priority so early years settings, schools, colleges and universities will all remain open. Parents and carers should make sure their children keep attending school. However, universities and adult learning providers should consider increasing online provision where possible.

Parents will still be able to access registered childcare and other childcare activities where reasonably necessary to enable parents to work or access education and training. Parents are also able to form a childcare bubble with one other household for the purposes of informal childcare, for children who are 13 or under.

Ministers are also clear that it is vital to keep the provision for non-Covid healthcare needs going. Unless clinicians tell patients otherwise, they should continue to use the NHS, get scans and other tests, turn up for all appointments and collect medicines and treatments.

We are also planning a programme of mass testing which will help us get on top of this virus. We now have the immediate prospect of using many millions of cheap, reliable and rapid turnaround tests.

As a result of partnerships with NHS and university labs, new cutting-edge testing innovations and a recruitment drive boosting the UK's coronavirus diagnostic industry, NHS Test and Trace has rapidly expanded testing capability ahead of winter. The target of

500,000 testing capacity per day was reached on Saturday 31 October.

Introducing these restrictions is a difficult decision. But the public have the power to deal with this pandemic, working together with the Government and following the rules and guidance.

Update on recent changes to the Local Alert Level

In order to reduce the transmission of Covid-19, the following areas moved into Local COVID Alert Level High on 31 October: Carlisle, East Riding of Yorkshire, Kingston-Upon-Hull, North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, Dudley, Staffordshire, Telford and Wrekin, Amber Valley, Bolsover, Derbyshire Dales, Derby City, South Derbyshire, the whole of High Peak, Charnwood, Luton, and Oxford City.

This means that for these areas, the following measures apply:

- people must not meet with anybody outside their household or support bubble in any indoor setting, whether at home or in a public place;
- people must not meet in a group of more than 6 outside, including in a garden or other space; and
- people should aim to reduce the number of journeys they make where possible. If they need to travel, they should walk or cycle where possible, or plan ahead and avoid busy times and routes on public transport.

These restrictions remain in place until 5 November, when they will then be superseded by the new national restrictions.

Grenfell Update

[HLWS541]

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:

The Grenfell Tower fire in 2017 was a national tragedy. 72 people died in the greatest loss of life in a residential fire since the Second World War; many more mourn the loss of their families, friends, community, and homes.

Grenfell Tower Inquiry published its Phase 1 report on 30 October 2019. The Report's findings addressed the events of that night - the fire, how it started and spread, and the emergency response to it. Today I am updating the House on the progress and choices that the Government has made in implementing and acting on these recommendations. We owe it to the bereaved, the survivors, the community, and indeed all people living in blocks of flats around the country to demonstrate that we are making progress and their homes are being made safer.

The Government is delivering a comprehensive programme of reform on building and fire safety to ensure real and long-lasting, change. In the past year we have acted on the recommendations of Sir Martin and the

Inquiry, in addition to our ongoing work in response to recommendations made by Dame Judith Hackitt in the Independent Review. We are addressing historic defects and delivering new legislation. This will bring about thorough regulatory reform; and ensure that people feel empowered and listened to and, more importantly, that they are safe and feel safe in their homes.

We recognised the importance of urgent action to remove unsafe Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding from high-rise residential buildings, and to date 77 per cent of identified high-rise residential and publicly owned buildings have already been or are in the process of being fully remediated. We expect this figure to rise significantly by 31 December as the remaining residential buildings have a plan in place or have expressed their intention to remediate. As well as providing support, we will hold the owners of these buildings to account and keep residents safe in their homes.

We have worked with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and local health and education partners to help the community in its recovery: rehousing residents of the Tower and of Grenfell Walk; providing funding to support refurbishment of the Lancaster West Estate; and addressing local concerns about the impact of the fire on health and the local environment.

We want the views of Grenfell communities to be heard across government, which is why the Prime Minister appointed Rt Hon Nick Hurd, former Minister for Grenfell Victims, as his Independent Adviser to represent the views of Grenfell communities at the heart of government. We know that the bereaved and the survivors of the Grenfell Tower fire await the forthcoming Social Housing White Paper, and we anticipate publishing this in the coming month.

My officials are working with the Grenfell community and the people affected by the fire, including on the delivery of a fitting and lasting memorial to the 72 people who very sadly lost their lives. As well as continuing to provide regular updates to the community about the site and regarding the legislative programme, we will also ensure we provide further regular updates on progress against the Inquiry's recommendations.

Recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase One Report

The report made 46 detailed recommendations to improve fire safety, directed at a range of organisations including: the London Fire Brigade (LFB) and Fire and Rescue Services more broadly, other emergency services, building owners, and Government. The Government is already taking forward a number of these recommendations, including: fundamental legislative change; working with Fire and Rescue Services to support them in making the necessary improvements; starting specific projects on evacuation; working with local leaders and national bodies to ensure that action is being taken across the country supported by new funding; and identifying and remediating buildings with historic risks from unsafe cladding.

Building a safer future

Since December 2019, the Home Office has led on developing and introducing the Fire Safety Bill. That Bill will clarify the scope of the Fire Safety Order (FSO) in multi-occupied residential buildings. In particular, it will place beyond doubt that in multi-occupied residential blocks the FSO applies to the structure, external wall systems and flat entrance doors, ensuring that Fire and Rescue Authorities can confidently take enforcement action where building owners or managers are not compliant.

The Fire Safety Bill paves the way for secondary legislation which we propose to make after the commencement of the Fire Safety Bill next year. The Fire Safety Consultation held this year set out Government proposals to strengthen fire safety in regulated buildings in England to ensure that people are safe from fire regardless of where they live, stay or work. These proposals are a practical and effective approach to address the risks the Inquiry identified in Phase 1. They will provide residents with greater assurance and deliver fire safety improvements in their buildings and hold Responsible Persons, including building owners and managers, to account. At the same time, the Government will be introducing the Building Safety Bill in 2021, paving the way for a strengthened building safety regime for buildings, with an even stronger regime for high rise buildings.

Looking to the future, at the heart of the new building safety regime are two new regulators. The first, the Building Safety Regulator, will implement the more stringent regulatory regime for high risk residential buildings. It will also oversee the safety and performance of other buildings and support work to improve the competence of professionals across the industry. The Regulator will be delivered by the Health and Safety Executive and began to operate in shadow form earlier this year.

We are also committed to further strengthening the regulation of construction products. Our draft Building Safety Bill includes provisions for a more robust regulatory framework that covers a wider range of products. It will strengthen the powers available to regulators, enforce the rules and lay the groundwork to establish a national regulator which will spearhead the new approach.

The shadow Building Safety Regulator, within the HSE, is already advising the Government on the new regime. Over the coming months, it will develop guidance to ensure that all regulators involved understand how this will operate, and what they need to do to prepare for it.

Together, the measures in the draft Building Safety Bill, Fire Safety Bill, and Fire Safety Order consultation will improve safety standards for residents in all blocks of flats. Stricter regulations for high-rise buildings will make sure those living in them can feel safe and be safe in their homes – as is their right. Indeed, everything my officials

do across the Building Safety Programme in the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Fire and Resilience Directorate in the Home Office is driven by a shared determination to prevent the recurrence of a tragedy like Grenfell.

Fire and Rescue Services

The Phase 1 report made it very clear that Fire and Rescue Services should make significant improvements to their training; policies and practices; and their equipment and technology. We are seeking real changes demonstrated through an investment in the right types of training, leadership and equipment.

That is why the Home Secretary wrote to LFB, requiring regular reporting on its progress on implementing the recommendations. Although there is still more to do, we are encouraged that LFB continues to focus on implementing all the recommendations directed to them as well as those targeting services more broadly. The LFB has revised its policies, and through a programme of training is embedding changes in the approach to high-rise firefighting. The integration of different and new technologies such as the trialling of drones to improve situational awareness and support incident commanders, is encouraging. The use of smoke hoods and smoke curtains to assist with evacuations, trialled in large scale operational exercises, appears to be a positive step. The Home Office continues to receive regular reports which have shown steady and concerted progress, even against a backdrop of the pandemic.

The Home Secretary has also commissioned Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to review the governance and progress of LFB's action plan to implement the recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report. We anticipate the outcome of this initial review in January 2021.

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) is reflecting the Inquiry's recommendations in its ongoing review of National Operational Guidance and the development of national standards through the Fire Standards Board, which this Government established. The Minister of State for Building Safety and Communities last month hosted a roundtable for all fire chiefs and chairs, to ensure that local services were equally committed to making rapid and meaningful progress in order to protect communities.

To ensure that the lessons from Grenfell are learned and change is implemented at pace we have made available £10 million in additional funding in 2020/21 to drive change nationally and in local services. A further £20 million has been provided to support fire protection activity across England.

As with London, HMICFRS will provide independent assurance on the effectiveness of services in responding to the recommendations as part of its second cycle of inspection, which the Home Secretary has agreed will commence in the new year.

