

**Session 2019-21  
No. 171**



**Thursday  
14 January 2021**

**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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<b>Earl Howe</b>	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
<b>Lord Agnew of Oulton</b>	Minister of State, Treasury and Cabinet Office
<b>Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon</b>	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
<b>Lord Ashton of Hyde</b>	Chief Whip
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<b>Baroness Berridge</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education and Department for International Trade
<b>Lord Bethell</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care
<b>Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist</b>	Whip
<b>Lord Callanan</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
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<b>Baroness Goldie</b>	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
<b>Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park</b>	Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
<b>Lord Greenhalgh</b>	Minister of State, Home Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
<b>Lord Grimstone of Boscobel</b>	Minister of State, Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Department for International Trade
<b>Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay</b>	Whip
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<b>Baroness Scott of Bybrook</b>	Whip
<b>Baroness Stedman-Scott</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
<b>Lord Stewart of Direleton</b>	Advocate-General for Scotland
<b>Lord True</b>	Minister of State, Cabinet Office
<b>Baroness Vere of Norbiton</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
<b>Baroness Williams of Trafford</b>	Minister of State, Home Office
<b>Lord Wolfson of Tredegar</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Justice
<b>Viscount Younger of Leckie</b>	Whip

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# Written Statements

*Thursday, 14 January 2021*

## Contingencies Fund Advance

[HLWS707]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** My Hon. Friend, the Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government (Luke Hall) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I give notice that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government intends to seek an advance from the Contingencies Fund to fund previously announced Covid-19 expenditure on Local Government DEL that is above the level of the Net Cash Requirement approved at the Main Estimate. The Department requires an advance of its cash requirement pending parliamentary approval of the Supplementary Estimate 2020-21.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £3,559,984,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £3,559,984,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

## Criminal Legal Aid: Independent Review

[HLWS705]

**Lord Wolfson of Tredegar:** My right honourable friend the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Robert Buckland) has made the following Written Statement:

"Following the accelerated package of measures amending the Criminal Legal Aid Fee Schemes announced in August, I announced that the next phase of the Criminal Legal Aid Review would involve an independently led review. On 21<sup>st</sup> December 2020 I published the Terms of Reference for that review, and announced via press notice that it would be chaired by Sir Christopher Bellamy QC. I am today following up that announcement.

The first phase of the Criminal Legal Aid Review has delivered up to £51m to practitioners, and the independently-led review will build on the data and insights collected so far. It will be far-reaching in scope, assessing the Criminal Legal Aid market in its entirety; the service being provided, how it is procured and how it is administered. It will develop and continue the original aims of the first phase of the Criminal Legal Aid Review.

Over the last few years, concerns have been raised about the long-term sustainability of Criminal Legal Aid. Against this backdrop, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is important that we do what is necessary to ensure the Criminal Legal Aid System is efficient, effective, and sustainable.

The ultimate objective for the Criminal Legal Aid System is to provide legal advice and representation to

those who need it, in line with my statutory duty to ensure legal aid is made available in order to ensure and uphold access to justice. This objective will provide the foundation for the review's analysis and recommendations. The review will aim to ensure that defendants receive high quality advice and representation from a diverse set of practitioners, both now and in the future, whilst also making sure that the Criminal Legal Aid System is sustainable and provides value for money to the taxpayer and contributes to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Criminal Justice System. The themes and objectives of the review are outlined in detail in the Terms of Reference, which I have placed in the Library of the House.

The review will be chaired by Sir Christopher Bellamy QC. Sir Christopher is a former judge with a wealth of legal experience. He has recently stepped down as Chairman of Linklaters global competition practice and joined Monckton Chambers to focus on mediation and arbitration. Sir Christopher will lead a dedicated review team within Government which will support him as he delivers the review's recommendations.

I am working to establish an Expert Advisory Panel as soon as possible who will provide support to the review by testing and challenging the review's analysis and recommendations. The Panel will be composed of individuals with a range of backgrounds, skills and experience that will aid the review in its analysis of the Criminal Legal Aid System.

The review will report this year and the Ministry of Justice will aim to publish the report, alongside the Government's response, by the end of 2021."

## Domestic Abuse Victims: Workplace Support

[HLWS706]

**Lord Callanan:** My Honourable friend the Minister for London and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets) (Paul Scully) 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 Government's report into support in the workplace for victims of domestic abuse.

This report, which I am publishing today, sets out the key findings from the review conducted by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy this year, as well as the areas of work which Government will take forward as a result of this review.

This review is part of the Government's agenda to raise awareness and build understanding about the devastating impact of domestic abuse on victims and their families. The landmark Domestic Abuse Bill, led by the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice, aims to ensure that victims have the confidence to come forward and report their experiences, safe in the knowledge that the state will do everything it can, both to support them and their

children and to pursue the abuser. The Bill includes a wide range of measures to better protect and support victims of domestic abuse and their children for the long term.

Alongside the measures in the Bill, we know that accessing and remaining in work is vital for victims of domestic abuse. Work provides not only an income, and the security that brings, but also opportunities to make social connections, and maintain health and wellbeing. For individuals experiencing domestic abuse, the workplace itself can also be a place of safety and respite from the abuser, and a place where they can make the arrangements they need and contact specialist services.

To inform this report, BEIS launched a call for evidence in June seeking evidence of how workplaces can most effectively support victims of domestic abuse. This received 126 written responses from individuals, representatives of victims, employers and their representatives, trade unions and others with interest. We also held a series of roundtables and meetings to discuss the issues in more depth with the Designate Domestic Abuse Commissioner, the Victims Commissioner, trade unions, specialist charities and service providers, employers and their representatives across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

With the right support and encouragement, employers can play a key role in helping to lift the lid on this often hidden and always hideous crime. The report considers what pragmatic, effective new measures could be put in place in the workplace by Government and employers. It is structured around three main themes:

- Raising awareness and understanding of the impacts that domestic abuse can have on individuals and employers.
- Building and sharing best practice among employers.
- The role that employment rights play in addressing the needs of victims of domestic abuse.

