

**Session 2019-21
No. 149**



**Thursday
26 November 2020**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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

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Earl Howe	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
Lord Agnew of Oulton	Minister of State, Treasury and Cabinet Office
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Lord Ashton of Hyde	Chief Whip
Baroness Barran	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
Baroness Berridge	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education and Department for International Trade
Lord Bethell	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care and Whip
Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist	Whip
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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

Thursday, 26 November 2020

Contingencies Fund Advance

[HLWS600]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: My right honourable friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

HM Revenue and Customs will incur new expenditure in connection with the government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-21.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £21,715,000,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for HM Revenue and Customs. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £21,715,000,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

In line with the latest OBR forecasts, further requests to the Contingencies Fund may be made as necessary to fund Covid-19 activity delivered by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

Covid-19 Winter Plan: Tiers

[HLWS597]

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

On 23 November, the Prime Minister set out our Covid-19 Winter Plan in Parliament. Our Covid-19 Winter Plan puts forward the UK Government's programme for suppressing the virus, protecting the NHS and the vulnerable, keeping education and the economy going, and providing a route back to normality. Thanks to the shared sacrifice of everyone in recent weeks, in following the national restrictions, we have been able to start to bring the virus back under control and slow its growth, easing some of the pressure on the NHS. We will do this by returning to a regional tiered approach, saving the toughest measures for the parts of the country where prevalence remains too high.

The tiering approach provides a framework that, if used firmly, should prevent the need to introduce stricter national measures.

On 2 December we will lift the national restrictions across all of England and the following restrictions will be eased:

- i) The stay-at-home requirement will end.
- ii) Non-essential retail, gyms, personal care will reopen. The wider leisure and entertainment sectors will also reopen, although to varying degrees.
- iii) Communal worship, weddings and outdoor sports can resume.

iv) People will no longer be limited to seeing one other person in outdoor public spaces, where the rule of 6 will now apply.

The new regulations set out the restrictions applicable in each tier. We have taken into account advice from SAGE on the impact of the previous tiers to strengthen the measures in the tiers, and help enable areas to move more swiftly into lower tiers.

The changes to the tiers are as follows:

- In tier 1, the Government will reinforce the importance that, where people can work from home, they should do so.
- In tier 2, hospitality settings that serve alcohol must close, unless operating as restaurants. Hospitality venues can only serve alcohol with substantial meals.
- In tier 3, hospitality will close except for delivery, drive-through and takeaway, hotels and other accommodation providers must close (except for specific exemptions, such as people staying for work purposes, where people are attending a funeral, or where they cannot return home) and indoor entertainment venues such as cinemas, theatres and bowling allies must also close. Elite sport will be played without spectators. Organised outdoor sport can resume, but the Government will advise against higher risk contact sports.

These are not easy decisions, but they have been made according to the best clinical advice, and the criteria that we set out in the Covid-19 Winter Plan.

These are:

- i) Case detection rates in all age groups
- ii) Case detection rates in the over 60s
- iii) The rate at which cases are rising or falling
- iv) Positivity rate (the number of positive cases detected as a percentage of tests taken)
- v) Pressure on the NHS.

The indicators have been designed to give the Government a picture of what is happening with the virus in any area so that suitable action can be taken. These key indicators need to be viewed in the context of how they interact with each other as well as the wider context but provide an important framework for decision making – assessing the underlying prevalence in addition to how the spread of the disease is changing in areas. Given these sensitivities, it is not possible to set rigid thresholds for these indicators.

The regulations will require the Government to review the allocations every 14 days, with the first review complete by the end of 16 December.

We have been able to announce UK-wide arrangements for Christmas, allowing friends and loved ones to reunite, and form a Christmas bubble of three households for five days over the Christmas period.

We have increased funding through our Contain Outbreak Management Fund, which will provide monthly payments to local authorities facing higher restrictions.

We are also launching a major community testing programme, honing in on the areas with the greatest rate of infection.

This programme is open to local authorities in Tier 3 areas and offers help to get out of the toughest restrictions as fast as possible.

The following areas will be in each tier from the 2 December. This list will also be published on gov.uk and a postcode tracker will be available for the public to check what rules apply in their local area.

<i>Allocations</i>			
<i>Region</i>	<i>Sub-Region</i>	<i>Allocation</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
North West	Greater Manchester	Very High (Tier 3)	While there has been continued improvement in Greater Manchester, weekly case rates remain very high, especially amongst those aged over 60, at around 260 per 100,000 people. The pressure on the local NHS is decreasing in some areas but remains a concern; Manchester University hospital and Pennine Acute Trust remain under significant pressure.
	Lancashire, Blackpool, and Blackburn with Darwen	Very High (Tier 3)	While there have been improvements in some areas, case rates and the proportion of tests which are positive for covid-19 remain high. Case rates in over 60s are very high (over 200 per 100,000) in 6 lower tier local authorities. There is still pressure on the NHS in this region.
	Liverpool City Region	High (Tier 2)	There is continued improvement across the Liverpool city region. Case rates (including for the over 60s) are decreasing rapidly with some notable improvements in Liverpool, Knowsley and Sefton. Cases have fallen by 69% over 6 weeks. However, despite improvements, case rates in over 60s remain high at 150+ per 100,000 people in all lower tier local authorities.
	Cheshire (including Warrington)	High (Tier 2)	Case rates are continuing to decline across Warrington and Cheshire, with a 27.4% fall to 209 people per 100,000, in line with Liverpool City Region. However, case rates in those over 60 remain high (175/100,000) though falling. Positivity is 8.1%. Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS foundation Trust has 150 inpatients with Covid-19.
	Cumbria	High (Tier 2)	The picture in Cumbria is broadly improving although case rates in Carlisle and South Lakeland are increasing – with increases likely due to a large school outbreak. Case rates in over 60s are above 100 per 100,000 in Carlisle and Barrow-in-Furness. These case rates are too high for allocation to Tier 1 but Cumbria's trajectory does currently not warrant inclusion in Tier 3.
North East	Tees Valley Combined Authority	Very High (Tier 3)	While case rates are now decreasing in all lower tier local authorities, they remain very high at 390 people per 100,000 across the region, with positivity also very high at 13.3%. The case rate in over 60s remains very high at 292 per 100,000. NHS admissions in the area have remained high in November.
	North East Combined Authority	Very High (Tier 3)	The region continues to see very high case rates, overall 318 people per 100,000, although this figure is either stable or falling in all parts of the region. Case rate in over 60s remains very high at 256 per 100,000. NHS admissions in the area have remained high in November.
Yorkshire and The Humber	The Humber	Very High (Tier 3)	The picture in Humber is improving with case rates now falling in 3 of the 4 lower tier local authorities. However, case rates in all ages and in over 60s remain very high (431/100,000 and 344/100,000 respectively). Positivity is 12.6%. There is ongoing pressure on the local NHS.
	West Yorkshire	Very High (Tier 3)	This area is improving with case rates falling in all 5 lower tier local authorities. However, case rates in all ages and rates in over 60s remain very high (389/100,000 and 312/100,000 respectively). Positivity is 13.9%.
	South Yorkshire	Very High (Tier 3)	This area is improving with case rates falling in all 4 lower tier local authorities. However, case rates in all ages and rates in those over 60 remain very high (274/100,000 and 223/100,000 respectively). Positivity is 11.0%. There is pressure on local NHS Trusts.
	York and North Yorkshire	High (Tier 2)	Overall case rates (including for those over 60) in this region are improving in seven of the eight local authorities and lower than other parts of Yorkshire and The Humber but remain high overall (202/100,000 in all age groups and 145/100,000 for those aged over 60). Positivity is 8.5%. Rates in Scarborough are significantly higher than the rest of the region (334/100,000 in all age groups and 247/100,000 in those aged over 60) but falling rapidly.
East Midlands	Leicester and Leicestershire	Very High (Tier 3)	Improvements have been seen in overall case rates in all but one lower tier local authority, but remain very high at 355 per 100,000, including in over 60s at 250 per 100k. The pressure on the local NHS remains very high.
	Derby and Derbyshire	Very High (Tier 3)	There has been improvement in this area, but case rates remain very high at 275 per 100,000, and in those over 60 it is 220 per 100,000. The pressure on the local NHS remains high.