Fire Protection

The Independent Review into Building Regulations and Fire Safety found the system ‘broken’. This broken system is being further revealed through the work of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. The Phase 1 report found that a number of key fire protection measures failed to work as they should have at Grenfell. The Inquiry identified failings in the way in which LFB fulfilled its obligations under s.7(2)(d) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. This requirement is in place to ensure that it had the information needed for extinguishing fire and protecting life at the Tower.

Post Grenfell, we have seen other examples, which have further highlighted the importance of strengthening the overall protection capability and capacity of fire and rescue services. The work of HMICFRS, The Independent Review and the Grenfell Tower Inquiry evidence the need for more to be done to ensure that people are safe and secure in their homes and that FRSs need additional support to deliver an improved protection function to help achieve this goal. It is important that people can feel safe in their homes and that is why we have committed to ensuring that all high-rise residential buildings are inspected or reviewed by the end of 2021.

Our first priority for the £20 million protection funding has been to ensure that fire and rescue services are able to review or inspect every high-rise residential building in England by the end of 2021. This is a major programme of work, overseen by the Fire Protection Board, which will set the foundation for the building safety regulator. The funding has also created a new leadership function in NFCC; and provides funding for Fire and Rescue Services to have the capability and capacity to respond to risks in other potentially higher risk buildings, including residential buildings under 18 metres, care homes and hospitals.

Both MHCLG and the Home Office have worked with services and the NFCC, through the Fire Protection Board, to ensure appropriate interim measures remain in place to protect residents in buildings with dangerous cladding, such as ACM. The revised NFCC Simultaneous Evacuation Guidance, published on 1 October 2020, provides clearer advice which supports the Fire and Rescue Services and responsible persons to fully evacuate as soon as a fire is detected. The guidance advises responsible persons to explore cost benefit options with leaseholders and residents. It also encourages the installation of Common Fire alarms systems which means reducing the dependency on waking watch wherever possible. The guidance also reiterates that interim measures should only ever be short term and are not a substitute for remediation.

In addition, the research to support the development of national guidelines for carrying out partial or total evacuations of high-rise residential buildings and building design requirements is progressing. Independent experts will support the research that will underpin this work, and review the means of escape provisions in blocks of flats, including use of the “stay put” strategy and evacuation.

Emergency services

The Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) Joint Doctrine provides responders, at the scene and elsewhere, with a common way of working when responding to multi-agency incidents. Sir Martin recommended a number of amendments to the JESIP Joint Doctrine, including around communicating the declaration of a major incident.

The Emergency Services lead Chief Officers from JESIP have committed to addressing, in full, these recommendations in the review of the JESIP Joint Doctrine currently underway. This work is forecast to be completed in spring 2021.

Early actions and remediating historic risks:

Following the fire, the Government removed unsafe cladding products from the market and began dealing with historic defects. We banned combustible materials for use on new high-rise residential buildings and continue to work closely with local authorities, industry and regulators to identify existing buildings with dangerous cladding. Since then, we have continued to engage robustly with building owners, regulators and industry, to ensure the most dangerous forms of cladding are removed and replaced as soon as possible.

Building owners are responsible for building safety. But the Government recognises that funding is often a key barrier to remediation. That’s why we’re providing £1.6 billion to speed up the removal of unsafe cladding.

Despite COVID restrictions, we made it clear that these circumstances could not be allowed to impede progress on ACM remediation. Working closely with industry, we made good progress despite the many challenges we faced. We have set out a clear expectation that all building owners, across all sectors, must start ACM remediation works on site by the end of 2020.

There is still some way to go, but it is important to recognise that homes are being made safer. To date, 351 buildings (77 per cent of all identified high-rise residential and publicly owned buildings, including hotels and student accommodation), have already been or are in the process of being fully remediated. 148 social sector residential buildings – 95 per cent of that sector – have done the same. All remaining residential buildings now have a plan in place or have reported an intent to remediate.

Both myself and the Minister of State for Building Safety and Communities have personally met local leaders and the Fire Service to support them in taking action where progress is slow. Progress is reported through monthly data releases, and we have made clear that we will not rule out further measures in our mission to hold the owners of these buildings to account and keep residents safe in their homes.

Conclusion

In the year since the Phase 1 report was published, the Government has delivered demonstrable progress on all fronts and remained resolute in its commitment to deliver the recommendations. In relation to London we have used

our powers to ensure that real change is happening. Through the funding we have provided the NFCC we have bolstered the national leadership that will help all services to make strategic and meaningful change – both in culture and leadership and in practical operational delivery. We have worked with industry, building owners, and regulators to ensure the most dangerous forms of cladding are removed and replaced as soon as possible. This work is not complete – we will continue to improve our services and the safety of buildings to ensure that the conditions that led to the tragedy at Grenfell Tower will no longer exist. The proposed legislative reforms will ensure there is absolute clarity on the regulatory framework, providing strong and comprehensive building safety so that residents can know their safety is assured.

Inclusive Transport Strategy: Year 2 Update

[HLWS544]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Transport (Chris Heaton-Harris), has made the following Ministerial Statement.

Today is “Purple Tuesday”, a day dedicated to ensuring that the needs of disabled people, as valued consumers, are properly recognised and that they receive the best levels of customer service.

As the Minister with the Department for Transport responsible for accessible transport, I am determined that the transport network deliver an equally first-class experience to disabled people. The challenges disabled people face when using our transport system are well documented and whilst good progress has been made, I recognise there is still more to do.

I want to see continued steps being taken to improve disabled people’s experience accessing transport. I also want to see our ambition for a fully inclusive and accessible transport network by 2030, with assistance if infrastructure remains a barrier, realised. I am equally determined that the current pandemic and its aftereffects will not limit our ambition to achieving this.

Thus, I am pleased to help mark “Purple Tuesday” by announcing further progress on delivering our Inclusive Transport Strategy.

The Strategy was published in 2018 setting out an ambitious programme for transforming the transport system and today I am publishing a report detailing what has been delivered in the past two years. In the last year we have, for example, published a passenger rights toolkit, which provides guidance to maritime operators on how to comply with passenger rights regulations; and launched the “It’s everyone’s journey” public awareness campaign.

Alongside the update on the Inclusive Transport Strategy, I am also announcing:

- Details of the first set of operators who have successfully applied to the Inclusive Transport Leaders Scheme, which allows operators to receive formal

recognition for the positive actions they are taking to improve disabled passengers’ experiences of using the transport system, and to encourage others to follow.

- A disability equality awareness training package that we are making available, free of charge, for all transport operators. This will ensure that all transport operators, big and small, can access a common standard of disability training for their staff; and
- A funding competition, which will enable businesses to bid for grant funding to develop products or services that will improve the travel experience for disabled people.

I am grateful to the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee and representatives of disabled peoples’ organisations who continue to hold both myself and the Department to account for the delivery of the Inclusive Transport Strategy, and I look forward to continuing to work with them as the Strategy enters its third year.

Copies of this letter and the report on the progress of the Inclusive Transport Strategy have been placed in the library of both Houses.

Insolvency Service Performance Targets 2020-21

[HLWS543]

Lord Callanan: I have set performance targets for the Insolvency Service for the financial year 2020-21. The Insolvency Service is the Government agency that delivers public services to those affected by financial distress or failure by providing frameworks to deal with insolvency and the financial misconduct that sometimes accompanies or leads to it.

The Insolvency Service aims to deliver economic confidence through a fair corporate and personal insolvency regime which gives investors and lenders confidence to take the commercial risks necessary to support economic growth. It has a crucial role to play in supporting businesses and individuals in financial difficulty or facing redundancy owing to their employer’s insolvency.

In 2020-21 and beyond the Insolvency Service will be critical in giving confidence to the UK’s businesses, investors and employees following the impact of COVID-19. I have set measures and targets at a level which will drive the Insolvency Service to deliver its essential services effectively for its stakeholders. These measures include:

<i>Measure</i>	<i>2020-21 target</i>
Make bankruptcy orders sought by individuals within 2 working days	95% or greater
Determine debt relief order applications within 48 hours	95% or greater
Average time taken to process redundancy payment claims	14 days or less

<i>Measure</i>	<i>2020-21 target</i>
Issue reports to creditors within fifteen days of interviewing[1]	91% or greater
Deliver against the agency apprentice target for 2020-21	42 or more
Pay supplier invoices within 30 calendar days	100%
Pay supplier invoices within 5 working days	80%

The Insolvency Service's Annual Plan for 2020-21 is published in full on Gov.uk.

[1] Or a decision that no interview is required.

Minimum Income Floor

[HLWS545]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: My Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Dr Thérèse Coffey MP) has made the following Written Statement.

After careful consideration of the ongoing public health situation and the national working environment, the current easement of the suspension of the Minimum Income Floor in Universal Credit that was due to expire on 12th November 2020 will be extended to the end of April 2021.

Regulations will be laid and made prior to 12th November 2020.

Written Answers

Tuesday, 3 November 2020

Adult Education: Finance

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Confederation of British Industry Learning for life: Funding a world-class adult education system, published on 19 October. [HL9382]

Baroness Berridge: The key theme of the report mirrors our own assessment of the need for reskilling and the importance of adult education. We have introduced or announced a range of policies to help boost adult education.