The work does not end with this report. We will work together with employers, representatives of victims and trade unions to continue to build awareness and understanding of domestic abuse and drive good practice across the board. The evidence provided showed that flexibility can help victims in situations where they need to access services. We will take forward the Manifesto commitment to consult on ways to ensure that flexible working becomes the default for everyone, which we know will benefit individuals experiencing domestic abuse. We will also prepare a consultation on further steps to help victims of domestic abuse in the workplace, for example on how to support them to access existing employment rights such as flexible working more effectively.

Copies of the report will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

## **Indemnity for Police Area Returning Officers and Local Returning Officers: 2021 Police and Crime Commissioner elections**

[HLWS703]

**Lord True:** My Hon. Friend, the Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution (Chloe Smith MP) has today made the following written statement:

It is necessary for the Cabinet Office to indemnify Police Area Returning Officers (PAROs) and Local Returning Officers (LROs) in England and Wales against uninsured claims that arise out of the conduct of their duties in Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) elections. This is because for the purposes of PCC elections, PAROs and LROs are statutorily independent officers and are separate from both central and local government. As such, they are personally liable for the conduct of the PCC elections. They are therefore potentially exposed to a variety of legal risks and challenges. Existing insurance that covers PAROs and LROs in discharging their statutory duties as returning officers at local elections will not, in most cases, cover them at the PCC election.

In light of this, the Cabinet Office proposes to continue to indemnify PAROs and LROs at the forthcoming PCC elections on 6 May 2021, and any subsequent by-elections taking place before the next scheduled elections on 1 May 2024, against claims that arise out of the conduct of their duties where existing insurance cover does not apply. Where a PARO or LRO already holds insurance which covers liabilities incurred at the PCC election, they will be required to claim under that insurance (or to seek to claim under it) before making a claim against this indemnity. Insurance for specific elections has historically provided extremely poor value for money, with claims made under such cover being smaller than the cost of the insurance premium. An indemnity therefore provides better value for money and this approach has been taken for elections since 2009.

On this basis, I have today laid a Minute setting out the Cabinet Office's intention to extend the current arrangements which indemnify PAROs and LROs against claims that arise out of the conduct of their duties in relation to the PCC elections.

In Wales, PAROs and LROs will be conducting Welsh Parliamentary elections in combination with PCC elections on 6 May 2021. The Welsh Government will provide its own indemnity to returning officers working on the Welsh Parliamentary polls. Where a claim is made against the actions or conduct of a returning officer in relation to both Welsh Parliamentary and PCC elections, any losses, liability, damages, costs, claims, proceedings or expenses incurred in relation to the combined polls will be apportioned equally, so far as that is reasonable.

The indemnity will provide PAROs and LROs with cover for:

- Amounts that exceed the upper limits on any existing insurance policies held by them, or local authorities on their behalf, that will provide coverage.
- Any reasonable costs resulting from their liabilities to the public, as an employer or in their professional role.

The indemnity will only apply so far as any charges are not otherwise recoverable under the charges provisions contained in section 55 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, and is subject to exclusions set out in the departmental Minute. The indemnity is otherwise unlimited in terms of the maximum amount covered per claim.

We will also provide a certificate confirming that we will bear any employee liabilities of the PARO or LRO which would otherwise be covered by insurance procured under the Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969.

It is normal practice, when a government department proposes to undertake a contingent liability in excess of £300,000 for which there is no specific statutory authority, for the Minister concerned to present a departmental Minute to Parliament giving particulars of the liability created and explaining the circumstances; and to refrain from incurring the liability until 14 Parliamentary sitting days after the issue of the Minute, except in cases of special urgency. The Treasury has approved the proposal in principle.

### **Indemnity for Returning Officers and Acting Returning Officers: UK Parliamentary Elections**

[HLWS702]

**Lord True:** My Hon. Friend, the Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution (Chloe Smith MP) has today made the following written statement:

It is necessary for the Cabinet Office to indemnify Returning Officers in England, Scotland and Wales against uninsured claims that arise out of the conduct of their duties in the course of a UK parliamentary election or by-election. This is because for purposes of UK Parliamentary elections, Returning Officers and Acting Returning Officers throughout Great Britain (referred to below as "ROs" and "AROs") are statutorily independent officers. They are separate from both central and local government. As a result, they are exposed to a variety of legal risks varying from minor claims for injury, to significant election petitions and associated legal costs.

ROs and AROs make their own arrangements to insure themselves against any risks they face in taking forward their statutory duties at local and UK Parliamentary elections. The cover obtained usually forms part of the local authority's own insurance arrangements. While this insurance will cover certain risks to which ROs and AROs may be exposed at UK Parliamentary elections, they could ultimately be liable for claims of a type not covered by insurance policies. They could also be liable

for claims that exceed the insurance limits in existing cover.

In light of this, the Cabinet Office proposes to continue to provide ROs and AROs with a specific indemnity for UK Parliamentary elections to supplement the insurance policies that have been arranged locally. On this basis, I have today laid a Minute setting out the Cabinet Office's intention to extend the current arrangements which indemnify ROs and AROs against claims that arise out of the conduct of their duties in relation to UK Parliamentary elections.

The indemnity will cover ROs' and AROs' costs (including reasonable legal costs and reasonable expenses) incurred in connection with a UK Parliamentary election, which arise in relation to their discharge of responsibilities as RO or ARO but fall outside of the scope of the insurance cover which they have arranged locally, and where all other forms of recourse have been exhausted. The indemnity will be limited to the extent set out in the departmental Minute.