	Lincolnshire	Very High (Tier 3)	There has been an overall improvement, but case rates remain high throughout the county, at 307 per 100,000 and in the over 60s it is 281 per 100,000. NHS pressures in Lincolnshire remain high and show signs of increasing, particularly for the units treating the more serious cases
	Nottingham and Nottinghamshire	Very High (Tier 3)	There has been an improvement, but case rates remain very high in the over 60s at 211 per 100,000. The overall case rate is 244 per 100,000 and positivity is 10%. The proportion of hospital beds taken up by covid-19 patients is high but appears to be falling.
	Northamptonshire	High (Tier 2)	Although improvements in the overall case rates have been seen recently, there is a continued rise in rates of Covid-19 in the over 60s. Over 60s case rate is 154 per 100,000. There is some evidence that the local NHS is seeing the proportion of people with Covid-19 being admitted and subsequently occupying beds stabilising, however Covid and Non-Covid patients occupying beds in units treating more serious cases is high.
	Rutland	High (Tier 2)	This area is improving with a case rate of 125 per 100,000 and 118 per 100,000 for the over 60s, which while elevated is different from the surrounding areas. Positivity is 6.4%.
West Midlands	Birmingham and Black Country	Very High (Tier 3)	While case rates are improving (down 8.3%) they remain very high (390/100,000). There is a similar trend for positivity. Pressure on the NHS remains high.
	Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent	Very High (Tier 3)	While the situation is improving with case rates down 13.4%, case rates and test positivity are both very high across this area (391/100,000 and 11.1% respectively). The pressure on the local NHS remains very high, including in units treating the more serious cases.
	Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull	Very High (Tier 3)	The case rate remains very high (though falling) across this area at 236/100,000. The case rate in over 60s remains very high at 182/100,000. There is a clear upward trend in case rates in over 60s in three of the seven local authority areas. Positivity is 9.0%. The pressure on the local NHS remains high.
	Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin	High (Tier 2)	The case rate remains high (though falling) at 200/100,000. The case rate in over 60s remains high at 139/100,000 and is falling. Positivity is 7.2%.
	Herefordshire	High (Tier 2)	Herefordshire has a high case rate at 160.3/100,000. These rates are too high for allocation to Tier 1 but the slight downward trajectory – a fall of 1.9% - does currently not warrant inclusion in Tier 3.
	Worcestershire	High (Tier 2)	While there has been a decline in case rates in all lower tier local authorities they do remain high (201/100,000), including in the over 60s (141/100,000). These case rates are too high for allocation to Tier 1 but the downward trajectory – with a fall of 18.3% - does currently not warrant inclusion in Tier 3. Hospital admissions of patients with covid-19 have started to stabilise
London	London	High (Tier 2)	The trajectory of key indicators of Covid-19 in an area (including all age case rates, over 60s case rates and positivity) have been increasing until very recently. The situation in London is not uniform throughout the city. 13 of the 33 boroughs have case rates which are 10% or more higher than a week ago and ten boroughs where case rates for over 60s are above 150 per 100,000. Hospital admissions continue to increase in the East and North London in particular, although they are still well below the spring peak. Taken as a whole, the situation in London has stabilised at a similar case rate and positivity to other parts of the country in Tier 2.
East of England	Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes	High (Tier 2)	The overall case rate is still increasing in two of the three lower tier local authorities. The overall case rate is high at 178/100,000 and it is 113/100,000 in the over 60s although this rises to 185/100,000 in Luton. Positivity 6.9%. There is pressure on the local NHS.
	Essex, Thurrock and Southend on Sea	High (Tier 2)	Overall the rate is 159/100,000 and rising. The rate in over 60s is 100/100,000 and falling. Positivity is 6.4%.
	Norfolk	High (Tier 2)	The majority of Norfolk is improving. Case rates are 123/100,000 and positivity is 5.0%. Case rates for over 60s remain over 100 per 100,000 in Great Yarmouth, Norwich and South Norfolk (with increasing trajectories in the last two areas).
	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	High (Tier 2)	An improving picture with decreasing case rates across 5 of the 6 local authorities although the case rate is still high at 123/100,000 overall. Case rates in over 60s are also decreasing (58/100,000). Positivity has dropped to 5.2%.
	Hertfordshire	High (Tier 2)	There is an improving picture across the majority of Hertfordshire – the case rate has fallen to 147/100,000 overall with drops in rates in 9 of the 10 local authorities. Case rates in over 60s are falling also (102/100,000) but they are greater than 100/100,000 in 6 local authorities. Positivity is 6.3% falling.
	Suffolk	High (Tier 2)	There is an improving picture across the majority of Suffolk. The case rate has fallen to 82/100,000 with drops in rate in 4 of the 5 local

			authorities. There has been a >40% increase in weekly case rate to 128/100,000 in Ipswich compared to the previous week. Across Suffolk, case rates in over 60s are also falling (72/100,000). Positivity is 3.7%.
South East	Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton.	High (Tier 2)	There is a mixed picture across this area although the overall case rate is now 152/100,000 and falling in almost all areas. NHS admissions were increasing rapidly until mid-November and are now stable.
	Isle of Wight	Medium (Tier 1)	The case rate is low and decreasing at 71 per 100,000 and lower in over 60s at 44 per 100,000. Covid-19 pressure on the NHS is low.
	East and West Sussex, and Brighton and Hove	High (Tier 2)	Case rates in Sussex are at 120 per 100,000 with a total positivity of 4.5%. However, the trend is increasing in several areas. NHS admissions have been fairly stable in the last month but there is increasing occupancy in units treating more serious cases.
	Surrey	High (Tier 2)	Case rates are stable or improving in all areas with the overall rate at 139 per 100,000. The most concerning lower tier local authorities are those that neighbour London (Spelthorne and Runnymede) with case rates over 200 per 100,000, and high case rates in the over 60s are observed in neighbouring Surrey Heath and Woking. Surrey Heartlands Health & Care Partnership (STP) report admissions to hospital from covid-19 patients were fairly stable in the last month.
	Reading, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest, Windsor and Maidenhead, West Berkshire	High (Tier 2)	An improving picture across the area with the exception of Slough and Reading. Slough has high case rates (326 per 100,000 overall and 219 per 100,000 for the over 60s) and relatively high positivity of 12%. The case rate and positivity away from Slough do not justify inclusion at tier 3.
	Slough	Very High (Tier 3)	The weekly case rate in Slough is much higher than surrounding areas at over 320 per 100,000 people compared with 155 per 100,000 in the rest of Berkshire and 138 in Buckinghamshire. Test positivity is also much higher at 12%.
	Buckinghamshire	High (Tier 2)	A broadly stable or improving picture across Buckinghamshire with a case rate at 138 per 100,000 and positivity at 6.4%. These case rates remain too high for allocation to Tier 1.
	Oxfordshire	High (Tier 2)	Positive improvements across key indicators across all areas in Oxfordshire, but case rates still too high for Tier 1. Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire And Berkshire West STP hospital admissions have been fairly stable in recent months.
	Kent & Medway	Very High (Tier 3)	Case rates are high and continuing to rise with large increases in case rates in almost all areas in the last 7 days. Some of the highest case rates in the country are currently seen in Kent. Rising case rates in people aged over 60 are a particular concern. Positivity is also increasing in 10 of the 13 lower tier local authorities. Kent And Medway STP are reporting hospital admissions are increasing and mutual aid necessary across the county.
South West	Bristol, South Gloucestershire, North Somerset	Very High (Tier 3)	The overall picture remains concerning with very high case rates overall (325/100,000) and in the over 60s (208/100,000). Positivity is 10.4%. Bristol, South Gloucestershire, and North Somerset are part of a wider travel to work area and thus form a natural geographic grouping, separate to the surrounding area.
	Somerset and Bath and North East Somerset	High (Tier 2)	There are very small increases in the case rates in this area, however overall case rates and those in over 60s remain high (154/100,000 and 102/100,000 respectively). Positivity is stable at 5.5%.
	Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	High (Tier 2)	Case rates are falling across the area (131/100,000 in all cases and 99/100,000 in the over 60s). However the over 60 case rate is still high at 151/100,000 in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. Positivity is 5.2%. In addition, the Dorset STP reports daily admissions to hospitals are increasing.
	Gloucestershire	High (Tier 2)	Case rates in Gloucestershire remain high at 162/100,000. While a decline has been seen in the case rate in the over 60s, this remains at 92/100,000. Positivity is 6.3%.
	Wiltshire and Swindon	High (Tier 2)	Case rates continue to fall in Swindon but are increasing in Wiltshire. Overall case rates are 143/100,000 and 93/100,000 in the over 60s. Positivity is 6.2%. Swindon and Wiltshire STP are reporting increasing admissions to hospital.
	Devon	High (Tier 2)	Case rates are 121/100,000 overall though there are higher rates in Plymouth, Torbay and Exeter. The case rate in the over 60s is 85/100,000 though significantly higher in Exeter (155.9/100,000). Positivity is 4.2%. There is pressure at the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital.
	Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	Medium (Tier 1)	There are low case rates and test positivity in Cornwall and the case rates in all age groups are stable or declining.
			There have been no cases in the Isles of Scilly in the last seven days meaning there is strong evidence to make an allocation to Tier 1.