To help boost apprenticeship opportunities, we are supporting employers to invest in the skilled workforce they need to recover and grow by offering £2,000 for each new apprentice they hire aged under 25, and £1,500 for those aged 25 and over, in recognition of the value apprentices of any age can bring to businesses and to our economic recovery.

My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister recently announced a new lifetime skills guarantee that will help support adults across the country to make lifelong learning a reality - opening doors for more people to realise their talents, develop new skills and get better jobs.

For adults who do not currently have a level 3 qualification, the government will be fully funding their first full level 3 through the National Skills Fund. This entitlement will be targeted at areas with high economic value and the strongest alignment with government priorities, to ensure the best possible returns for individuals, employers and the nation.

New digital bootcamps, in 6 areas, will support local regions and employers to fill in-demand vacancies. The bootcamp training courses will provide valuable skills based on employer demand and will offer a fast track to a job interview on completion. Pending the success of the initial bootcamps, we are planning to expand the digital bootcamps to more of the country from spring 2021. We also want to extend this model to include other technical skills training.

A Lifelong Loan Entitlement, which will provide individuals with an entitlement to 4 years of loan funding to use over their lifetime. The entitlement could be used for modules of a course, as well as full years of study. We will be consulting on the Lifelong Loan Entitlement in due course and will bring in legislation later in the Parliament as necessary.

This is on top of the already announced £2.5 billion (£3 billion when including Barnett funding for devolved administrations), for the National Skills Fund to help adults learn valuable skills and prepare for the economy of the future. It aims to boost productivity and ensure

more people and places can share in the rewards that improved productivity can bring. It also presents a great opportunity to create a more coherent and simpler system that learners, providers, local areas and employers can more easily understand and navigate. Further plans for the National Skills Fund will be communicated in due course.

We are also continuing to invest in education and skills training for adults through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) (£1.34 billion in the 2020/21 academic year). The AEB fully funds or co-funds skills provision for eligible adults aged 19 and above from pre-entry to level 3, to support adults to gain the skills they need for work, an apprenticeship or further learning. This includes fully funded courses in English and maths, for adults who need to improve their literacy and numeracy, fully funded first full level 2 and/or level 3 for learners aged 19 to 23 and fully funded specified digital skills qualifications for adults with no/low digital skills.

Apprentices: Construction

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Construction Industry Council Build back better: Improving the apprenticeship system to better support infrastructure, published in September; and what plans they have to review the flexibility of the apprenticeship levy. [HL9448]

Baroness Berridge: We welcome the Construction Industry Council highlighting the value apprenticeships bring to employers and individuals and it is encouraging to see that the report shows the positive impact the levy has had on apprenticeship recruitment among both levy and non-levy paying employers.

The apprenticeship levy is an important part of our apprenticeship reforms, supporting employers of all sizes to invest in high-quality training. As well as funding new apprenticeships in levy-paying employers, income from the levy is used to fund new apprenticeships in employers that do not pay the levy, as well as existing apprentices that started in previous years.

We have already committed to improve the working of the apprenticeship levy and as part of this we will work with employers to improve the transfer process, making it easier for them to find smaller employers to transfer levy funds to. In doing so we will build on successful regional pilot schemes, such as that in West Midlands Combined Authority. We are also working with employers to make apprenticeships work better for different sectors, including those with more flexible and short-term models of employment.

We also recognise that employers of all sizes currently face significant challenges. To help support employers to offer new apprenticeships, employers are now able to claim £2,000 for every new apprentice they hire under the age of 25, and £1,500 for those 25 and over until 31 January 2021. Employers can use this funding to help

meet any of the costs associated with supporting a new apprentice in the workplace, including: uniforms, apprentice travel and towards meeting the cost of an apprentice's wages.

We continue to work closely with the construction sector and are committed to making sure the apprenticeship programme continues to provide opportunities for people of all backgrounds, while meeting the needs of employers of all sizes and delivering for the economy.

Apprentices: Redundancy

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase support for apprentices who have been made redundant during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL9445]

Baroness Berridge: We are committed to supporting redundant apprentices to find new opportunities and to continue and complete their apprenticeships wherever possible.

In August we introduced the new Redundancy Support Service for Apprentices which provides clear, accessible advice and guidance to individuals on the impact of redundancy, their options and next steps. As part of this service we also launched a vacancy sharing scheme to help redundant apprentices find new apprenticeship opportunities with employers. Over 850 employers have signed up to the service to offer opportunities to redundant apprentices, including Bupa Dental and Taylor Wimpey.

We have also amended legislation to enable more apprentices to complete their apprenticeship in the event of redundancy. In addition to funding an apprentice's training to completion if they have less than six months of their apprenticeship remaining at the point of redundancy, we have extended this provision to include any apprentice who has completed 75% or more of their apprenticeship at the point of redundancy.

To help support employers to offer new apprenticeships, including to those that have been made redundant, employers are now able to claim £2,000 for every new apprentice they hire under the age of 25, and £1,500 for those 25 and over, until 31 January 2021.

ARM: NVIDIA

Asked by Lord Broers

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have requested that the Competition and Markets Authority investigate the potential purchase of ARM by Nvidia; and if not, what plans they have to do so. [HL9521]

Baroness Barran: The government is clear that Arm is an important part of the UK's technology sector and makes a significant contribution to the UK economy.

The Competition and Markets Authority bears responsibility for assessing any competition impacts arising from the proposed deal and it will be following its normal regulatory processes in examining this deal. Separately, the Secretary of State also has the responsibility for determining whether or not to refer an acquisition on public interest grounds if relevant thresholds in the Enterprise Act 2002 are met. As such, we are examining this potential acquisition carefully.

We note that it is subject to regulatory approvals in multiple jurisdictions and is not expected to complete until 2022. It would be inappropriate to comment further at this stage.

Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences

Asked by Baroness Helic

To ask Her Majesty's Government which British embassies have active projects under the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative; and for any such projects, what they entail. [HL9365]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Five projects directly funded by the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) are planned for delivery by our overseas embassies. These projects will deliver against the three core PSVI objectives: strengthening justice and accountability; ensuring support for all survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and tackling the stigma they face; preventing conflict related sexual violence through engagement with faith, media and other stakeholders.

Asked by Baroness Helic

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the outcome of projects completed under the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative since March 2018. [HL9366]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: All Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) projects completed since 2018, are reviewed individually in an end of project report. Overall, Her Majesty's Government is satisfied our programming work continues to deliver against the three core PSVI objectives: strengthening justice and accountability; ensuring support for all survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and tackling the stigma they face; preventing conflict related sexual violence through engagement with faith, media and other stakeholders.

Asked by Baroness Helic

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many times the UK team of experts on preventing sexual violence in conflict has been deployed since March 2018; to which countries they have been deployed; and what was the outcome as a result of each such deployment. [HL9367]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) Team of

Experts have been deployed 11 times since March 2018, including deployments to Dhaka, Mali and Zimbabwe. The sensitive nature of the deployments means that the outcomes are not published. The Team of Experts are a group of independent experts deployed to support the work of national and international bodies and NGOs.

Armed Forces: Gambling

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the existing syllabus for new recruits to the armed forces currently includes training on gambling related harm. [HL9440]

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to enact legislation similar to the Gambling Addiction Prevention Act 2019 in the United States, which legally requires the development and implementation of policies and programmes to prevent and treat gambling disorders among members of the armed forces and their dependants. [HL9441]

Baroness Goldie: New recruits to the Armed Forces receive comprehensive briefing on the importance of financial security and the values and standards expected of them, during which the issue of gambling is raised. They are also signposted to the full range of support and assistance available for welfare matters, including gambling. New officers are trained how to identify and support those under their command who are experiencing financial difficulties, including those caused by gambling.

There are no plans to enact legislation similar to that of the United States' Gambling Addiction Prevention Act 2019. Policies and initiatives already in operation by the Department and Armed Forces closely mirror the requirements and obligations stipulated by said Act and have similar effect.

Asylum and Immigration: Deportation

Asked by *Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many enforced returns they are in the process of carrying out because of a breach of asylum or immigration rules; and whether those subject to those returns have been informed. [HL9416]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Numbers of those liable to removal can be found online (and attached) in our published statistics in table ASY_03 at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-protection-data-august-2020> and tables Pre_MRP_01 and Post_MRP_01 at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-enforcement-data-august-2020>

The notification of liability to removal, including changes brought in by the Immigration Act 2014 ; single

power of removal; appeal rights; administrative reviews; and curtailment. More detail can be found at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/606982/GI-Non-EEA-admin-removal-v3.pdf

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Table - ASY_03 [UKVI_I_P_Q2_2020_Published - ASY 03.xlsx]

Tables - Pre MRP 01 and Post MRP 01 [IE_Q2_2020_Published - tables Pre_MRP_01 and Post_MRP_01.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-10-21/HL9416>

Asylum: Employment

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Durham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 29 September (HL8116), what plans they have to publish the terms of reference for the Home Office review into the right to work of asylum seekers. [HL9359]

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Durham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 29 September (HL8116), what external organisations have been (1) formally, and (2) informally, consulted as part of the Home Office review into the right to work of asylum seekers. [HL9360]

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Durham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the response by Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay on 9 September (HL Deb, col 820), when the review into the right to work of asylum seekers will be laid before the House. [HL9361]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Asylum seeker right to work is a complex issue. A review of the policy is ongoing, and we are considering the evidence put forward on the issue. The findings of the review will be announced once the work has been completed.