The indemnity will cover costs arising in relation to UK Parliamentary elections, including by-elections, where the date of the poll is on or before 1 May 2024. The indemnity is subject to exceptions identified in the Minute, but is unlimited in terms of the maximum amount it covers per claim. If the liability is called, provision for any payment is to be met from the Consolidated Fund.

It is normal practice, when a government department proposes to undertake a contingent liability in excess of £300,000 for which there is no specific statutory authority, for the Minister concerned to present a departmental Minute to Parliament giving particulars of the liability created and explaining the circumstances; and to refrain from incurring the liability until fourteen Parliamentary sitting days after the issue of the Minute, except in cases of special urgency. The Treasury has approved the proposal in principle.

### **Reforming Pre-charge Bail**

[HLWS704]

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

In February of last year, this Government launched a consultation seeking views on reforming pre-charge bail. A number of cases had highlighted that the existing system was not working for victims, law enforcement, or suspects. It is of great importance to this Government that the public has confidence in the criminal justice system, and I am clear that the welfare of victims should be at its heart.

The consultation sought views on a number of aspects of the pre-charge bail process – in particular addressing the reduced reliance on pre-charge bail, and the growing number of suspects being released under investigation

(RUI). Under RUI, conditions and restrictions, which could be used to protect the victim, cannot be imposed on a suspect, and this has meant that in a number of cases victims have not had the right safeguards in place.

We received feedback from a range of stakeholders – from charities and victim services to lawyers and the judiciary and police - which we have used to inform our response. The Government has listened, and now we are taking action.

We will be bringing forward the following reforms, legislating where necessary at the earliest opportunity, to ensure victims can feel better protected and suspects will not be placed under endless suspicion.:

- We will remove the current presumption against use of pre-charge bail to ensure that law enforcement can take a balanced decision depending on the circumstances of the case. This will help reduce the numbers of those released under investigation (RUI).
- We will adjust the timescales and authorisation levels for pre-charge bail to better reflect the operational realities faced by investigating officers, whilst maintaining rigorous oversight of decisions to extend bail timelines.
- We will ensure that victims play a key role in the pre-charge bail process, that they are fully informed as the case progresses and are able to ask questions and provide views. This is so officers can take into account any safeguarding concerns to ensure appropriate measures are in place.

We are determined to give the police the right tools to keep the public safe. These changes are designed to make the pre-charge bail regime more effective and to provide more confidence for all involved.

Further detail of the changes we are making can be found in the consultation response. The consultation response will be available at: [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/police-powers-](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/police-powers-)

[pre-charge-bail](#) A copy will also be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

## **Second-hand Margin Scheme in Northern Ireland: Motor Vehicles Sourced from Great Britain**

[HLWS708]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** Under the Northern Ireland Protocol ('the Protocol'), EU VAT rules in respect of goods will continue to apply in Northern Ireland. However, Northern Ireland is, and will remain, part of the UK's VAT system.

As set out in the 10 December 2020 Command Paper [CP 346], the Government is aware of concerns regarding the use of the second-hand margin scheme in Northern Ireland, with respect to motor vehicles sourced in Great Britain. The Government understands the impact this may have on Northern Ireland traders and consumers, and is therefore exploring options to minimise this.

As an interim measure, the Government will be issuing guidance to traders on how they can continue to apply the margin scheme in relation to motor vehicles sold since the end of the transition period.

Following initial engagement this week, the Government will also seek to agree a long-term derogation with the European Commission from EU VAT rules to allow the margin scheme in Northern Ireland to apply in respect of motor vehicles sourced in Great Britain.

In line with this approach, the Government will bring forward legislation at the earliest opportunity on the use of the margin scheme in Northern Ireland with respect to motor vehicles sourced in Great Britain. Consistent with the Government's intentions to apply for a derogation, this legislation will be retrospective and apply from 11pm on 31 December 2020.

# Written Answers

Thursday, 14 January 2021

## Agricultural Products

*Asked by Lord Field of Birkenhead*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the estimated projected output of (1) cereals, (2) fruit and vegetables, (3) potatoes, (4) meat, (5) poultry meat, (6) dairy and eggs, and (7) fish, in the UK between 2030 and 2050. [HL11657]

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble:** The UK has the climate, the natural resources and entrepreneurial farmers and food producers to equip us to produce a wide range of commodities. 64% of the food that we consume is already home-grown, and we remain confident in the resilience of our leading agricultural sectors. Productivity is a key driver of long-term economic growth and prosperity and we will support our hard-working farmers and growers to continue to produce a reliable and sustainable supply to high environmental, food safety and animal welfare standards. Through our Environmental Land Management scheme, we will also support farmers to invest in the foundations of food production - healthy soil, clean and plentiful water and thriving wildlife.

We have agreed a new settlement with the EU and the Fisheries Act 2020 will ensure that our fisheries are managed in a sustainable way - balancing social, economic, and social benefits while preventing the over exploitation of fish stocks.

The Seafood Industry Leadership Group leads and supports the work of the Seafood 2040 Strategic Framework for England (SF2040). Seafood 2040 aims to achieve a 75% increase in UK Seafood consumption by 2040. As part of Seafood 2040, the English Aquaculture Strategy published in November 2020 sets out plans for the sustainable development of English aquaculture over the next twenty years, including a tenfold increase in production volume to around 90,000 tonnes by 2040.