Departmental Contingent Liability Notification: Human Challenge Project

[HLWS595]

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

I am tabling this statement for the benefit of Honourable and Right Honourable Members to bring to their attention the contingent liabilities relating to the contract signed between the Government and Imperial College London for the Human Challenge Project.

This project was announced on 20 October and is aimed at supporting the search for a Covid-19 vaccine. A £33.6 million Government investment will back the project in partnership with Imperial College London, hVIVO and the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust.

In human challenge studies, a vaccine candidate that has proven to be safe in initial trials is given to a small number of carefully selected healthy, young adult volunteers who are then exposed to the virus in a safe and controlled environment. These studies offer the chance to accelerate development of promising vaccines against Covid-19, bringing them to people more quickly and potentially saving thousands of lives.

The first step of the project is the Virus Characterisation Study. This will begin in January 2021 and establish the smallest amount of virus needed to cause Covid-19 infection in the volunteers. Robust safety, ethics, and regulatory approvals will be put in place before the study begins. Imperial College is the academic study sponsor for the Characterisation Study. As study sponsor, Imperial will be liable for any negative side-effects volunteers may experience in this study. Imperial has therefore taken out its own insurance, up to the sum of £10m and for up to 36 months after completion of the study.

My Department has agreed to provide the excess for a Relief Claim that Imperial may make for a maximum of £15,000 per volunteer (to a maximum of the 90 volunteers involved in this Study). This is only applicable where the claim arises as the result of the study but not as the result of one of the parties' negligence. In addition to the agreed excess, my Department has agreed to provide unlimited indemnity beyond the £10 million.

My Department believes that this is a justifiable position given the very low risk of exceeding the maximum liability. In a reasonable worst-case scenario, our analysis estimates that liability would be under £1.5m. Therefore, we do not expect the maximum liability to be exceeded.

A full Departmental Minute will be laid in the House of Commons providing more detail on this contingent liability.

Elizabeth Dixon Investigation Report

[HLWS598]

Lord Bethell: My Hon Friend the Minister of State (Minister for Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health) (Nadine Dorries) has made the following written statement:

Today we have published the report into the events surrounding the death of Elizabeth Dixon – a baby who sadly died in December 2001 from asphyxiation resulting from a blocked tracheostomy tube and while under the care of a private nursing agency.

I offer my heart-felt condolences to Elizabeth's family, to Anne and Graeme Dixon for their loss, compounded by the length of time – the passage of twenty years – before the facts of this case have been brought to light.

The investigation led by Dr Bill Kirkup was tasked with reviewing the care given to Elizabeth Dixon between her birth on 14 December 2000 and her death on 4 December 2001 - and the response of the health system to a catalogue of errors and serious failings in that care.

This report describes a harrowing and shocking series of mistakes associated with the care received by Elizabeth and a response to her death that was completely inadequate and at times inhumane. Elizabeth and her family were let down by a failure to diagnose or respond to her underlying condition, to put in place the care she required, to acknowledge the circumstances of her death or provide her parents with an honest account of these failings.

The investigation sheds light on what the report describes as a 'twenty year cover up'. It alleges that some individuals have been persistently dishonest in accounting for their actions or inaction.

Underlying all of this was the acceptance of a flawed prognosis that influenced the future course of events. It created a situation in which "facts were wilfully ignored, and alternatives fabricated". Shocking too is the implication in the report's recommendations that the presence of her physical and mental health needs may have been used to justify or excuse the inadequate care she had received.

On behalf of Government and the health system I would like to say I am truly sorry for the devastating impact this must have had upon the Dixon family.

Individuals made mistakes and acted unprofessionally, but the system allowed it. The report makes clear that "clinical error, openly disclosed, investigated and learned from, should not result in blame or censure; equally, conscious choices to cover up or to be dishonest should not be tolerated".

It is also unacceptable for patients ever to be exposed to unsafe or poor care, and I remain fully committed to ensuring we provide the highest standards of quality and safe services to all patients.

I am grateful to my Right Honourable Friend the member for South West Surrey for commissioning this investigation in June 2017 when he was Secretary of State for Health and bringing these events into the open. I would also like to thank Dr Bill Kirkup and his team for the diligence and hard work that has informed their report.

Particularly, I would like to pay tribute to Anne and Graeme Dixon who have fought so hard for answers. I hope this report is the beginning of a process that will bring some closure for the family. They should not have had to wait for so long.

This report shines a light on a culture of denial and cover up 20 years ago that left a family with little choice but report their concerns to the police. Families should not have to fight a closed system for answers and I will not hesitate to expose this sort of behaviour whenever it appears today.

Indeed, Elizabeth's legacy should be that other families will always be told the truth.

Relevant organisations will need to consider and reflect carefully on the report's recommendations. There is no room for complacency. The continual appearance of shocking reports about patient safety – historic or more recent – implies there is much for the NHS to focus on. My Department will therefore have oversight of their responses and report back to the House. There needs to be learning and implementation, but above all I want to be assured that we are doing all we can to make sure such events cannot happen again.

No other family should ever again have to go through the heartache and frustration experienced by the Dixon's and I apologise again for the failings set out in this report.

Copies of the report have been laid before the House.

Public Health England: Annual Report and Accounts 2019-20

[HLWS596]

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

I wish to inform the House of the publication of Public Health England's Annual Report and Accounts for the financial year 2019/20. A copy of the Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20 ('the Report') has been laid before both Houses.

Public Health England (PHE) is an Executive Agency of the Department of Health and Social Care, providing the evidence, support and advice needed locally, nationally and internationally. PHE is responsible for four critical functions: protecting the public's health; improving the public's health, improving population health; and supporting the capacity and capability of the public health system in England.

The Report sets out the activity, performance and expenditure of PHE for key areas of its business for 2019-

2020 financial year and reflects the position as at 31 March 2020. The report is based on activity in the 2019/20 financial year and notes that some performance in the final quarter was impacted because PHE rigorously reprioritised to free up significant internal resource for the Covid-19 response.

As referenced in the Report, on 18 August 2020, the Government announced the establishment of a new National Institute for Health Protection (NIHP), which will bring together the additional testing capacity at scale of NHS Test and Trace, the Joint Biosecurity Centre intelligence and analytical capability with the public health science and health protection expertise of PHE. NIHP will be formally and fully established in 2021.

NHS Test and Trace and PHE put in place integrated arrangements on the Covid-19 response and created a joint situational awareness team to provide analysis and insight into the progression of the virus, under single leadership.

Until further formal changes are made, PHE continues to operate and deliver its core functions in line with its Framework Agreement and continues to be held to account for delivery against the priorities set by Government in the annual strategic remit and priorities letter and agreed business plans through formal quarterly accountability meetings. PHE's governance boards and groups and PHE's Advisory Board also continue to operate. There will be a continued focus on responding to Covid-19, now and throughout the winter. Health improvement, preventing ill health and reducing inequalities will also remain priorities for PHE, prior to full transition to new arrangements.

Work is underway to determine the right future arrangements for PHE's vital non-health protection functions, including health improvement responsibilities, and we will engage widely on proposals before implementing new arrangements in 2021.

Retail Prices Index Methodology: Government and UK Statistics Authority Joint Consultation Response

[HLWS599]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: My honourable friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

Today, the Government and UK Statistics Authority have published the response to their joint consultation on the reform to Retail Prices Index (RPI) methodology. The consultation response document can be found at the following address:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-consultation-on-the-reform-to-retail-prices-index-rpi-methodology>.

A copy of the consultation response has been deposited in the Library of the House.

Tax Credits, Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance

[HLWS601]

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

The government will bring forward regulations that will increase most tax credits rates and thresholds and will increase the Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance rates in line with the general rise in prices as measured by the September 2020 Consumer Price Index (CPI). CPI has been the default inflation measure for the government's statutory annual review of benefits since 2011.

The annual uprating of benefits will take place for tax credits from the start of the new tax year and for Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance in the first full week of the 2021-22 tax year. In 2021, this will be 6 April for tax credits and 12 April for Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance.

The government is committed to supporting those who need it most. The annual up-rating process takes into account a variety of measures:

- The majority of elements and thresholds in Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit will be increased by

September's CPI figure (0.5%) from April 2021. In line with established practice and the Office for Budget Responsibility's expectations in their welfare forecast, the maximum rate of the childcare element, the family element, the withdrawal rate and the income disregards will remain unchanged.