Officials have been in contact as necessary with Asylum Matters and Refugee Action in respect of asylum seeker right to work policy.

BBC: Political Impartiality

Asked by *Lord Vinson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions, if any, they have had with the BBC since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic about their obligations under the Royal Charter for the continuance of the British Broadcasting Corporation, presented to Parliament in December 2016, "to provide impartial news and

information to help people understand and engage with the world around them". [HL9449]

Baroness Barran: The government meets with the BBC on regular occasions to discuss a wide range of issues. When speaking to Tim Davie to congratulate him on his appointment as the new Director General of the BBC, the Secretary of State welcomed Tim Davie's commitment to impartiality at the BBC. In an age of fake news and self reinforcing algorithms, the need for genuine impartiality is greater than ever.

In April the BBC announced a wide-ranging package of measures to help keep the nation informed, educated, and entertained through these unprecedented times. These new measures included daily and weekly coronavirus updates, supplied across television, radio and online platforms.

The BBC is operationally and editorially independent of government, and it is for the BBC Board to ensure that all of the BBC's output meets the highest standards the public expects. Ofcom is the independent regulator of the BBC, and is responsible for holding the BBC to account in this regard.

British Indian Ocean Territory: Legal Costs

Asked by Baroness Whitaker

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sugg on 3 August (HL7037), whether they will now answer the question put, namely, what has been the total cost to the public purse of the UK's participation in recent proceedings before the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965. [HL9455]

Baroness Sugg: These advisory proceedings in the International Court of Justice concerned a request for an advisory opinion from the United Nations General Assembly. All Member States of the United Nations were invited to participate in the proceedings. Thirty-one States and the African Union filed written statements, and ten States and the African Union filed written comments on the written statements. Twenty-two States and the African Union participated in the oral proceedings.

The UK participated at all stages of the proceedings. From the accessible records held by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, the legal costs of the UK's participation were £309,608.20. This figure comprises Counsels' fees and Government Legal Department fees.

British Nationality: Fees and Charges

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 19 October (HL Deb, cols 1272–5), in how many instances citizenship fees were waived during the last twelve

months for which figures are available; how many of those waivers involved children; and what plans they have to undertake a children's best interest assessment of their policy on citizenship fees. [HL9346]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: There are no general waivers that apply to citizenship applications. There is however, a specific waiver which allows for a child who would have become a British citizen but for the fact that the mother was married to someone other than the child's biological father at the time of the birth, to apply to register as a British citizen without needing to pay a fee.

There are a number of exceptions to application fees for leave to remain in the United Kingdom which protect the most vulnerable, such as for young people who are in the care of a local authority.

Citizenship registration fees are the subject of current litigation. While the court case is ongoing it would not be appropriate to comment on next steps.

Broadband: Finance

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the announcement that the long-term spending review will be replaced by a one-year spending review, whether plans to service the UK with fibre broadband by 2025 will be included as a multi-year capital allocation priority infrastructure project. [HL9493]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Spending Review, which will be delivered on 25 November, will set out the government's spending plans.

The government recognises the importance of connectivity both to the economy and to people's lives. We are committed to nationwide gigabit-capable broadband as soon as possible, and are taking a number of steps to achieve this. The March Budget this year committed £5 billion to support the rollout of gigabit-capable broadband in the hardest to reach areas.

Cameroon: Armed Conflict

Asked by Lord Boateng

To ask Her Majesty's Government when the British High Commissioner to the Cameroon last visited Kumba in the Southwest Region of that Country; what plans there are for another visit in order to assess the human rights situation following the attack on primary school children at a school in that city; and what steps they intend to take to restart the peace process in the Cameroon between government and armed militia groups. [HL9508]

Baroness Sugg: The Government remains deeply concerned about the situation in the North-West and South-West (Anglophone) regions of Cameroon including reports of human rights abuses and violations by both armed separatists and security forces. We are appalled by the attack on the Mother Francisca International Bilingual

Academy in Kumba, Cameroon, on 24 October and the horrific killing of innocent children. We offer our condolences to the families of those affected. The British High Commissioner to Cameroon publicly condemned the attack on 24 October, and on 25 October the Minister for Africa publicly called for the perpetrators of this vile act to be held accountable, reiterating that every child has the right to a safe education. The British High Commissioner to Cameroon regularly visits the South-West region, and remains in close contact with a range of groups affected by the crisis.

We continue to call for restraint, an end to the violence and inclusive dialogue about the root causes of the crisis. The Minister for Africa has committed to visiting Cameroon in the coming few months and will again raise the Government's concerns about the crisis directly with the Government of Cameroon. The UK has shared experiences of conflict resolution with the Government, and through the British High Commission in Yaoundé we are also supporting local partners in their efforts to promote peace. We continue to urge all parties to remain engaged in ongoing Swiss-led efforts to facilitate talks and remain ready to support all credible peacebuilding efforts.

Cameroon: Peace Negotiations

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the killing of six children in an attack on a school in Kumba, Cameroon on 24 October; and what representations they intend to make to the government of Cameroon about (1) the provision of protection for schools, (2) the declaration of a ceasefire, and (3) the case for formal negotiations to find a resolution to the crisis in the Anglophone regions. [HL9500]

Baroness Sugg: The UK Government is appalled by the attack on the Mother Francisca International Bilingual Academy in Kumba, Cameroon, on 24 October and the horrific killing of innocent children. We offer our condolences to the families of those affected. On 25 October the Minister for Africa publicly called for the perpetrators of this vile act to be held accountable, reiterating that every child has the right to a safe education. As the Prime Minister's UK Special Envoy for Girls' Education, I am committed to ensuring girls' rights remains a priority for the UK Government including fulfilling every girl's right to 12 years of quality education.

The UK Government remains deeply concerned about the situation in the North-West and South-West (Anglophone) regions of Cameroon including reports of human rights abuses and violations by both armed separatists and security forces. We continue to call for restraint, an end to the violence and inclusive dialogue about the root causes of the crisis, including during engagement with senior levels of the Government of Cameroon. The Minister for Africa has committed to

visiting Cameroon soon and will again raise the Government's concerns about the crisis directly with the Government of Cameroon. The UK has shared experiences of conflict resolution with the Government, and through the British High Commission in Yaoundé we are also supporting local partners in their efforts to promote peace. We continue to urge all parties to remain engaged in ongoing Swiss-led efforts to facilitate talks and remain ready to support all credible peacebuilding efforts.

China: UN Human Rights Council

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the government of China's election to the UN Human Rights Council on 13 October, and (2) the impact of that election on that Council's ability to hold the government of China accountable for the human rights situation in that country. [HL9378]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are clear that all members of the Council, including China, should uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights. We have repeatedly made clear to China our grave concerns about the human rights situation in the country, including at the most recent session of the UN Human Rights Council on 25 September, where we dedicated our entire national statement to China. We will continue to take a leading international role in holding China to account for its human rights violations, both at the UN Human Rights Council and by raising our concerns directly with Chinese authorities.

Commonwealth: Digital Technology

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress has been made as a result of the Digital Connectivity Cluster led by the UK and South Africa. [HL9393]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London in 2018, countries reaffirmed their commitment to free trade and adopted the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda for Trade and Investment with the ambition of enhancing cooperation across the Commonwealth – boosting intra-Commonwealth trade to beyond \$2 trillion by 2030. Six members came forward to lead the five 'clusters' (working groups): physical, digital, regulatory, supply-side and business to business connectivity. Following the launch of the Connectivity Agenda, the United Kingdom volunteered to co-lead the digital cluster with South Africa.

The Connectivity Agenda clusters have met three times so far. Members from 18 Commonwealth countries have exchanged views and experiences on the opportunities and challenges of digital transformation, digital inclusion, barriers to e-commerce and the readiness of countries to

engage in digital trade. Members have also discussed developing a set of high-level principles to underpin digital connectivity. The Commonwealth Secretariat is developing a Commonwealth FinTech Toolkit and a Commonwealth Repository of Digital Policies.

Coronavirus: Aviation

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of UK residents who contracted COVID-19 whilst on an aeroplane. [HL9150]

Lord Bethell: It is not possible to concretely identify where infection occurs in individual positive cases of COVID-19. Where someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 has recently travelled on a flight, contact tracing will be carried out by a public health specialist. Priority is given to contact-tracing close contacts and co-travellers, since these persons face a higher risk than other passengers.

Coronavirus: Disease Control

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to clarify the COVID-19 tier rules for those with two or more places of residence; and whether someone whose primary residence is subject to one tier must abide by that tier's rules if moving to a secondary residence in a different tier. [HL9294]

Lord Bethell: People must comply with the restrictions and guidance in place in the area that they are currently residing. Those residing in areas that are under additional restrictions above the medium level should not be travelling to other areas. Similarly, we expect that inhabitants of medium restriction areas should not travel to other areas with greater restrictions.