## Aviation: Air Pollution

*Asked by Lord Oates*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment the FlyZero initiative, announced on 20 July, has made of the research by D S Lee et al The contribution of global aviation to anthropogenic climate forcing for 2000 to 2018, published in volume 244 of Atmospheric Environment, which found that non-CO2 effects contribute approximately two-thirds of aviation-induced warming; and what steps, if any, they have taken to adjust the work of that initiative in the light of this research. [HL11679]

**Lord Callanan:** The FlyZero project will investigate the commercial and technical feasibility for a zero-carbon

emitting aircraft. A much wider sustainability agenda is at the core of the planned aircraft studies. Beyond tail-pipe carbon emissions, FlyZero will consider full lifecycle sustainability, including other sources of environmental impact, such as non-CO<sub>2</sub> effects.

The FlyZero team have considered the work of Prof. Lee et al, in addition to many other publications and work, such as modelling and data, from UK and international experts on the topic of non-CO<sub>2</sub> impacts. This includes the European Commission report: "Updated analysis of the non-CO<sub>2</sub> climate impacts of aviation and potential policy measures pursuant to EU Emissions Trading System Directive Article 30(4)" released in December 2020.

## Bosnia and Herzegovina: Politics and Government

*Asked by Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government which states were fellow signatories to the General Framework for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995; whether those states have a duty to assess whether that agreement is still appropriate to the needs of that country; whether they have made any such assessment; and if so, what steps they intend to take in response. [HL11667]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The signatories of the General Framework for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (GFAP) are Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Representatives from the UK, USA, France, Germany, Russia and the European Union signed the document as witnesses. The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting BiH's security, democracy and prosperity, underpinned as necessary by constitutional reform. The international community will offer support, but it is essential that the authorities in BiH themselves make reforms based on broad consensus and for the greater good of all citizens. This path forward requires compromise and cooperation from all sides. All BiH citizens must have the right to participate equally in their country's future.

## Buildings: Insulation

*Asked by Lord Porter of Spalding*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what percentage of fires since 2012 in buildings over (1) 18 metres or six storeys high, and (2) 11 metres or four storeys high, have had (a) non-combustible insulation, (b) combustible cavity insulation, and (c) no cavity insulation. [HL11681]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** The Home Office does not collect this information. Data on fires in high-rise and medium-rise purpose-built flats are available in Table 0205 here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables#dwelling-fires-attended> but we do not collect information on cavity insulation in the property in which the fire took place.

## Business: Coronavirus

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have had with business representative organisations about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL11689]

**Lord Callanan:** Ministers and officials have engaged closely with business representative organisations throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and we continue to do so.

BEIS Ministers hold regular sector calls with all the industries that BEIS covers, including but not limited to manufacturing, energy, construction, life sciences, professional services, retail and hospitality. The industry representatives include business organisations and trade associations. We use these ongoing engagements to collect direct intelligence on the impacts of Covid-19 on industries and sectors that informs the response from BEIS and other Government departments and ensures the effectiveness of the Government's response to the Covid-19 outbreak.

## Care Homes: Migrant Workers

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the income requirement of £25,600 for immigrants on staffing levels in care homes; and what plans they have to ensure that care homes experience no staff shortages because of that requirement. [HL11696]

**Lord Bethell:** The new 'Skilled Worker' route will mean roles such as senior care worker and registered manager that meet the skills and/or salary requirements will be eligible for a sponsored Skilled Worker visa. However, we recognise that occupations such as direct care roles which do not meet the skills and salary threshold will not be eligible. The flow of European Union workers into the sector annually is small comparable to the size of the workforce – fewer than 5% of all workers joining the sector in a direct care role in 2019/20 had arrived from the EU in the previous 12 months. Therefore, we expect employers will be able to recruit domestically to outnumber any decreased flow of workers from the EU and we are taking action to support this.

## Commonwealth Games 2022

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have agreed (1) a budget, and (2) a programme, to support the legacy of the Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022. [HL11822]

**Baroness Barran:** Birmingham and the West Midlands region will benefit from a £778 million investment to stage the 2022 Commonwealth Games, including £594

million of funding from central government. This significant investment is driving legacy opportunities across both the West Midlands and UK, including job creation, community and sports facilities and a timely boost to businesses.

An additional £24 million investment from the government and the West Midlands Combined Authority to create a Tourism, Trade and Investment Programme will ensure the city, region and the UK can take advantage of the economic opportunities hosting the Games provides.

Games legacy is being planned and delivered by a collaboration of Games partners including the Department for Digital Culture, Media and Sport, Birmingham City Council, the West Midlands Combined Authority and the Organising Committee. A Legacy Plan is being prepared and will be published later in 2021.

## Coronavirus: Social Distancing

*Asked by Lord Mendelsohn*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent assessment they have made of the effectiveness of their social distancing guidance during the COVID-19 pandemic; and what plans they have, if any, to change that guidance. [HL11759]

**Lord Bethell:** We recognise how hard the impact of COVID-19 pandemic has been on people's relationships with their loved ones. The current guidance on social distancing remains that people should stay at least two metres away from others outside their household, to control the spread of the virus and keeping people safe. This guidance is under constant review to reflect the latest advice from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies and the latest evidence we have on the transmission of the virus, including new variants. We are also working across government to ensure that guidance relating to specific sectors on social distancing and non-pharmaceutical interventions takes into account the latest advice and information.

## Coronavirus: Vaccination

*Asked by Lord Field of Birkenhead*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to prioritise COVID-19 vaccinations for clinically extremely vulnerable groups irrespective of age. [HL11656]

**Lord Bethell:** The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised that all clinically extremely vulnerable individuals aged 16 years old and above should receive a COVID-19 vaccination in the first phase of the programme.

Children, including those in at risk groups, have a very low risk of mortality from COVID-19 and the advice of the JCVI is for the first phase of vaccination to involve a targeted programme to vaccinate those most at risk of mortality. Data from the first wave of the pandemic in the

United Kingdom indicated that mortality in children was only seen in older children with severe neuro-disabilities. Given this, the JCVI has advised exceptional use of the vaccine outside of the authorisation in this group where these children require residential care and are as such at higher risk of exposure.