- The 0.5% increase will be applied to the rate of the Working Tax Credit basic element announced by Written Ministerial Statement on 4 November 2019 (£1,995). The statutory annual review of benefits is separate from the temporary £20 per week uplift to the Working Tax Credit basic element and the Universal Credit standard allowance, which was announced as a temporary measure in March 2020, and enacted for one year under different legislation in response to the public health emergency. As we have done throughout this crisis, we will continue to assess how best to support low-income families, which is why we will look at the economic and health context in the new year.

- Child Benefit will be increased in line with CPI (0.5%) from April 2021.

- As set out in legislation, Guardian's Allowance will be uprated in line with prices, measured by CPI (0.5%).

The full list of proposed benefit and credit rates will be placed in the Libraries of the House in due course.

Written Answers

Thursday, 26 November 2020

Accident and Emergency Departments: Drugs

Asked by **Lord Patel of Bradford**

To ask Her Majesty's Government since March, what is the total number of people in England who have presented at accident and emergency departments with (1) an overdose, or (2) parasuicide; and whether they can provide these figures broken down by region. [[HL10363](#)]

Lord Bethell: The diagnosis coding scheme used in the Emergency Care Data Set does not uniquely identify parasuicide.

The following table shows data on accident and emergency (A&E) attendances with a primary diagnosis of overdose, by commissioning region, April - September 2020.

Commissioning region	Attendances
London	4,955
South West	6,710
South East	8,040
Midlands	11,220
East of England	5,895
North West	7,820
North East and Yorkshire	10,825
Unknown	10
England	55,473

It should be noted that this is not a count of patients as an individual may have attended an A&E department in any given period.

Afghanistan and Iraq: NATO

Asked by **The Marquess of Lothian**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the risk posed to the lives of NATO troops in (1) Afghanistan, and (2) Iraq, as a result of the proposed drawdown of United States troops in those countries by 15 January 2021, as announced on 17 November; and what discussions they have had with the government of the United States about such drawdowns. [[HL10519](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The safety and security of all our personnel is of paramount importance. The Ministry of Defence keeps operational risk for both Afghanistan and Iraq under constant review, and we adjust our force protection arrangements in accordance

with the circumstances. We have regular discussions with the US and other Allies about our approach to both countries, which we do not discuss publicly.

Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse

Asked by **Baroness Pinnock**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Royal College of Psychiatrists' analysis published on 14 September that estimated that the number of high-risk drinkers has risen from 4.8 million in February to 8.4 million during the Covid-19 pandemic; and what steps they plan to take based on any such assessment. [[HL10242](#)]

Lord Bethell: Local authorities are responsible for assessing local needs and commissioning alcohol services to meet these needs, including during the Covid-19 pandemic. Public Health England (PHE) supports local authorities in this work by providing advice, guidance and data.

PHE has been collecting and publishing a range of data on alcohol sales and consumption during the period of the pandemic. This data can be viewed as part of the Wider Impacts of Covid-19 on Health monitoring tool, which is available in an online only format.

The data indicates that while many people have taken the opportunity of lockdown to moderate their drinking, or to not drink at all, there is a group of people who are drinking at levels which increase their risk of harm.

Allotments: Coronavirus

Asked by **Lord Greaves**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Greenhalgh on 10 November ([HL9637](#)), what plans they have to provide direct funding to parish councils to increase the provision of allotments. [[HL10286](#)]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Government does not have powers to offer direct financial support to parish and town councils, which are funded through a precept collected from within the overall council tax paid by the residents of the parish or town. Allotment provision is a matter for local authorities, who are best placed to understand and respond to local requirements. I would encourage town and parish councils to work with their principal authorities to ensure that communities can continue to benefit from access to allotments.

Armed Forces: Families

Asked by **Lord Touhig**

To ask Her Majesty's Government when a new UK armed forces families' strategy will be published. [[HL10461](#)]

Baroness Goldie: In 2019 Andrew Selous MP was asked to produce an independent report for the Ministry

of Defence (MOD) to explore what more support could be offered to Service families. That review, *Living in Our Shoes*, was published in June 2020 and considered how the MOD and wider Government policy reflects the varied make-up and diverse needs of a range of family models:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/living-in-our-shoes-understanding-the-needs-of-uk-armed-forces-families>.

The Government is now considering the findings of Mr Selous' review alongside other key research informing the development of a new UK Armed Forces Families Strategy, which the MOD anticipates will be published in 2021.

Asylum: Coronavirus

Asked by **Baroness Coussins**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure information about the Covid-19 pandemic is made available to asylum seekers in the UK; and in which languages such information is made available (1) in printed form, (2) online, and (3) on social media. [HL10274]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: There are currently no plans to update social Media with Covid-19 guidance in languages other than English and Welsh.

Guidance for Covid-19 has been translated into 60 different languages in partnership with the British Red Cross and other partners such as Migrant help and is available using the link provided: <http://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/coronavirus-information/>.

Also, videos with key Covid-19 information for migrants in the UK are being released here: <https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/key-covid-19-information-for-migrants/>.

Alternatively links to translated support and guidance can be found through our Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) provider, Migrant Help here: <https://www.migranthehelpuk.org/translated-support>.

Providers signpost the people we support to these website where these documents are available to download, print or view online. Printed guidance has also been given to those residing in Home Office initial accommodation in their own languages relating to hygiene, washing hands, social distancing, coronavirus symptoms and what to do if they become symptomatic.

Buses: Manufacturing Industries

Asked by **Baroness Randerson**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many jobs have been lost in the UK bus manufacturing industry since February 2020; and in what regions any such job losses have occurred. [HL10312]

Lord Callanan: Since February 2020, UK bus manufacturers have announced 775 job losses in total. In May, Wrightbus announced 125 job losses at its Ballymena site in Northern Ireland. In July, Alexander Dennis Limited announced 650 job losses across its sites in Falkirk, Scarborough, and Guildford.

Channel Tunnel Railway Line: Coronavirus

Asked by **Lord Berkeley**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with (1) Eurostar International Ltd, and (2) HS1 Ltd, about the impact of reduced passenger demand caused by the current travel restrictions on those companies' ability to continue to provide a service in the future. [HL10270]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The international rail sector, as with the rest of the international travel sector, has been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Government has been engaging extensively with Eurostar since the outbreak of Covid-19 earlier this year, closely monitoring the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on demand for international rail services and working with Eurostar to provide support, particularly through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Department for Transport officials have also been actively participating in trilateral discussions with Eurostar and HS1 Ltd to consider and address the longer-term challenges facing the HS1 system as a result of reduced demand for international rail services. The Rail Minister has also recently met with both Eurostar and HS1 to discuss these challenges. The Government will continue to engage in these discussions to identify workable, appropriate solutions to these challenges.

Contraceptives

Asked by **Baroness Jenkin of Kennington**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the report by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Sexual and Reproductive Health, Women's Lives, Women's Rights: Strengthening Access to Contraception Beyond the Pandemic, published on 10 September, what plans they have to use primary care networks to provide opportunities to train the workforce in contraceptive care. [HL10166]

Lord Bethell: The All Party Parliamentary Group on Sexual and Reproductive Health's report, *Women's Lives, Women's Rights: Strengthening Access to Contraception Beyond the Covid-19 Pandemic*, has raised a number of important issues. The recommendations, including those relating to the workforce, will be considered as part of our upcoming work to develop the sexual and reproductive health strategy.

Coronavirus: Aviation

Asked by *Baroness Randerson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to include airline pilots and cabin crew in the priority groups for Covid-19 vaccination. [HL10367]

Lord Bethell: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who provide advice to Government on which vaccine(s) the United Kingdom should use, and which groups to prioritise. Whilst there is a desire for the whole UK population to be vaccinated, there may need to be an element of prioritisation - based on availability, evidence on safety and efficacy in different population groups and constraints in supply.

The committee – in their interim advice - have advised that for Phase 1, the vaccine first be given to care home residents and staff, followed by people over 80 and health and social workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors in the initial phase. We will consider the Committee's advice carefully as further data emerges in preparation for Phase 2 including for critical workers in other essential sectors. Our vaccination programmes are led by the latest scientific evidence and we expect the Committee's advice to develop as more evidence is gathered.

Coronavirus: Mink

Asked by *Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to reports of transmission of Covid-19 between minks and humans in Denmark, what steps they are taking to reduce the human and animal health risks posed by mink and other fur farming. [HL10175]

Lord Bethell: Fur farming including mink and other animal fur has been banned in the United Kingdom since 2000.