The National Health Service continues to provide healthcare services in all parts of the country, and there are exemptions to the rules in areas of increased restrictions that allow patients to attend medical, dental and ophthalmic appointments in other areas. There are no specific restrictions relating to travel and transport. However, people should keep their journeys to a minimum.

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether under the COVID-19 tier rules a person can move from a primary residence in a high-risk tier to a secondary residence in a lower-risk tier in order to attend medical, dental and ophthalmic appointments; and if not, how they intend to enforce those rules. [HL9295]

Lord Bethell: People must comply with the restrictions and guidance in place in the area that they are currently residing. Those residing in areas that are under additional restrictions above the medium level should not be travelling to other areas. Similarly, we expect that

inhabitants of medium restriction areas should not travel to other areas with greater restrictions.

The National Health Service continues to provide healthcare services in all parts of the country, and there are exemptions to the rules in areas of increased restrictions that allow patients to attend medical, dental and ophthalmic appointments in other areas. There are no specific restrictions relating to travel and transport. However, people should keep their journeys to a minimum.

Coronavirus: Universities

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to make mass on-campus testing available at all universities. [HL8556]

Lord Bethell: Testing capacity is the highest it has ever been, but we are seeing a significant demand for tests. It is vital that university staff and students only get a test if they develop coronavirus symptoms.

We have quickly established walk-through sites and deployed mobile test sites so that almost all universities are within three miles of an in-person test site allowing staff and students to get access to tests should they develop symptoms. We are looking to reduce this further down to one and a half miles where possible.

In cases of outbreaks we are working with universities to deliver large batches of home test kits which can then be distributed to students isolating in their households or halls to residence to test themselves.

Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Senior Civil Servants

Asked by Baroness Kramer

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many BAME civil servants there are at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport at (1) SCS1, (2) SCS2, (3) SCS3, and (4) SCS4, grade. [HL9423]

Baroness Barran:

SCS1	7
SCS2	Less than Five
SCS3	Less than Five
SCS4	Less than Five

As of September 2020, the department's declaration rate for ethnicity is 77.2%, meaning that the figures in the table above are based on the percentage that was declared and not the department's true population.

Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions

Asked by **Lord Bradley**

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they intend to answer the Question for Written Answer (HL7617) tabled by Lord Bradley on 2 September. [HL8712]

Asked by **Lord Bradley**

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they intend to answer the Question for Written Answer (HL8019) tabled by Lord Bradley on 10 September. [HL8713]

Lord Bethell: I answered the Noble Lord's questions on 8 and 20 October respectively.

Eating Disorders: Hospital Beds

Asked by **Baroness Parminter**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many inpatient beds are available to the NHS for eating disorder patients in (1) England, (2) the North of England, (3) the Midlands and East of England, (4) London, and (5) the South of England; and, for each of those categories, how many are available for (a) children and young people, and (b) adults. [HL9309]

Lord Bethell: The following table provides data on the number of inpatient beds for eating disorders for adults and for children and young people.

	Total bed base	Adult eating disorder beds	Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services eating disorder beds ¹
England	648 (national total)	400	248
North of England (North East, North West and Yorkshire and Humber)	157	129	28
Midlands and East of England	203	97	106
London	162	99	63
South of England (including Wessex)	126	75	51

Source: NHS England

Note:

¹ Some children and young people with eating disorders are treated in general child and adolescent mental health services.

Employee Ownership and Save as You Earn

Asked by **Lord Lee of Trafford**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many people have participated in (1) a Save As You Earn, and (2) a Share Incentive Plan, scheme in each of the last five years. [HL9432]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Save As You Earn (SAYE) scheme and Share Incentive Plans (SIPs) are tax-advantaged employee share schemes offered by the Government.

HMRC publishes annual statistics on Employee Share Schemes on GOV.UK^[1].

Statistics on participation in SAYE schemes and SIPs for the last four years can be found in the tables below. Figures for 2014-15 are not available due to the introduction of the Employment Related Securities service.

HMRC collects data at the points at which employees enter or leave Employee Share Schemes which is reflected in the tables below. However, HMRC does not hold data on the number of people who hold options or shares within an Employee Share Scheme each year.

For SAYE, data is provided on the number of employees who are granted and exercised options.

For SIPs, data is provided on the number of employees who are awarded or purchase the four different types of shares available. Some employees may receive more than one type of share in a given year.

Table 1 - SAYE

SAYE	Employees granted share options	Employees exercising share options
14-15	-	-
15-16	510,000	200,000
16-17	400,000	140,000
17-18	340,000	120,000
18-19	310,000	110,000

Table 2 - SIP

SIP – employees awarded / purchased	Free shares	Partnership shares	Matching shares	Dividend shares
14-15	-	-	-	-
15-16	560,000	5,380,000	3,920,000	870,000
16-17	140,000	4,160,000	2,990,000	760,000
17-18	140,000	2,890,000	2,010,000	530,000
18-19	110,000	2,840,000	2,050,000	500,000

[1]

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/employee-share-schemes-statistics#national-statistics>

Employment: Equality

Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to tackle race inequality in the workplace. [HL8601]

Baroness Berridge: The Government's Race Disparity Audit (RDA) and its website, Ethnicity Facts and Figures, was launched in October 2017. The website is world first and has been welcomed internationally for its open and data-driven approach to highlighting inequalities of outcomes.

In response to its findings, Government has taken action to increase diversity in employment.

This includes launching the Race at Work Charter which aims to increase ethnic minority representation in all sectors, and providing targeted employment support in twenty areas around the country with high rates of ethnic minority unemployment to boost earning potential.

In 2018/19, the Government consulted on options for exploring possibilities for employer- level ethnicity pay reporting. Following the consultation, Government met with businesses and representative organisations to understand the barriers to reporting. The Government is continuing to analyse this data and is committed to responding to the consultation by the end of the year.

In addition, this year the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities was established and is examining all aspects of continuing racial and ethnic disparities in Britain. It is building on the work of the Race Disparity Unit. The Commission is carrying out a deeper examination of what the causes of these disparities are and is seeking to establish what works to address them effectively, including in employment and enterprise.

Exports

Asked by **Viscount Waverley**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what support they plan to provide to encourage the target growth in exports. [HL9396]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The Government is committed to ensuring that all UK businesses can take advantage of the significant economic benefits of exporting. According to UNCTAD global export rankings (released in September 2020) the UK overtook France to become the world's fifth largest exporter in 2019 and was the only one of the world's top ten exporters to increase exports in that year.

Our ambitious free trade agreement programme and market access work helps unlock new opportunities for exporters worldwide.

We also provide direct support to both new and existing exporters, to ensure firms have the confidence and expertise they need to export around the world.

Access to finance is also central to our support for business. The export finance offer from UK Export Finance, the UK's export credit agency, helps UK companies win export contracts, fulfil contracts, and get paid.

Females: Coronavirus

Asked by **Baroness Manzoor**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have undertaken an impact assessment on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women; and if not, why not. [HL8980]

Baroness Berridge: An equalities assessment was carried out on the Coronavirus Act and was published on 28 July. This can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-act-2020-equality-impact-assessment>.

Considering equality impacts is part of an ongoing process to support policy development. The responsibility for equalities impact assessments lies with departments, who take this responsibility very seriously. Impact assessments are kept under review and my colleagues are fully aware of their equality duties.

Ghana: Counter-terrorism

Asked by **Lord Lancaster of Kimbolton**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the threat of terrorism as a result of Islamist extremism in Ghana; and what support they intend to offer to the government of Ghana to counter that threat. [HL9544]

Baroness Sugg: We are committed to working with Ghana, other West African countries and our international partners to prepare against the threat of possible future Islamist insurgencies in coastal West Africa. The Prime Minister discussed security in the region with President Akufo-Addo of Ghana at the UK-Africa Investment Summit in January. The UK is concerned by the potential emerging threat of terrorism to Ghana and other West African coastal states from extremist groups currently active in the neighbouring Sahel.

The UK is working closely with the Government of Ghana to share knowledge and expertise on regional security. The Ministry of Defence is delivering crisis response training to support Ghana to counter the threat, working both with security agencies in the north of Ghana and the central government in Accra, as well as helping to develop Ghana's military capability with US partners.

Government Equalities Office

Asked by **Baroness Gale**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of women's organisations the Government Equalities Office regularly engages with;

and by what methods that Office engages with those women's organisations. [HL9125]

Baroness Berridge: The Government Equalities Office has engaged with more than 25 women's organisations by phone, email, online and in person in 2020. GEO regularly meets with relevant umbrella organisations including, most recently, Equally Ours, the UK Civil Society Women's Alliance, National Alliance of Women's Organisations and Business in the Community to discuss the gendered impacts of COVID-19 to feed into policy advice. GEO is working to ensure the government can hear and be influenced by a wide range of women's voices.