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

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the communique from the Primates of the Anglican Communion on 12 November about equitable COVID-19 vaccine access, what measures they have put in place to ensure that people living in the least economically developed countries have access to any such vaccine. [[HL11697](#)]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK is committed to rapid equitable access to safe and effective vaccines, and has committed up to £548 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), which is the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines. This makes the UK among the COVAX AMC's largest bilateral donors. Our commitment 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.

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

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the communique from the Primates of the Anglican Communion on 12 November about equitable COVID-19 vaccine access, what plans they have to use faith communities globally to encourage the distribution and uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine. [[HL11698](#)]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK is committed to rapid, equitable access to safe and effective vaccines, treatments, and tests globally. We have committed up to £548 million for the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), which is the international initiative administered by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance to support global equitable access to vaccines. Our commitment 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.

Gavi and its partners plan to partner with faith-based organisations, including working with religious leaders, to provide accurate and transparent information on COVID-19 vaccines, and encourage the distribution and uptake of the vaccine when rolled-out.

## Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions

*Asked by **Baroness Whitaker***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Lord Bethell on 25 November (HL Deb, col 254), when they will answer the Written Question

tabled by Baroness Whitaker on 21 October (HL9456), namely, what plans they have (1) to mark International Stammering Awareness Day on 22 October, and (2) to develop technology across the NHS which ensures equal access to specialist speech and language therapy for people who stammer. [[HL11513](#)]

**Lord Bethell:** I replied to the noble Baroness's Question on 21 December 2020.

## Digital Technology

*Asked by **Lord Watson of Invergowrie***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Barran on 20 November (HL10315), what provisions that reduce digital exclusion have been implemented as a result of their continual assessment of varying approaches to promoting digital inclusion; and how the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport defines "vulnerable consumers" in that context. [[HL11711](#)]

**Baroness Barran:** In response to Covid-19, last year the Government agreed a set of commitments with the UK's major broadband and mobile operators to support disadvantaged and vulnerable consumers. This included lifting data caps on all fixed broadband packages, and provision of new and generous landline and mobile offers, such as free or low cost mobile data boosts.

The majority of the UK's leading mobile network operators have also agreed to provide free data uplifts to disadvantaged families with school-age children. Through it's Get Help with Technology scheme, the Department for Education is also distributing devices to disadvantaged children. Furthermore, we are pleased that all four of the main mobile network operators have committed to working with Oak Academy to zero rate the website, and EE is also zero-rating BBC Bitesize.

In relation to identifying vulnerability in the telecoms sector, Ofcom, the telecoms regulator, requires communication providers to have in place policies and procedures to identify and support customers whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Such circumstances can include, but not limited to, age, a physical or learning disability, health, income levels, etc.

[Ofcom's vulnerability guide](#), which I attach, provides best practice to communication providers on supporting vulnerable consumers, including setting an expectation on providers that they take an inclusive approach to identifying vulnerable consumers, noting that circumstances that cause vulnerability can be sudden and dynamic, as demonstrated by Covid-19.

The Government has also introduced new essential digital skills qualifications (EDSQs) based on new national standards for essential digital skills. Adults with no or low digital skills can study essential digital skills qualifications for free.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Ofcom's vulnerability guide [treating-vulnerable-customer-fairly-guide.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-12-30/HL11711>

## Digital Technology: Care Leavers

*Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Barran on 20 November (HL10315), what steps they have taken to put in place measures that specifically benefit young people leaving the care system in overcoming digital exclusion. [HL11712]

*Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the barriers facing care leavers in being approved for contracts with broadband providers. [HL11713]

**Baroness Berridge:** We are aware that care leavers are less likely to have access to a device and internet package than their peers in the general population and that, consequently, they were likely to be at higher risk of loneliness and isolation during the COVID-19 outbreak. That is why, in April 2020, we prioritised care leavers for receipt of laptops and 4G wireless routers that the department distributed to local authorities as part of a £100 million investment in technology access for vulnerable children and young people.

Of the 220,000 laptops and tablets, and over 50,000 routers that have been distributed, 148,000 have been provided specifically to children with a social worker and care leavers. This has meant that thousands of care leavers have digital access to allow them to participate in learning online and to maintain contact with their Personal Advisers and with other support networks and access support services online. A copy of the guidance issued to local authorities is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/laptops-tablets-and-4g-wireless-routers-provided-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

Since these devices were distributed, we have extended the data packages provided, with all current SIM card contracts remaining active until July 2021. A copy of these details is available at: <https://get-help-with-tech.education.gov.uk/devices/preparing-4g-wireless-routers#contract-length>.

All local authorities have a duty to consult on and publish a local offer for their care leavers. This includes care leavers' statutory entitlements, as well as any discretionary support and services that the local authority chooses to provide. Some local authorities have included supplying mobile phones, data packages or other forms of digital access for their care leavers during COVID-19 and may consider making this part of their local offer going forward.

## Electric Vehicles

*Asked by Lord Truscott*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to accelerate (1) the adoption of electric and other low- or non-carbon emitting cars in the UK, and (2) any necessary infrastructure required for such cars. [HL11710]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Government is investing over £2.8 billion to facilitate the transition to zero emission vehicles. Of this, £1.3 billion has been ring fenced to accelerate the roll out of charging infrastructure, targeting support on rapid chargepoints on motorways and major A roads and installing more on-street chargepoints near homes and workplaces to make charging as easy as refuelling a petrol or diesel car. The Government has also pledged £582 million in grants for those buying zero or ultra-low emission vehicles to make them cheaper to buy and incentivise more people to make the transition.