There are an estimated 120,000 wild mink in Great Britain, that established in the wild following escapes/releases from fur farms in the early twentieth century. As wild mink generally avoids human contact, there is very limited risk of direct contact with mink for the public. Individuals responsible for care of wild or rescued mink are being provided advice by Natural England on practices to reduce infection.

Coronavirus: Obesity

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of recent remarks by Professor Dame Sally Davies about (1) the correlation between obesity and the UK's Covid-19 mortality rate, and (2) the 'structural environment' contributing to obesity in the UK. [HL10322]

Lord Bethell: There is consistent evidence that people who are overweight or living with obesity who contract Covid-19 are more likely to be admitted to hospital, admitted to an intensive care unit and to die from Covid-19 compared to those of a healthy body weight status.

We published *Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives* in July. Our strategy is designed to reshape the food environment by providing people with a healthier choice and encouraging them to take it. A copy is attached.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

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

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-11-16/HL10322>

Coronavirus: Vaccination

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans, if any, they have to include teachers and school staff in priority groups for any potential Covid-19 vaccine. [HL10251]

Lord Bethell: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who provide advice to Government on which vaccine(s) the United Kingdom should use, and which groups to prioritise. Whilst there is a desire for the whole UK population to be vaccinated, there may need to be an element of prioritisation - based on availability, evidence on safety and efficacy in different population groups and constraints in supply.

The committee – in their interim advice - have advised that for Phase 1, the vaccine first be given to care home residents and staff, followed by people over 80 and health and social workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors in the initial phase. We will consider the Committee's advice carefully as further data emerges in preparation for Phase 2. Our vaccination programmes are led by the latest scientific evidence and we expect the Committee's advice to develop as more evidence is gathered.

Asked by *Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the Covid-19 vaccination will be available in those rural areas which are less easily accessible and with higher population sparsity. [HL10301]

Lord Bethell: The National Health Service has a tried and tested track record for delivering vaccination programmes and will work with existing partners across the healthcare system to ensure a Covid-19 vaccine can be deployed safely and effectively. Detailed planning is underway building on the NHS's expertise delivering immunisation programmes including the flu vaccination programme. Planning considerations include the size and

make-up of the workforce needed to deliver a potentially extensive vaccination programme at pace, training requirements, guidance, consumables and other equipment. They also include the supporting infrastructure required, including warehousing, transport, logistics for transport across the nation and end-destination 'clinic' storage.

Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the future importance of dispensing practices in administering Covid-19 vaccinations in rural areas with poor transport links and connectivity. [HL10302]

Lord Bethell: The National Health Service has a tried and tested track record for delivering vaccination programmes and will work with existing partners across the healthcare system, including general practices, to ensure a Covid-19 vaccine can be deployed safely and effectively. Detailed planning is underway building on the NHS's expertise to deliver immunisation programmes, such as the flu vaccination programme. Planning considerations, includes the supporting infrastructure required, including warehousing, transport, logistics for transport across the nation and end-destination 'clinic' storage.

Asked by Baroness Finlay of Llandaff

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether frontline staff working in the funeral industry will be considered as a priority group to receive vaccination against Covid-19. [HL10329]

Lord Bethell: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who provide advice to Government on which vaccine(s) the United Kingdom should use, and which groups to prioritise. Whilst there is a desire for the whole UK population to be vaccinated, there may need to be an element of prioritisation - based on availability, evidence on safety and efficacy in different population groups and constraints in supply.

The committee – in their interim advice - have advised that for Phase 1, the vaccine first be given to care home residents and staff, followed by people over 80 and health and social workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors in the initial phase. We will consider the Committee's advice carefully as further data emerges in preparation for Phase 2 including for critical workers in other essential sectors. Our vaccination programmes are led by the latest scientific evidence and we expect the Committee's advice to develop as more evidence is gathered.

Asked by Lord Bassam of Brighton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what contingency plans they have made to alter a Covid-19 vaccination schedule if a booster dose is required. [HL9904]

Lord Bethell: A Covid-19 vaccine will only be deployed once it has met robust standards on safety, efficacy and quality through clinical trials and approved for use by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency. The Government has asked the National Health Service to be ready to deploy any safe and effective vaccines when available. All plans for deployment remain flexible as there are no certainties in the development, production, formulation and timing of any new vaccines. Information on vaccine characteristics, including potential requirements for a booster dose, is being factored into programme deployment planning.

Dentistry

Asked by Lord Allen of Kensington

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to remove the annual cap on dentistry places at UK universities. [HL10147]

Lord Bethell: The provision of dentistry training places in the United Kingdom is a devolved issue.

In England, the Government temporarily lifted the cap on dental school places for students who completed A-Levels in 2020 and who had an offer from a university in England to study dentistry subject to their grades. This ensured a place this year or next for every eligible student.

The Government has no plans outside this change to remove the cap. However, it is committed to ensuring that the number of dental school places are in line with England's requirements for dentists and continues to monitor the effectiveness of current arrangements.

Developing Countries: Coronavirus

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to provide equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines for those living in the global south. [HL10635]

Baroness Sugg: The UK is committed to rapid, equitable access to safe and effective vaccines as demonstrated by our strong support for the Access for Covid-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator. The UK has contributed up to £813 million to the ACT-Accelerator partners. This includes the UK's commitment of up to £548 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) - the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines, of which the UK is the largest bilateral donor. Our commitment to the COVAX AMC will support access to Covid-19 vaccines for up to 92 developing countries by contributing to the supply of 1 billion doses in 2021, and vaccinations for up to 500 million people (subject to vaccines successfully securing stringent regulatory approvals).

Elections: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to delaying the local elections due in England in May 2021 to a later date. [HL10282]

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the operation of the United States Presidential elections on 3 November with a view to informing their methods of running multiple elections during the Covid-19 pandemic, in particular in relation to the (1) mayoral, (2) London Assembly, (3) Police Commissioner, (4) county, and (5) borough, elections that are due to occur on 6 May 2021. [HL10285]

Lord True: Many elections have taken place globally since the beginning of the pandemic, including the recent US Presidential and associated elections. The Government keeps international practice under regular review. The UK Government is working with the election sector and public health bodies to identify and resolve challenges involved in delivering the May 2021 elections. This includes supporting Returning Officers to ensure polling stations are safe and Covid-secure places to vote. Voters will be able participate in the May 2021 elections safely, and in a way of their choice, whether in-person, by proxy or by post.

It is the Government's view that polls can be delivered safely and securely if Covid-19 secure guidelines are followed closely. The Government is clear that the expectation is for polls to take place next May.

Fireworks: Antisocial Behaviour

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what advice they have given to local authorities in relation to the use of antisocial behaviour legislation to reduce local nuisances caused by the use of fireworks; whether they have received representations that other legislation has been assessed by such authorities as not being effective in doing so; and what their response has been to any such representations. [HL10281]

Lord Callanan: The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 ('the 2014 Act') provides the police, local authorities and other local agencies with a range of flexible tools and powers that they can use to respond quickly and effectively to anti-social behaviour. The powers in the 2014 Act are deliberately local in nature, and it is for local agencies to determine whether their use is appropriate in the specific circumstances.

We receive representations from a wide range of stakeholders, all with a broad range of views on the issues and what action they would like to see. This includes representations from Local Authorities and Councillors

and we are engaging with them to understand the issues they face with regards to fireworks.

Fisheries

Asked by Lord Hay of Ballyore

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with (1) the Netherlands, (2) Sweden, and (3) Iceland, about future access to British fishing stocks. [HL10289]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Negotiations are ongoing for a fisheries framework agreement with the EU. To date there have been no direct discussions with the Netherlands or Sweden around future access to British fishing stocks.

In the negotiations, we have been clear throughout that we want a simple, separate fisheries framework agreement which reflects our rights under international law and which provides for annual negotiations over access and fishing opportunities. Any access negotiated with the EU will only cover the UK's exclusive economic zone and not the 0-12nm zone. This remains the case.

On 11 November, the UK signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Iceland to enhance cooperation on fisheries matters. The MoU, which will come into effect on 1 January 2021, establishes a UK-Iceland Fisheries Dialogue whereby both countries can share best practice and cooperate on a range of issues, including product innovation and the traceability and marketing of seafood products. This MoU does not provide for fishing opportunities or access to either party's waters.