Homelessness

Asked by Lord Bird

To ask Her Majesty's Government what financial support they plan to give to local councils to provide permanent accommodation to those at risk of homelessness. [HL9409]

Lord Greenhalgh: As part of the Government's investment of £433 million to deliver 6,000 new homes for rough sleepers by the end of this Parliament, on 29 October we announced that more than 3,300 new long-term homes for rough sleepers and other vulnerable people have been approved, subject to due diligence and contracting.

Backed by Government investment of more than £150 million the new homes will be made available in every region of England. This will enable people who sleep rough, or at risk of sleeping rough, to be rehoused in secure, long-term accommodation, providing some of the most vulnerable in society with a permanent place to live and help to rebuild their lives.

This funding is in addition to the £91.5 million allocated to 274 councils in September to fund their individual local plans for rough sleepers over the coming months, and to help provide short-term and interim accommodation for vulnerable people, as well as the £10 million Cold Weather Payment for councils to help to keep rough sleepers safe this winter.

Hospitals

Asked by Lord Wills

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bethell on 7 October (HL8399), whether they will now answer the question put, namely, what procedures they put in place to ensure the maximum use of capacity between 1 April and 1 September in hospitals operated by the Independent Healthcare Providers Network under their partnership agreement with the NHS. [HL8959]

Asked by Lord Wills

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bethell on 7 October

(HL8398), whether they will now answer the question put, namely, what estimate they have made of spare capacity between 1 April and 1 September in hospitals operated by the Independent Healthcare Providers Network under their partnership agreement with the NHS. [HL8960]

Lord Bethell: A national agreement is in place between NHS England and NHS Improvement in collaboration with the Independent Healthcare Providers Network and independent sector providers to ensure National Health Service patients benefit from an unprecedented partnership with private hospitals as we battle the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Department and NHS England and NHS Improvement have worked with the independent sector to secure all appropriate inpatient capacity and other resource across England.

To maximise total elective activity, NHS England and NHS Improvement worked with independent providers to identify best of use of capacity, based on local need. From the end of March to June 2020 both equipment and staffing from independent sector providers were deployed by NHS trusts in order to ensure delivery of services for NHS patients. Since June, the use of independent sector sites has been focused on assisting the NHS to restore services and increase elective capacity.

As part of preparing for winter, the Government has provided an additional £3 billion to the NHS. This includes additional funding to the NHS to allow them to continue to use additional hospital capacity from the independent sector, and to maintain the Nightingale hospitals, in their current state, until the end of March 2021.

Local Government: Cumbria

Asked by Lord Walney

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Invitation for Proposals for a Single Tier of Local Government issued to principal authorities in Cumbria by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 9 October, what plans they have to consider proposals that cross existing county boundaries. [HL9496]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Secretary of State will carefully consider any proposal for single tier local government received in response to the invitation issued on 9 October 2020 on the basis of the longstanding criteria for establishing unitary councils, namely that, if implemented, it must be likely to improve local government in the area, commands a good deal of local support overall across the area, and lead to unitary councils covering a credible geography.

The statutory Guidance accompanying the invitation states that in formulating a proposal an authority should take into account the impact of any proposed unitary authorities on other local boundaries and geographies; if the area of any proposed unitary authority crosses existing

police force and fire and rescue authority boundaries, the proposal should include an assessment of what the impact would be on the police forces and/or fire and rescue authorities and include the views of the relevant Police and Crime Commissioners and Fire and Rescue Authorities.

Music: Education

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by Youth Music and the Take It Away Consortium Reshape Music, published on 14 October; and what steps they are taking to make music education more accessible. [HL9330]

Baroness Berridge: The Reshape Music report provides a valuable contribution in understanding the experiences of disabled young people in accessing music education at school, through Music Education Hubs and in the community. The research was funded by the National Lottery fund through Arts Council England, and the Department will work closely with the Arts Council to assess the findings of the report.

We believe all pupils should have access to a quality music education, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The National Plan for Music Education sets out our vision for music education, including to enable children from all backgrounds and every part of England to have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument.

The Department is due to refresh the national plan following the Call for Evidence undertaken earlier this year. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the refresh of the national plan is currently on hold but will be published in due course.

Nagorno Karabakh: Armed Conflict

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the validity of footage showing Azerbaijan Military personnel executing two Armenian prisoners of war; and whether this constitutes a violation of the Geneva Convention. [HL9582]

Baroness Sugg: Officials are assessing the footage in question. We are deeply concerned of accusations from both sides that war crimes are being committed and continue to urge de-escalation. Where it is possible to verify reports of alleged violations of the Geneva Convention in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, we will do so and we will raise these with the parties involved.

Nigeria: Violence

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the Nigerian Armed Forces opened fire on peaceful protesters in Lagos; and what discussions they have had with the government of Nigeria about referring CCTV footage of those events to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for independent verification. [HL9499]

Baroness Sugg: The UK Government is deeply concerned by the violence during protests in major cities in Nigeria, including reports of casualties in Lekki, Lagos, on 20 October. We offer our condolences to the families of those affected.

The Foreign Secretary issued a statement on 21 October calling for an end to the violence and for the Nigerian Government to urgently investigate reports of brutality by its security forces. The Minister for Africa tweeted on 16 October, noting the Nigerian people's democratic and peaceful calls for reforms, and again on 21 October, encouraging the Nigerian authorities to restore peace and address concerns over brutality towards civilians. He reiterated these messages when he spoke with Foreign Minister Onyeama on 23 October. The British High Commissioner in Abuja and the Deputy High Commissioner in Lagos continue to raise the protests with representatives of the Nigerian Government. We will continue to push the Nigerian police to uphold human rights and the rule of law in all operations. We will also continue to urge the Nigerian authorities to investigate allegations of police brutality, illegal detentions and assaults, and hold those responsible to account.

The UK Government have received reassurances from the Lagos State Government that the CCTV cameras were not removed from the site and that the CCTV footage will be made available to the Judicial Panel of Enquiry and Restitution in Lagos State for investigation. We will continue to follow the proceedings of the Judicial Panel closely.

Osime Brown

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the petition to stop the deportation of Osime Brown receiving over 250,000 signatures, what plans they have (1) to assess the compassionate factors relating to his case, and (2) to review his deportation. [HL9371]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: We only ever return those who we and, where applicable, the courts are satisfied do not need our protection and have no legal basis to remain in the UK. No action would be taken to deport an individual while there are outstanding legal barriers that would prevent their removal from the UK and until all outstanding representations have been considered.

It would be inappropriate to comment further while legal proceedings are ongoing.

Palestinians: Olives

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take, if any, to protect olive groves and farmland in Palestine from damage by Israeli settlers. [HL9384]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK condemns any incidence of violence by settlers against Palestinians. We recognise that there can be an increase in assaults on Palestinian farmers, the destruction of olive trees and the stealing of produce coinciding with the Palestinian olive harvest, which began earlier this month. We have expressed our concerns to the Israeli Government on a number of occasions. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population. We welcome the efforts of Israeli authorities to address settler violence and urge them to thoroughly investigate every instance and bring those responsible to justice.

Premium Bonds

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether any consultation took place before the announcement that, in future, premium bond winners will not receive their cheques by post. [HL9414]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The decision by NS&I announced on September 17 to pay all Premium Bonds prizes direct to customers' bank accounts was informed by customer research and changing customer behaviours. It will make managing Premium Bonds prize distribution quicker, more cost-effective and have a much lower environmental impact.

Since 2011, Premium Bonds holders have been able to have their prizes paid directly into a UK bank account in their name. Since March 2020, nearly half a million customers have switched from receiving paper warrants to having their prizes paid directly into their bank account or automatically reinvested. In the October 2020 prize draw, more than three quarters (76%) of the 3,921,323 prizes were paid directly into customers' bank accounts or reinvested into more Premium Bonds.

Public Transport: Air Pollution

Asked by Lord Bradshaw

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps are being taken to improve the air quality inside public transport vehicles. [HL9357]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Improving air quality is a top priority for this Government. We have put in place a

£3.8 billion plan to deliver cleaner transport that includes £130 million already invested to support the purchase of over 1,700 low emission buses and supporting infrastructure and a further £5 billion announced by the Prime Minister to deliver a further 4,000 new zero emission vehicles and improve services.

Actions we take to cut pollution from transport will improve air quality for users of public transport. In light of COVID-19, the Department's Safer Transport guidance for operators encourages consideration of how to increase ventilation and air flow inside public transport vehicles. Where possible, transport operators should ensure that a fresh air supply is consistently flowing through public transport vehicles. The guidance is available online.

Racial Discrimination

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address racism. [HL9062]

Baroness Berridge: The Government's Race Disparity Audit (RDA) and its website, Ethnicity Facts and Figures, was launched in October 2017. The website is a world first and has been welcomed internationally for its open and data-driven approach to highlighting inequalities of outcomes.

In response to its findings, Government has taken action to address disparities in criminal justice, increasing diversity in employment, mental health, school exclusions, and barriers to progress for young people.