The Government will continue to support industry and consumers to make the switch to cleaner vehicles.

## Ethiopia: Armed Conflict

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the use of 'quiet' diplomacy to resolve the conflict in Tigray; and what plans they have to withhold aid to Ethiopia until the impact of the conflict on human rights can be assessed. [HL11627]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Her Majesty's Government has maintained a dialogue with the Government of Ethiopia throughout the current situation in Tigray. We have made clear the expectations of the international community on the protection of civilians and the importance of independent human rights investigations, advocated for unfettered and free humanitarian access, and called for a political solution.

Withholding funding for basic services (health and the Covid-19 response, nutrition, education, food security and water) would have a significant impact on the most vulnerable. We remain committed to the development of Ethiopia and its people, but we will continue to review our support in light of changing circumstances.

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have made representations to the government of Ethiopia to accept the role of the African Union's former presidents in mediating an end to the conflict in Tigray; and if so, what response they have received. [HL11629]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK has welcomed the offers of mediation by the African Union (AU) and President Ramaphosa and the efforts to date of the AU's three distinguished Special Envoys. Prime Minister Abiy met with the three AU Envoys on Friday 27 November

2020 and we continue to encourage the Ethiopian Government to maintain engagement with the AU and the Special Envoys, and continue to call for a cessation of violence

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 29 December (HL11518), whether they will now answer the question put, namely what steps they have taken in response to the statement by the government of Ethiopia that (1) its military shot at a UN convoy, and (2) it wants the UN to travel in armed convoy. [HL11630]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We were concerned to learn that UN staff conducting an assessment mission to Tigray were shot at and briefly detained. Humanitarian agencies must be able to deliver aid to people affected by the fighting in Ethiopia in line with international humanitarian principles. We note that guidance on the use of armed escorts in Tigray has now been developed by the UN humanitarian country team, and we continue to press for full and unfettered humanitarian access to Tigray and other impacted areas.

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 29 December (HL11518), whether they will now answer the question put, namely what steps they have taken in response to reports that Tigrayans have been removed from their jobs at the UN; and to reports that the government of Ethiopia is preventing aid reaching Ethiopians. [HL11631]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are working closely with our partners and UN agencies to ensure that all staff can continue to work. We continue to call for unfettered humanitarian access for the UN and other humanitarian actors to Tigray and other impacted areas.

*Asked by Lord Boateng*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the numbers of displaced people escaping conflict in Tigray (a) internally, and (b) externally into Sudan, and (2) the implications of that conflict for food security in that region. [HL11639]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We await the results of the joint UN - Government of Ethiopia needs assessment missions. The UN estimates that up to 1.3 million people affected by the conflict in Tigray need humanitarian assistance, on top of an existing humanitarian caseload of one million people in the region. As of 4 January, 55,500 people have sought refuge in Sudan.

We are concerned about the impact of the conflict and displacement on food security and nutrition in Tigray and understand that up to 1.26 million people could be in need of humanitarian food assistance.

*Asked by Lord Boateng*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of carpet bombing by Eritrean and Ethiopian forces on villages in Tigray; and what steps they intend to take (1) themselves, (2) with the African Union, (3) with EU member states, (4) with the government of the United States, and (5) with other interested parties, to safeguard the civilian population of Tigray from such action. [HL11640]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are concerned at reports of violations and atrocities in Tigray. Access to much of the region remains constrained and reports are difficult to verify. We have consistently called, in concert with international partners, for all parties to the conflict to prioritise the protection of civilians. We continue to call for independent investigation of allegations of abuses and violations of International Humanitarian Law. The British Ambassador in Eritrea and other international partners continue to raise questions about the mounting reports of Eritrean involvement in the conflict in Tigray. The Eritrean Government continue to deny their involvement.

*Asked by Lord Boateng*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of (1) conflict in Tigray, (2) the actions of combatants in that region against historic places of Christian and Muslim worship, (3) reports of the arrest of leading clerics including the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, and (4) reports of the disappearance of Bishop Mehdin, priests, and followers from the Eparchy of Adigrat. [HL11641]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** It is clear that the conflict in Tigray has had significant consequences for many tens of thousands of people, displacing them internally and externally, and adversely impacting those that were already in need of humanitarian assistance. We are saddened by reports that some places of worship may have been damaged in the conflict. Access to much of the region remains constrained, and reports difficult to verify.

We are aware of no reporting to suggest that Patriarch Abune has been detained, and this issue has not been raised with our Embassy in Addis Ababa by our friends at the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. Our Embassy in Addis Ababa have received indications that Bishop Mehdin is well and at liberty, and are attempting to contact him directly.

## Ethiopia: Humanitarian Situation

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether humanitarian corridors are being established in Tigray as part of the UN operation in that region; whether any such corridors will conform to the principles of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; whether such corridors will be supervised by

the government of Ethiopia in a way that does not compromise the neutrality of the operation; and whether access will be allowed to all areas, including those now under Tigrayan control. [[HL11626](#)]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK has been at the forefront, liaising closely with the UN and partners, in calling for sustained, free and unfettered humanitarian access across Tigray, in line with the guiding principles laid down by UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The UK worked with the UN to develop these guidelines and they have been shared with the Government of Ethiopia.

The mission must be able to work without hindrance and in turn it must facilitate the timely supply of humanitarian support to those who need it including to civilians in contested areas. We continue to work with the UN to monitor access and humanitarian delivery and the extent to which the UN's guiding principles are adhered to.