Flood Control: Finance

Asked by Lord Walney

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the £5.2 billion investment in flood and coastal defence programmes, announced in the Budget on 11 March, has been affected by subsequent spending announcements in other areas. [HL10258]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: At the Budget in March, the Government confirmed that it will invest £5.2 billion over six years to create around 2,000 new flood and coastal defence schemes to better protect 336,000 properties in England by 2027. This was further confirmed in the Chancellor's Spending Review, which was published today.

In addition, it was announced that a further £200 million would be provided for local innovative resilience projects which reduce flood risk. This summer, a further £170 million of capital funding was announced to accelerate work on shovel-ready flood defence schemes that will begin construction in 2020 or 2021. 22 areas across the country will benefit from this immediate boost to jobs supporting the local economy as communities recover from the impact of coronavirus.

By spring 2021, Defra will publish further details of what it expects to achieve from the £5.2 billion invested over the next six-year programme and how it is to be managed. The Environment Agency will publish an updated programme of specific flood and coastal defence capital projects annually.

Gambling: Rehabilitation

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

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the report by GambleAware Annual Statistics from the National Gambling Treatment Service (Great Britain), published on 29 October, what steps they are taking to encourage those affected by gambling-related harm to seek help. [[HL10186](#)]

Lord Bethell: The Government remains committed to the treatment of gambling-related harms.

The NHS Long Term Plan announced the creation of an additional 14 specialist problem gambling clinics by 2023/24, three of which are already up and running. The NHS England Northern Gambling Service in Leeds opened last summer and includes satellite sites in Manchester and Sunderland.

Work continues on the phased expansion of these services, enabling the National Health Service to explore how best to use existing treatment models to reach those in most need of support.

The Department is working collaboratively with key delivery partners to support the integration and expansion of treatment services and improve public awareness. GambleAware launched a new campaign during February and March to raise awareness of the treatment available through the National Gambling Treatment Service.

Gaza: Israel

*Asked by **Baroness Tonge***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the letter sent by Gisha - the Legal Center for Freedom of Movement and Adalah - the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel to the government of Israel on 8 November requesting (1) a halt to the Israel Defence Force's destruction of land in the Gaza Strip, (2) an investigation into recent incursions, and (3) compensation to Gaza farmers for the damage; and what plans they have to support such requests. [[HL10403](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of the letter sent by Gisha - the Legal Center for Freedom of Movement and Adalah - the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel to the Government of Israel. Reports of destruction of agricultural land is concerning and the UK raises with Israeli counterparts when necessary. We also continue to urge Israel to ease their movement and access restrictions on Gaza. While we fully respect Israel's right to security, the situation in Gaza is unsustainable.

Health: Equality

*Asked by **Lord Greaves***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Northern Health Science Alliance Covid-19 and the Northern Powerhouse: tackling inequalities for UK health and productivity, published on 10 November; and what proposals they are putting forward to meet the recommendations of that report. [[HL10223](#)]

Lord Bethell: The NHS Long Term Plan commits all major national programmes and every local area across England to set out specific measurable goals and mechanisms by which they will contribute to narrowing health inequalities over the next five and 10 years.

On economy and productivity, the Government is levelling up opportunity across the United Kingdom to ensure that everyone can benefit from economic growth. For example, HM Treasury has provided £1 billion for local projects to boost local economic growth. In the North of England this includes so far over half a million self-employed people have been supported through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, with claims worth over £1 billion. Furthermore, over 2 million jobs have been protected through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and business support loans worth over £10.5 billion have been provided.

HMS Queen Elizabeth

*Asked by **Lord Touhig***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, whether the governments of other countries will be providing support when HMS Queen Elizabeth is deployed in the South China Sea. [[HL10460](#)]

Baroness Goldie: Planning continues for the 2021 Carrier Strike Group deployment and a statement will be made to Parliament in due course. What we can say for now is that this deployment - which will of course include working alongside and engaging with partners and allies (including NATO) - will be a demonstration of the professionalism and capability of our people, our ships and our aircraft. The deployment will also provide support to the UK's wider diplomatic and trade efforts.

Hydrogen: Renewable Energy

*Asked by **Baroness Meacher***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much they plan to invest in the production of (1) blue hydrogen, and (2) green hydrogen, over the next five years. [[HL10305](#)]

Lord Callanan: The Government is committed to developing hydrogen as a decarbonised energy carrier, as confirmed in the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution announced by my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 18th November.

The Ten Point Plan package aims to bring forward a combination of commercial-scale CCUS-enabled 'blue' hydrogen and smaller scale electrolytic 'green' hydrogen projects. Both these production methods – and other innovative techniques – will be needed to deliver UK hydrogen demand expected by 2050.

This twin-track approach will enable production to be brought forward at the necessary scale during the 2020s, to grow the supply chain and build confidence in the sector, whilst scaling up green hydrogen which is likely to dominate the global market in the long term.

The Plan set out that the Government, working with industry, is aiming for 5GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity in the UK by 2030,

We will support our hydrogen ambition through a range of measures, including a £240m Net Zero Hydrogen Fund out to 2024/25 and bringing forward, next year, detail on hydrogen business models and the revenue mechanism to stimulate private investment in new low carbon hydrogen production facilities. We expect these measures to reflect our twin track approach to production.

*Asked by **Baroness Meacher***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to commit to include investments in the production of blue and green hydrogen as part of their forthcoming economy-wide hydrogen strategy. [HL10306]

Lord Callanan: The Government is committed to developing hydrogen as a decarbonised energy carrier, as confirmed in the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution announced by my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 18th November.

The Ten Point Plan package aims to bring forward a combination of commercial-scale CCUS-enabled 'blue' hydrogen and smaller scale electrolytic 'green' hydrogen projects. Both these production methods – and other innovative techniques – will be needed to deliver UK hydrogen demand expected by 2050.

This twin-track approach will enable production to be brought forward at the necessary scale during the 2020s, to grow the supply chain and build confidence in the sector, whilst scaling up green hydrogen which is likely to dominate the global market in the long term.

The Plan set out that the Government, working with industry, is aiming for 5GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity in the UK by 2030.

We will support our hydrogen ambition through a range of measures, including a £240m Net Zero Hydrogen Fund out to 2024/25 and bringing forward, next year, detail on hydrogen business models and the revenue mechanism to stimulate private investment in new low carbon hydrogen production facilities. We expect these measures to reflect our twin track approach to production. More detail on how we intend to work with industry towards the 5GW 2030 ambition will be set out in the hydrogen strategy in early 2021.

*Asked by **Baroness Meacher***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made (1) of the levels of investment being committed by (a) Germany, (b) France, (c) other countries, to the production of green hydrogen, and (2) of the impact any such international competition may have on the UK's green hydrogen sector. [HL10307]

Lord Callanan: We are following international hydrogen developments from Germany, France and other countries, and participate in a range of international fora, including the Clean Energy Ministerial, the International Partnership for Hydrogen for Fuel Cells in the Economy and Mission Innovation. These offer opportunities to discuss other countries' domestic hydrogen strategies in detail, their levels of investment, including in green hydrogen production and explore opportunities for collaboration.

We plan to publish a UK Hydrogen Strategy in early 2021; this will be informed in part by assessment of international activity and the opportunities and challenges that presents for the UK hydrogen economy.

Immigration: Afghanistan

*Asked by **Baroness Coussins***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to amend the Immigration Rules to allow applications for relocation to the UK from former interpreters who have fled Afghanistan, who are otherwise eligible under the Ex-Gratia Redundancy Scheme, but need to apply from a third country. [HL10275]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: We keep the Immigration Rules for the ex-gratia scheme for those Afghan interpreters who supported HM Forces under regular review, and will continue working with the Ministry of Defence to consider options for those who may otherwise be eligible to relocate to the United Kingdom but have left Afghanistan.

Influenza: Vaccination

*Asked by **Baroness McIntosh of Pickering***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that remaining influenza vaccines are delivered to GP practices and administered for those over the age of 50 in advance of the Covid-19 vaccine being made available. [HL10304]

Lord Bethell: The flu vaccine programme is currently underway, with priority given to those who are most at risk from the effects of flu, and frontline health and social care workers. We have announced that we will be extending the programme to those aged 50-64 from 1 December.

The Department has procured additional doses of seasonal flu vaccine to ensure more flu vaccines are

available this winter. General practitioners who have exhausted their own supply are now able to order from this central stock.

Overall, there is sufficient vaccine for more than 30 million people to be vaccinated in England this winter.