To date, the Race Disparity Unit has worked across Whitehall and with local authorities to co-produce interventions to address disparities. These include:

- In the last 12 months, we have undertaken work to improve trust between police forces and the local communities that they serve, including increasing diversity in the police workforce and developing additional training;
- We continue to provide targeted employment support in twenty areas around the country with high rates of ethnic minority unemployment to boost earning potential;
- Last year, we announced measures to drive change in tackling inequalities between ethnic groups in higher education, and the last 10 years have seen a significant increase in the rates of 18 year olds from ethnic minority groups going to university; and
- And we are acting on the findings of the Public Health England Review into disparities in the risks and outcomes of COVID-19 to ensure we take the right steps to protect and minimise the risks to vulnerable groups.

In addition, this year the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities was established and is examining all aspects of continuing racial and ethnic disparities in Britain. The Commission aims to set out a new, positive agenda for change - balancing the needs of individuals,

communities and society, maximising opportunities and ensuring fairness for all.

It is building on the work of the Race Disparity Unit. The Commission is carrying out a deeper examination of what the causes of these disparities are and is seeking to establish what works to address them effectively.

Railways: Fares

Asked by Lord Bradshaw

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to modify railway fares in the light of changing demand. [HL9358]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government remains committed to modernising rail fares and ticketing and, despite the impact of COVID-19, recognises that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a fundamental change in working patterns which could have long-term effects on commuter behaviours. We are actively considering how we can modernise our fares and retailing offer, to develop more convenient and better value options for passengers.

Renewable Energy: VAT

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the case for removing VAT from domestic microgeneration renewable products and installations to help consumers to adopt domestic renewable energy sources. [HL9352]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Under current VAT rules, the installation of water and wind turbines is subject to the standard rate of VAT. However, the installation of other energy saving materials that generate domestic energy, such as solar panels and micro combined heat and power units, are subject to the reduced rate of VAT when certain conditions are met.

Although there are no current plans to extend the scope of the relief already in place, the Government keeps all taxes under review.

Spaceflight: Unst

Asked by Lord Goodlad

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions have been held between the UK Space Agency and the Shetland Island Council about locating a spaceport on Unst; and what have been the outcomes from any such discussions. [HL9470]

Lord Callanan: The UK Space Agency has been in regular contact with Shetland Island Council, as we have been with councils in all potential spaceport locations, to understand their plans to support the Shetland Space Centre. These meetings have ensured a collaborative

working relationship between the UK Space Agency and Shetland Island Council, and that the Council is aware of the support and engagement forums offered by Government to enable them to harness the opportunities offered by commercial spaceflight. For example, the UK Space Agency invited Shetland Island Council to attend the Regulation plenary sessions as well as put them in contact with relevant officials who can provide clarity around security considerations relating to engagement with other nations. Furthermore, UK Space Agency officials visited Shetland in October 2019 and received a briefing from the Shetland Island Council on their plans to support the Shetland Space Centre.

Special Educational Needs

Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the challenges facing the parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities as outlined in the BBC Panorama programme *Fighting for an Education*, broadcast on 7 September. [HL9391]

Baroness Berridge: The safety and wellbeing of the most vulnerable children has always been a priority. That is why we kept nurseries, schools and colleges open to those with education, health and care plans, where it was safe to do so, and provided clear guidance on who was eligible to attend.

We understand that this is a challenging time for all parents, but particularly for those whose children have additional needs. As part of our response to the COVID-19 outbreak, we have supported local authorities, education providers and health services to respond to the challenges effectively by providing local authorities with £4.6 billion to meet additional demands, including within children's services. We are also increasing high needs funding for those with the most complex special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) by £780 million this year, and a further £730 million next year, to help provide the support that parents rightly expect for their children particularly during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Our reforms to the SEND system, in 2014, introduced vital support. In September 2019, we announced the SEND Review to ensure that the SEND system provides consistent, high quality, and integrated support across education, health and care. This cross-government review will look at ways to improve SEND so that young people with additional needs can thrive as they prepare for adulthood. The review will also consider ways of strengthening the accountability system and ensuring that poorer performing local authorities are monitored closely. In addition, we have commissioned the development of a new round of inspections from Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission, which we expect to drive more substantial improvements at a local and national level.

Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect to publish the outcome of their review of support for

children with special educational needs and disabilities. [HL9392]

Baroness Berridge: The government is currently conducting a thorough and fundamental review of the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system.

The issues that the SEND system face are complex, but we are determined to deliver real, lasting improvements, taking into account the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The findings of the review will be published as soon as it is practicable to do so.

Sports: Drugs

Asked by Lord Moynihan

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many tests were undertaken by UK Anti-Doping in the UK during the periods (1) January to March 2019, (2) April to June 2019, (3) July to September 2019, (4) October to December 2019, (5) January to March, (6) April to June, and (7) July to September. [HL9560]

Asked by Lord Moynihan

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many (1) blood samples, and (2) urine samples have been collected by UK Anti-Doping in the UK each month since March, in (a) England, (b) Scotland, (c) Northern Ireland, and (d) Wales. [HL9561]

Baroness Barran: UK Anti-Doping defines a test as any attempt to test a single athlete in a single Sample Collection Session. During the periods:

- i) January to March 2019, it conducted 3,803 tests.
- ii) April to June 2019, it conducted 2,212 tests.
- iii) July to September 2019, it conducted 2,943 tests.
- iv) October to December 2019, it conducted 2,789 tests.
- v) January to March 2020, it conducted 2,512 tests.
- vi) April to June 2020, it conducted 126 tests. The drop in testing during this period was due to UK Anti-Doping's decision in March 2020 to significantly reduce its testing programme due to Covid-19.
- vii) July to September 2020. The testing statistics for this period have not yet been released.

All testing in the first quarter of 2020-2021 (April-June 2020) conducted in the UK was done in England. However, this does not mean that athletes from Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales were not tested during this time. UK Anti-Doping publishes its testing figures on a quarterly basis and combines the figures for blood and urine samples. This ensures transparency of its testing activity, while protecting the confidential methodology which goes into planning a testing programme.

Asked by Lord Moynihan

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether a claim by athletes at a testing location that someone in their household is self-isolating, quarantining or shielding

provides sufficient grounds for UK Anti-Doping not to continue with testing; and how many cases in each of these categories have been noted by UK Anti-Doping since the restrictions arising from COVID-19 were imposed. [HL9562]

Baroness Barran: If attempting testing at an athlete's home, Doping Control Personnel or "Testers" will check whether anyone present at the athlete's residence is self-isolating, quarantining or shielding. If so, then this would provide sufficient grounds for UK Anti-Doping not to continue with testing. If testing outside of an athlete's home, Doping Control Personnel will check the athlete does not have Covid-19, Covid-19 symptoms, or is in an at risk-group before proceeding. UK Anti-Doping has developed a protocol which its Doping Control Personnel are required to follow to determine whether an athlete can be tested. This procedure is in line with the World Anti-Doping Agency's guidance for resuming testing, and is fully outlined on UK Anti-Doping's website.

Doping Control Personnel also warn the athlete that if they (or anyone else on their behalf) provide any information which is later found to be false, misleading, inaccurate or incomplete they may be committing the Anti-Doping Rule Violation of 'Tampering or Attempted Tampering' which could result in sanctions.

So far, there have not been any cases where testing has not proceeded due to self-isolation, quarantining or shielding.

Asked by Lord Moynihan

To ask Her Majesty's Government, following the ending of the statute on limitations this year for testing samples collected at the London Olympic Games in 2012, (1) how many anti-doping violations were found from retested samples collected in London; (2) what percentage of the urine samples collected at the London Olympic Games were re-analysed; and (3) which Olympic champions and medallists were stripped of their medals. [HL9563]

Baroness Barran: The government does not hold the data to answer this question. The samples collected during the London Olympic Games in 2012 were done so under the jurisdiction of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC), rather than UK Anti-Doping (the UK's national anti-doping organisation). As LOCOG no longer exists, it is therefore the IOC that has the ability to reanalyse the samples collected at the Games. UK Anti-Doping has welcomed the reanalysis of samples from previous Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Television Licences: Fees and Charges

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask Her Majesty's Government which regulations set the frequency and amount of instalments by which TV licence fees can be paid; what are the prescribed (1)

weekly, (2) monthly, and (3) quarterly, instalment amounts of such fees; and whether those instalments can be paid by cheque. [HL9410]

Baroness Barran: The payment instalment schemes for the TV licence fee are set out in the Communications (Television Licensing) Regulations 2004.

Schedule 2 of the Communications (Television Licensing) Regulations 2004 detail the instalment amounts and their frequency as prescribed by each instalment scheme.

It is the BBC, not the government, that administers these schemes and is responsible for the collection and enforcement of the licence fee, including methods of payment. TV Licensing's website explains that, at present, only annual licence fee payments can be made by cheque: <https://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/pay-for-your-tv-licence/ways-to-pay/cheque-or-postal-order>.

Tourism: Coronavirus

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support tourism businesses that are unable to trade due to COVID-19 restrictions. [HL9573]

Baroness Barran: We are aware that many tourism businesses' trade has been restricted by Government measures to control the spread of Covid-19.