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports from UN refugee camps in Tigray region that Eritrean refugees are being forcibly returned to Eritrea; whether they have raised concerns with the government of Eritrea about such reports; and what steps they are taking to uphold the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' mandate to protect any refugees in its care. [[HL11628](#)]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are extremely concerned that humanitarian agencies, including the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), do not have access to refugee camps in Tigray. The UNHCR has, as a result, been unable to corroborate reports of the abduction and forced return of Eritrean refugees. The UK continues to call for sustained, free and unfettered humanitarian access across Tigray, so that the UNHCR can uphold its mandate towards refugees.

The British Ambassador in Eritrea and our international partners continue to raise these questions with the Government of Eritrea who have denied that Eritrean forces have forcibly returned Eritrean refugees to Eritrea.

*Asked by Lord Boateng*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of reports that the government of Ethiopia has denied unfettered access to aid agencies and development workers to regions where humanitarian aid is needed; and what representations they have made to the government of Ethiopia about the impact of any such actions on (1) citizens in areas affected by conflict, (2) the humanitarian crisis, and (3) the continuation of the provision of Official Development Assistance to that country. [[HL11642](#)]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We continue to work with the UN to promote and monitor access and delivery of humanitarian support to those who need it including to

civilians in contested areas in line with the guiding humanitarian principles laid down by UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Two joint UN and Government of Ethiopia assessment missions to Tigray have taken place with assessment reports expected soon.

The UK has been at the forefront, liaising closely with the United Nations (UN) and partners, in calling for sustained, free and unfettered humanitarian access across Tigray. We continue to press for the supply of humanitarian assistance to all those who need it, including in the recent December visit by the Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs.

We have assessed the appropriateness of UKAid programmes in Ethiopia in light of the developments of the Tigray conflict. We are clear that our priority is supporting Ethiopians in need and we continue to support critical services including health, nutrition, education, food security and water, the COVID-19 response and humanitarian needs across the country.

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that humanitarian agencies are being denied access to people in need of support in Tigray by the government of Ethiopia. [[HL11699](#)]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK has been at the forefront, liaising closely with the UN and partners, in calling for sustained, free and unfettered humanitarian access across Tigray, in line with the guiding principles laid down by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Two joint UN and Government of Ethiopia assessment missions to Tigray have taken place with assessment reports expected soon. We continue to press for the supply of humanitarian assistance to all those who need it. UK supported live-saving assistance including, health, nutrition, non food items (such as blankets, shelter and cooking equipment), in addition to water and sanitation have reached some of the conflict affected areas.

We continue to work with the UN to promote and monitor access and the delivery of humanitarian support to all those who need it, including to civilians in contested areas.

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Ethiopia about any difficulties humanitarian agencies have had in accessing Tigray. [[HL11700](#)]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK has been at the forefront, liaising closely with the UN and partners, in calling for sustained, free and unfettered humanitarian access across Tigray, in line with the guiding principles laid down by UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. We continue to press for the supply of humanitarian assistance to all those who need it,

including in the recent December visit by the Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs.

We continue to work with the UN to monitor access and the delivery of humanitarian support to all those who need it including to civilians in contested areas.

### Football: Coronavirus

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with (1) the Football Association, and (2) the Premier League, about the compliance of players with COVID-19 protocols. [HL11836]

**Baroness Barran:** The government is glad that elite sport can currently continue safely behind closed doors during this period of national restrictions due to the strict health and safety protocols it can uphold.

Ministers recently met with the Football Association, Premier League and English Football League to discuss the latest health situation in light of the new COVID strain and national restrictions.

Ministers have made the football authorities fully aware of their responsibility to ensure that players and staff act in accordance with government rules and guidance.

### Football: Equality

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the Football Association's Football Leadership Diversity Code since its introduction in October 2020; and what discussions they had with the Football Association about the creation of that Code before it was launched. [HL11839]

**Baroness Barran:** The Government welcomed the launch of the Football Association's 'Football Leadership Diversity Code' and believe it will help improve diversity within the game, from the coaching setup to the boardroom, with over 40 clubs signed up so far.

The Government is in regular contact with the Football Association (FA) across a range of matters, however, the responsibility for developing the Code was for the FA.

### Football: Females

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Football Association about the classification of the Women's FA Cup as a 'non elite' competition. [HL11837]

**Baroness Barran:** The Minister for Sport recently met with the Football Association to discuss the Women's FA Cup and we continue to liaise closely with them to understand this issue.

However, it is up to the respective governing bodies to determine what constitutes the boundary between elite

and non-elite within their sports and the classification of such competitions.

### Health Services: Females

*Asked by Baroness Grey-Thompson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the current commissioning structure for women's health services in England. [HL10862]

**Lord Bethell:** There are currently no plans to review the current commissioning structure for women's health services. However, the Government is committed to supporting the National Health Service and local authorities to deliver joined-up care for women across the full range of health and care services.

### Honours: Prosecutions

*Asked by Lord Garnier*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many investigations have been undertaken in each of the last 25 years for which figures are available into alleged offences under (1) section 1(1), and (2) section 1(2) of the Honours (Prevention of Abuses) Act 1925; on how many occasions in such a period evidence has been provided to the Crown Prosecution Service for its consideration of a prosecution under each of these sub-sections of the Act; and when any such occasions took place. [HL11735]

**Lord Stewart of Dirleton:** Records held by the Crown Prosecution Service ('CPS') indicate that between 2004 – 2021 there have been no criminal charges in relation to offences under the Honours (Prevention of Abuses) Act 1925.

The CPS does not hold records of the number of pre-charge case files referred by the police, and information relating to criminal investigations is a matter for the police.

### Hospitals: Coronavirus

*Asked by Baroness Finlay of Llandaff*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of (1) crowding, and (2) corridor care, on nosocomial outbreaks of COVID-19 in hospitals. [HL11345]

*Asked by Baroness Finlay of Llandaff*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of (1) crowding, and (2) corridor care, in accident and emergency departments, on patient safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL11346]

**Lord Bethell:** Throughout the pandemic, the safety of all staff, patients and visitors has been a priority for the National Health Service.