Intensive Care: Drugs

Asked by Baroness Masham of Ilton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking (1) to inform, and (2) to implement, the use of ready-to-use critical care medicines such as noradrenaline at trust-level; and what assessment they have made of the impact of these medicines on (a) safety levels, (b) drug error rates, and (c) nursing time saved. [HL10353]

Lord Bethell: The Department commissioned Lord Carter of Coles to look into the provision of aseptic medicines, including some critical care medicines, in England. The noble Lord published his report on 29 October 2020. He made a number of recommendations, including setting up a network of hub and spoke facilities to prepare ready to administer medicines, providing guidance on standard injectable medicines, and training for aseptic pharmacy staff.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are setting up an NHS Aseptic Services transformation implementation board to co-ordinate the implementation of these recommendations.

Invalid Vehicles

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to review and update the document 'Mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs: the rules' (1) to permit all classes of invalid carriage to use bus lanes and cycle-only lanes on roads, (2) to permit all classes of invalid carriage to use cycle-only tracks and paths, and (3) to replace the term 'invalid carriage' with a different description. [HL10502]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Mobility scooters can be used on footways, footpaths, bridleways or pedestrianised areas, provided that they are used in accordance with prescribed requirements. Larger mobility scooters, capable of going up to 8mph, are permitted to use the road. The Government does not have any current plans to review and update the places where mobility scooters are permitted to be used.

The term 'invalid carriage' is the legal definition of a mobility scooter as laid out in the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. It means a vehicle, whether mechanically propelled or not, constructed or adapted for use for the carriage of one person, being a person suffering from some physical defect or disability.

Israel: Palestinians

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the government of Israel has (1) prevented Palestinian farmers from reaching their land, and (2) subsequently used the lack of use of such land as evidence that the land has been abandoned and can be used to expand settlements; and what steps they are taking, if any, to support those affected. [HL10459]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are seriously concerned by the continued expropriation of land by Israel in the West Bank, including notably for settlement expansion. We regularly call on Israel to halt such counterproductive activity and instead urgently commit to creating a better environment for a just and lasting peace. Settlements are illegal under international law and undermine the physical viability of the two-state solution. We continue to call on Israel to improve Palestinians' route to securing building permissions for homes and infrastructure, including agriculture and farming, in Area C.

Large Goods Vehicles: Holyhead Port

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government where they intend to designate land for additional parking for freight vehicles using the port of Holyhead for ferries to Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. [HL10310]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: This matter is an area of devolved competence and therefore the responsibility of the Welsh Government. The Department for Transport is engaging with officials in Wales and the other Devolved Administrations on traffic management and border readiness plans to share thinking and offer support as required.

Large Goods Vehicles: Ports

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have delayed the production of a handbook for freight drivers using UK ports; if so, why; when this handbook will be ready for distribution; in how many languages it will be available; and what steps they are taking to ensure it is written in accessible language. [HL10309]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The haulier handbook is only one part of a wider package the Government has put in place to help and guide hauliers, which also includes the rollout of 45 Information and Advice Sites and a multimillion pound information campaign, running across the UK and Europe.

We are progressing work on the handbook at pace, and plan to publish it to coincide with this month's full opening of the Information and Advice Sites.

The handbook explains complex procedures that hauliers and drivers will need to follow. We have worked with stakeholders to make it as clear as possible. Both Logistics UK and RHA have reviewed drafts of the handbook and tested the content with their members. This has lengthened the development time of the handbook, but it will help ensure that the document meets the needs of hauliers and drivers.

Much of the DfT element of this content has been available separately on GOV.UK for some time; as such hauliers have not had to wait for the handbook to get the DfT information.

We keep all our guidance under constant review, so we can improve it based on feedback from users.

The Haulier Handbook will be available in 14 languages including, Welsh, Romanian, Polish, Dutch, Bulgarian, French and Spanish.

Livestock: Disease Control

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to undertake a review of the potential risks posed by intensive farming of animals in enclosed spaces on (1) the incubation, and (2) animal to human transmission, of viruses. [[HL10271](#)]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Defra works in a 'One Health' approach with others, including public health and food safety departments and devolved administrations. We know the importance of surveillance for and management of the risk of emergence of zoonotic diseases, a constant threat in our globalised world where disease can spread so rapidly. We continue to develop a robust evidence base.

Defra's Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) routinely carry out surveillance on farms for zoonotic pathogens. It has significant surveillance programmes for tuberculosis, avian influenza, salmonella, brucellosis and anti-microbial resistance.

We respond promptly to outbreaks to minimise the impacts of zoonotic disease associated with farming and farmed products.

Different types of farming systems can be managed in a professional way with good biosecurity plans and housing systems to reduce disease transmission.

Military Operations: Airspace

Asked by Lord Davies of Gower

To ask Her Majesty's Government what procedure allows them to implement changes to military air space which are requested by the Ministry of Defence to further peacetime operations. [[HL10470](#)]

Baroness Goldie: The UK Flight Information Region airspace is neither specifically military or civilian. The Joint Air Navigation Services Council is responsible for the management of airspace and Air Traffic Service provision with a Joint and Integrated Approach between the Department for Transport and the Ministry of Defence.

These joint procedures are published in Civil Airspace Publication (CAP) 740 - UK Airspace Management Policy which is available on the Gov.uk website.

The practical policy guidance to enact an airspace change is published in CAP1616, again with the specific military stakeholder requirements considered throughout any change process.

Neighbourhood Development Plans

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they intend to ensure that existing approved Neighbourhood Plans will (1) relate to, and (2) fit with, the new local plans in their proposed planning system. [[HL10283](#)]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Government is committed to retaining neighbourhood planning as part of the planning system. We intend to publish further details in due course.

Passenger Ships: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Snape

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to publish the evidence supporting the case for specific travel advice for cruise ships. [[HL10544](#)]

Asked by Lord Snape

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, if any, of the need to update travel advice for cruise ships. [[HL10545](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) advises against ocean cruising informed by public health risk assessments. This advice is kept under continuous review. The risk assessments to inform travel advice from Public Health England and the Department of Health and Social Care are not published separately.

The FCDO remains fully committed to working closely with the Department for Transport and key industry leaders, informed by the changing public health situation during this pandemic to agree on the steps required to restart cruises safely.

Personal Records: Overseas Trade

Asked by Baroness Kidron

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the monetary value of trade involving personal data between the UK and Japan. [[HL10293](#)]

Baroness Barran: It is difficult to estimate figures for trade values involving personal data specifically, and the closest proxy we have is for data-enabled trade. We estimate that the value of data-enabled services trade with Japan is £12.9 billion, £7.0 billion of which is exports and £5.9 billion in imports. These values are derived from the Office of National Statistics 2019 trade figures.

Prison Governors: Length of Service

Asked by Lord Farmer

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the average length of (1) a completed prison governor tenure, and (2) existing prison governor tenures. [[HL10278](#)]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: (1) The average length of service of a completed prison governor tenure who left over the last 5 years is 4.2 years.

To note, the averages are based on total governor tenure (which would include them moving to different prisons) and not specific to time spent in one post.

(2) As at 30 June 2020, existing prison governors had spent an average of 2.7 years in their current post.

To note, this includes substantive band 10-11 Governing Governors only and does not include any deputy governors who may be filling the role on a temporary promotion.

Asked by Lord Farmer

To ask Her Majesty's Government what percentage of prison governors have stayed in post for more than (1) two, and (2) three years. [[HL10279](#)]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: As at 30th June 2020, 48% of prison governors had stayed in their current post for more than two years, and 39% had stayed in their current post for more than three years.

To note, this includes substantive band 10-11 Governing Governors only and does not include any deputy governors who may be filling the role on a temporary promotion.

Prisoners: Suicide

Asked by Lord Farmer

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the cost of suicides in prison over the last 12 months. [[HL10277](#)]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: Every death in custody is a tragedy and the Government is committed to reducing the number of self-inflicted deaths in prison.

There is a variety of financial costs associated with responding to and investigating each self-inflicted death, making it difficult to calculate the total. However, it is the human cost, in terms of the loss of life, and the impact on the lives of others, including the bereaved family and friends and the staff who worked with the individual, that is of concern to the Government. It is our determination to

avoid these harms, and our commitment to the welfare of those in our care, that drive our work to prevent self-inflicted deaths.

Prisons: Visits

Asked by Lord Farmer

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made in increasing awareness of the Assisted Prisons Visits scheme among (1) prisoners, and (2) visitors, since the publication of the report by the National Offender Management Service Families Do Matter Project Report 2009, which found that 38 per cent of prisoners and visitors were unaware of that scheme. [[HL10280](#)]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: A new online Help with Visits service (formerly known as the Assisted Prison Visits Scheme) was introduced in June 2017 to simplify the application process and the ease of access to the service for members of the public who are visiting prisons.