We have taken a number of steps to support tourism businesses through this period, including the significant cut to VAT for tourism and hospitality activities until the end of March. Businesses can continue to make use of the Government's broader support package, including the Bounce Back Loans scheme, the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme and the Job Support Scheme.

We have expanded the Job Support Scheme to provide support to businesses whose premises have been legally required to close as a direct result of Covid-19 restrictions set by one or more of the four governments of the UK.

We have also announced grants of up to £2,100 per month, primarily for businesses in the hospitality, accommodation and leisure sector who may be adversely impacted by the restrictions in high-alert level areas in England.

We are continuing to engage across Government and with stakeholders to assess how we can most effectively support the recovery of tourism across the UK.

Trade Agreements: Ghana

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to explore non-reciprocal mechanisms to allow continued market access if their negotiations with the government of Ghana to reach a continuity trade agreement are not successful. [HL9395]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: We continue to engage with Ghana to secure their duty-free quota-free access to

Britain, through a continuity trade agreement that would replicate the effect of the existing EU trade agreement and provide lasting certainty for businesses in our trading arrangements.

If a continuity agreement cannot be agreed with Ghana then, as a lower-middle income country, they will be able to get some trade preferences through our Generalised Scheme of Preferences from 31st December 2020.

Training: Unemployed People

Asked by Lord Bird

To ask Her Majesty's Government what measures they are taking to facilitate the mass retraining and upskilling of people to enable them to work in COVID-19-proof industries. [HL9406]

Baroness Berridge: The department wants to make the skills systems more responsive to employer skills needs in all sectors and will do whatever it takes to support businesses and people affected by COVID-19, which is why we offer a variety of programmes that businesses and individuals can use to retrain and upskill.

Adult skills are key in supporting the economy and tackling disadvantage. We are continuing to invest in education and skills training for adults through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) (£1.34 billion in the 2020/21 financial year). The principal purpose of the AEB is to engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to equip them for work, an apprenticeship or further learning. This includes fully funded courses in English and maths for adults who need to improve their literacy and numeracy, fully funded first full level 2 and/or level 3 for learners aged 19 to 23 and from 1 August 2020, fully funded specified digital skills qualifications for adults with no/low digital skills. The AEB also funds learning in the workplace, where a learner has a statutory entitlement to full funding.

Employers can offer apprenticeships to new recruits and existing staff, supporting the creation of new jobs as well as opportunities to upskill. They can choose between more than 580 apprenticeship standards that have been designed by employers to deliver the skills they need.

The government is also providing £2.5 billion (£3 billion when including Barnett funding for devolved administrations), for the National Skills Fund.

The fund aims to boost productivity and ensure more people and places can share in the rewards that improved productivity can bring. It also presents a great opportunity to create a more coherent and simpler system that learners, providers, local areas and employers can more easily understand and navigate.

My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister recently announced that for adults who do not currently have a level 3 qualification, the government will be fully funding their first full level 3 through the National Skills Fund. We will target this level 3 entitlement at subjects and qualifications with economic value and the strongest

alignment with government priorities, to ensure the best possible returns for individuals, employers and the nation.

The Prime Minister also announced the launch of our new digital bootcamps, in 6 areas, to support local regions and employers to fill in-demand vacancies. The bootcamp training courses will provide valuable skills based on employer demand and will offer a fast track to a job interview on completion. Pending the success of the initial bootcamps, we are planning to expand the digital bootcamps to more of the country from Spring 2021 and we also want to extend this model to include other technical skills training.

Further plans for the National Skills Fund will be communicated in due course.

Turkey: Military Intervention

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Prime Minister has received a joint letter, dated 2 September, from community organisations representing Cypriots, Armenians, Kurds and Egyptians in the UK about the government of Turkey's military actions; and if so, what assessment they have made of that letter. [HL9369]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The joint letter was responded to by HM Government on 30th September 2020.

The response outlined our priority to replicate the effects of the existing EU trading relationship with Turkey as far as possible, into a bilateral arrangement by the end of the Transition Period, whilst also offering reassurance on the robustness of our policies on the important matters raised. Trade does not come at the expense of our record in upholding rights and responsibilities, which a key part of our foreign policy, and HM Government will continue to engage the Turkish Government on these issues.

Turkey: Water Supply

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to make representations to the government of Turkey to restore the supply from Alouk water station on a permanent basis; and what plans they have to seek the support of other countries on this matter. [HL9536]

Baroness Sugg: The UK remains concerned by persistent disruption to water supply from Alouk water station to Hasakeh and other parts of North East Syria. Officials have raised this with the Turkish Government, including most recently on 22nd October. They continue to reassure us on their commitment to finding a workable solution. The UK discusses the situation regularly with the UN and UN member states, including at the Humanitarian Task Force in Geneva. Inconsistent electricity provision to pump water is an additional impediment and we welcome recent attempts by UNICEF

to begin installing voltage stabilisers. We will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Union Election Commission: Overseas Aid

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have provided any funds to support the Union Election Commission in Myanmar; if so, why; and what assessment they have made of reports that it has forbidden Rohingya people from standing as candidates. [HL9415]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is not providing any direct financial support to the Union Election Commission (UEC). We are very concerned at the exclusion of candidates on spurious citizenship grounds, this includes Rohingya and Muslim candidates. The right to stand as a candidate for all people in Myanmar is a key part of achieving effective democracy. Decisions made by the election commission must be transparent and clearly communicated. We are clear that the Rohingya, who have lived in Myanmar for generations, should be granted full citizenship and the associated rights. The Rohingya should not be excluded from Myanmar's elections. The Minister for Asia raised this issue with the Myanmar Minister for International Cooperation in June. We also raised this at the UN Security Council in September.

Union Learning Fund

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to replace the Union Learning Fund to ensure that workers continue to have access to training. [HL9383]

Baroness Berridge: The National Skills Fund is a substantial commitment to invest £2.5 billion in skills development over this parliament, which compares to £12 million in the current annual budget for Unionlearn. There is an existing adult entitlement to support any adult without English and Maths level 2 or Digital Skills level 1 to gain those qualifications, which my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, extended with his speech at Exeter College on 29 September 2020, confirming a new Lifetime Learning Guarantee that any adult without a level 3 qualification would be fully funded to obtain one. Reinvesting our existing funding for Unionlearn in our expanded offer will therefore contribute to a much more comprehensive offer in future, accessible to a wide range of learners, helping them to develop their skills and careers.

Universities: Remote Education

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with universities regarding a move to online teaching. [HL9381]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: We applaud the resilience, innovation and dedication shown by higher education staff and students in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. In August, my hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Universities, convened, and continues to chair, the Higher Education Taskforce, which includes representatives from a number of university organisations, through which we have provided public health advice and discussed matters to help providers to keep students and staff as safe as possible. In addition, universities are working with their local health protection teams and Directors of Public Health to determine the most effective measures that will help reduce transmission.

The Office for Students (OfS) has published information for providers, detailing practical guidance on how best to ensure students continue to receive a high-quality academic experience. The OfS will keep this guidance under review to ensure it remains relevant to the developing circumstances of the pandemic. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education has also published a series of guides to support providers to secure academic standards and to support student achievement during the pandemic.

The OfS published a statement on 9 October, setting out a number of measures that it is taking. These include making direct contact with those providers which have moved predominantly to online provision as a result of local COVID-19 restrictions. The OfS is actively monitoring these providers to ensure that they maintain the quality of their provision, that they are making all reasonable efforts to ensure online learning is accessible for all students, and that they have been clear in their communications to students about how arrangements for teaching and learning may change throughout this year. If the OfS has any concerns, it will investigate further.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has also commissioned Sir Michael Barber, the Chairman of the OfS, to lead a review to consider how to enhance the quality of digital teaching and learning and the opportunities which digital education presents for universities in the medium and long term. The review is expected to report in spring 2021.

Urban Areas: Regeneration

Asked by Lord Hay of Ballyore

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the progress made to date on their plans to reinvigorate fishing towns and communities. [HL9640]

Lord Greenhalgh: This Government recognises the unique challenges facing coastal communities and is committed to levelling up all areas of the UK. Through our £229 million Coastal Communities Fund we are supporting communities across England, including fishing towns. Now, through the £3.6 billion Towns Fund we are investing up to £25 million in fishing towns such as Blyth and St Ives. Coastal communities will further be supported through our flagship Fisheries Bill, creating new powers to set fairer fishing opportunities.

World Health Assembly: Taiwan

Asked by Baroness Northover

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to seek to include Taiwan as an observer at the forthcoming World Health Assembly, particularly at technical meetings relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL9434]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK continues to support Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organisations where statehood is not a prerequisite and where Taiwan can make a valuable contribution. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office supports the Department for Health in lobbying for Taiwan's participation in World Health Organisation (WHO) meetings. The UK is working with likeminded countries to lobby the WHO at official level to issue an invitation to Taiwan to observe the World Health Assembly in November and allow Taiwan to participate in relevant WHO technical meetings. Lessons learnt from Taiwan's effective tackling of the Covid-19 pandemic adds significant value to the international fight against the virus.

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