Family service providers have continued to assist HMPPS with raising the profile of the Help with Visits Scheme and, through their service user forum, have provided feedback on the design of the updated literature. This will be launched once Covid-19 restrictions ease across the prison estate.

Additionally, a pilot across a number of prisons will be used to review eligibility criteria to help inform potential changes that may be made to improve access to social visits for prisoners and their families.

Protective Clothing: Contracts

Asked by Lord Strasburger

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to publish details of any contracts for the purchase of personal protective equipment in 2020, for which they have financially assisted the contractor in any way, including (1) partial or complete up-front payment, or (2) payment in any other manner. [[HL10127](#)]

Lord Bethell: Advanced payments have been used on a number of contracts awarded to suppliers in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Each contract is different; some are payment on delivery and others are a percentage of payment upfront. Our approach has been to take some managed risk in order to secure supplies in an exceptional and globally highly competitive market. Contracts have break clauses in them, meaning if the company supplies faulty products or misses delivery dates, we can cancel the contracts and reclaim our money.

Over 900 contracts have been awarded by the Department and its executive agencies to suppliers for the delivery of goods and services related to the Covid-19 pandemic. To provide a validated assessment of whether an advanced payment has been agreed or not for each of these orders would involve disproportionate cost.

Research Councils: Finance

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to exempt research councils from the one-year spending review so they can fund long-term projects. [HL10234]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: To provide certainty to the research community, we are providing a multi-year settlement for UK Research and Innovation science.

This includes increasing funding for core UK Research and Innovation science by 9% next year and £400 million on average per annum until 23-24. By 23-24, the government will be investing £1.4 billion more per annum in core funding for its world-leading research base compared to 20-21.

Rolls-Royce: Nuclear Reactors

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Rolls-Royce led consortium over the proposals to build mini nuclear power plants; what assessment they have made of their (1) level of involvement, and (2) commitments, required to implement those proposals; what would be the requirements for planning and other regulatory approvals; and what timescale is envisaged. [HL10284]

Lord Callanan: The Government has regular engagement with the nuclear industry, including with Rolls-Royce, and has discussed the Rolls-Royce-led UK Small Modular Reactors (SMR) Consortium's work to design and deploy SMRs.

In November 2019, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) awarded an initial £18 million, matched by the UK SMR Consortium, for the development of a UK SMR under the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund. The UK SMR Consortium is aiming for the design to be ready for operation in the early 2030s.

UKRI is monitoring progress closely, including the level of involvement of the UK SMR Consortium's members, as well as progress against milestones and value for money. Decisions on further funding will be taken in due course.

The requirements for planning approvals are set out in the Planning Act 2008. New nuclear power stations are also subject to nuclear licensing and environmental permitting as regulated by the Office for Nuclear Regulation and the relevant environment agencies.

Self-employed

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the reasons for the reduction in the number of people who are self-employed; and what

steps, if any, they are taking to reverse the downward trend. [HL10231]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The UK has one of the most generous self-employed coronavirus support schemes in the world. The SEISS Grant Extension continues this critical support to the self-employed. The grant will be limited to self-employed individuals who are currently eligible for the SEISS and are actively continuing to trade but are facing reduced demand due to Covid-19. The extension will be in the form of two taxable grants. The first grant will cover a three-month period from the start of November until the end of January. This initial grant will cover 80% of average monthly trading profits, paid out in a single instalment covering three months' worth of profits for 1 November 2020 to 31 January 2020, and capped at £7,500 in total. The second grant will cover a three-month period from the start of February until the end of April. The Government will review the level of the second grant and set this in due course.

None the less, ONS data suggests the number of self-employed people dropped by 502,000 (a 10.0% drop) between December-February and July-September 2020.

The Government continues to provide additional support to help people start their own business, or develop their business if they are already self-employed. The New Enterprise Allowance provides support including mentoring and an allowance. In order to be eligible, claimants must be aged over 18 and either they or their partner must receive Universal Credit, Jobseeker's Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance, or they must receive Income Support and be a lone parent, sick or disabled.

Those on the New Enterprise Allowance have a mentor who gives them advice and support to help them set up their business and start to trade. Once their mentor has approved their business plan they may get a weekly allowance worth up to £1,274 over 26 weeks and they can apply for a loan to help with start-up costs.

Those who are already self-employed but not earning enough to move off Universal Credit completely can also benefit from the scheme. They may be able to get a mentor to give them advice and support to help them develop their business and apply for a start-up loan if their business is less than two years old.

New Enterprise Allowance contracts are set to end in 2021. The Government is looking into a replacement offer, and hopes to announce more details in due course.

Self-employed: Coronavirus

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Centre for Economic Performance *Self Employed: Six Months into the Crisis*, published on 10 November; and what steps they are taking to support self-employed workers. [HL10252]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Government recognises the impact that the changing path of the virus has had on the self-employed and has taken action to increase the level of support available through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS).

The third grant, covering November 2020 to January 2021, has now been increased to an overall level of 80 per cent of average trading profits, meaning that the maximum grant available has increased to £7,500. This provides equivalent support to the self-employed as is being provided for employees through the Government contribution in the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

This will provide an estimated £7.3bn of support to the self-employed through the period of November 2020 to January 2021 alone, with a further grant to follow covering February to April 2021. This places the SEISS among the most generous schemes for the self-employed in the world.

The SEISS continues to be just one element of a comprehensive package of support for the self-employed. The Universal Credit standard allowance has been temporarily increased for 2020-21 and the Minimum Income Floor relaxed for the duration of the crisis, so that where self-employed claimants' earnings have fallen significantly, their Universal Credit award will have increased to reflect their lower earnings. In addition to this, they may also have access to other elements of the package, including Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

Strokes: Rehabilitation

Asked by Lord Lingfield

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that stroke rehabilitation services continue to be delivered effectively during the Covid-19 pandemic. [[HL10350](#)]

Lord Bethell: NHS England and NHS Improvement have ensured that stroke services across England continue to provide rehabilitation and post-acute services to stroke survivors and their families and carers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have funded the Stroke Association over the last six months to provide Stroke Connect, which was developed in direct response to Covid-19 to ensure stroke survivors and their carers have support when discharged from hospital.

Universities: Admissions

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the decision by the Welsh Government has now cancelled A-level exams in summer 2021 and base grades on school assessment, what steps they intend to take to ensure that there is a level playing field for university admission in the UK in 2021. [[HL10300](#)]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: As autonomous institutions, higher education providers determine their own entry criteria. In making admissions decisions, we would expect providers to take into account variations across the UK in examination systems and types of qualification, as they have for many years.

We have been working closely with Ofqual, the devolved administrations, and partners across the education sector on all decisions relating to examinations and qualifications in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our Higher Education Taskforce, chaired by my hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Universities, provides a forum for discussion with sector representatives on a range of issues, including admissions, and we are working with the sector on the challenges which universities, colleges, and students are facing due to the pandemic.

We shall continue to engage with partners across the education sector on the measures needed to ensure that exams can be held in England, and on the issue of grading, with fairness for students as our priority.

UNRWA: Finance

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking, if any, in response to the statement by the Commissioner-General for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East on 9 November about that Agency's financial challenges. [[HL10457](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is a long-term supporter of the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA), and we recognise UNRWA's unique mandate from the UN General Assembly to protect and provide protection and core services to Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. We are providing £51 million to UNRWA in 2020/2021. Reports that UNRWA may not be able to pay the salaries of its staff in full are very worrying. To that end, the UK is working with UNRWA and other donors to improve UNRWA's financial viability. This includes broadening UNRWA's donor base, encouraging the full disbursement of pledges and support through multi-year funding.

West Bank: Demolition

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking, if any, to support Palestinians in the West Bank who have legal title deeds to their land from having their property and resources demolished by the government of Israel. [[HL10458](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We consistently call for an immediate end to all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution, including the demolition of Palestinian property in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International

Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians and is harmful to the peace process. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv have repeatedly raised our concern about demolitions with Israeli Ministers and senior officials, and urged them to cease the counter-productive policy of demolitions, and provide a clear, transparent route to construction for Palestinians in Area C.

West Bank: Sports

*Asked by **Baroness Tonge***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they plan to make to the government of

Israel about reports that that government has ordered that the building of a sports facility for Palestinian wheelchair users in Salfit be stopped. [[HL10402](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We recognise that Palestinians can face severe difficulty in securing building permissions for homes and infrastructure. We continue to urge the Government of Israel to develop improved mechanisms for zoning, planning and permitting in the West Bank for the benefit of the Palestinian population, including by facilitating local Palestinian participation in such processes.

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