It is for individual hospital trusts to carry out continual risk assessments of their premises and to put appropriate measures in place such as distancing, sanitising stations and the use of face coverings and other protective equipment to help minimise the spread of the COVID-19 virus, in line with nationally published guidance. This includes busy areas like accident and emergency departments, corridors and patient areas such wards and clinics.

### **Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Kent**

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what (1) toilet, (2) refreshment, and (3) other arrangements they have made for lorry drivers delayed by the closure of English Channel ports. [HL11694]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The Department for Transport is providing catering, toilet and medical facilities for hauliers who are directed to the Manston and Sevington sites. In the event of significant disruption on the M20, the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) may take the decision to activate their Driver Welfare Plan, which includes the proportionate distribution of welfare at the roadside. Both the Department and the KRF monitor the situation closely and have the capability to increase the provision of welfare depending on the scale of demand. This was demonstrated in the response to the extreme traffic disruption that occurred over the Christmas period due to the closure of the French border.

### **Local Government: Coronavirus**

*Asked by Baroness Eaton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Greenhalgh on 28 October (HL9181), what plans they have to ensure that councils in England can meet remotely after the expiry of the relevant powers under the Coronavirus Act 2020. [HL11655]

**Lord Greenhalgh:** There is no option under current legislation to extend the current regulations under the Coronavirus Act 2020 as section 78 (3) contains the sunset date of 7 May 2021.

The Government has received representations from the Local Government Association and others from the local government sector making the case for extending and making permanent the provision for local authorities to meet remotely or in hybrid form. The Government is considering this carefully. To extend the facility for councils to continue to meet remotely, or in hybrid form, would require primary legislation.

### **Low Incomes: Coronavirus**

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the report by the Child Poverty Action Group and the

Church of England Poverty in the pandemic: An update on the impact of coronavirus on low-income families and children, published on 14 December, what new measures they are putting in place to respond to the needs of low-income families, and in particular, the children of such families. [HL11653]

**Baroness Stedman-Scott:** Throughout the pandemic, the Government has delivered an unprecedented package of support to protect jobs and businesses and, for those in most need, injected billions into the welfare system. From 6 April 2020 the Government temporarily increased the standard allowance in Universal Credit by £20 per week on top of planned annual uprating, for new and existing Universal Credit claimants. This measure remains in place until March 2021.

The new Covid Winter Grant Scheme builds on that support with an additional £170 million for local authorities in England. The grant will carry conditions and reporting requirements to ensure the scheme is focussed on providing support with food and utility costs to vulnerable families with children. At least 80 per cent is to be spent on families with children, providing some flexibility for councils to help other vulnerable people. Councils will also be required to spend at least 80 per cent on food and key utilities for heating and power, again, with some flexibility for other essentials. It is also increasing the value of Healthy Start vouchers by more than a third to help low income families. From April the value of vouchers will rise from £3.10 to £4.25.

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the report by the Child Poverty Action Group and the Church of England Poverty in the pandemic: An update on the impact of coronavirus on low-income families and children, published on 14 December, what assessment they have made of the mental health issues of (1) parents, and (2) children, of low-income families. [HL11654]

**Lord Bethell:** We recognise how important it is that everyone, including those in low-income families, get the support they need with their mental health and we are working to ensure that mental health services are there for everyone who needs them during the pandemic. We have released guidance through the 'Every Mind Matters' website where people can get advice to support their mental health and wellbeing, which includes dealing with money worries and job uncertainty during the pandemic.

### **Night-time Economy: Coronavirus**

*Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the restrictions put in place to address the COVID-19 pandemic on (1) the income of businesses working in, and (2) jobs related to, the night-time economy; and what steps they are taking to address any such impact. [HL11671]

**Lord Callanan:** Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has worked closely with the hospitality sector, including those operating in the night-time economy, to understand and mitigate the impact of the pandemic on their businesses.

Night-time economy businesses have been able to benefit from government support, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, government-backed loans, Local Restrictions Support Grants, additional funding provided to Local Authorities to support businesses and the Cultural Relief Fund.

On 5 January, when the new national lockdown began, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a one-off top up grant for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses worth up to £9,000 per property to help businesses through to the spring. A £594 million discretionary fund has also been made available to support other impacted businesses.

### Offences against Children

*Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether in compiling their report Group based child sexual exploitation characteristics of offending, published on 15 December, they or the External Reference Group received evidence on the use of Islamic teachings for the justification of sexual exploitation; and if any such evidence was received, what that evidence was. [[HL11680](#)]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** Political or cultural sensitivities must not deter national and local agencies from uncovering and preventing these devastating crimes.

The paper published on 15 December 2020 sets out that child sexual exploitation is not exclusive to any single culture, community, race or religion. It happens in all areas of the country and can take many different forms.

Whilst developing this paper, officials and members of the External Reference Group considered evidence from a range of sources, including academic research, official statistics and published work by organisations working in the child sexual exploitation area, as well as a series of interviews with police officers and safeguarding officers involved in investigating this type of offending. The paper was published alongside a literature review, which provides an overview of evidence from recent research on group-based child sexual exploitation in the community.

While the External Reference Group considered and discussed the available evidence for the cultural drivers of offending as well as the use of cultural factors as a justification for offending, this evidence did not make specific reference to Islamic teaching.

### Overseas Loans: Republic of Ireland

*Asked by Lord Kilclooney*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what interest has been paid by the Republic of Ireland for loans made

under the Loans to Ireland Act 2010; and when any such loans are expected to be repaid. [[HL11669](#)]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** The latest statutory report under section 2 of the Loans to Ireland Act 2010 discloses all interest payments made up to 30 September 2020. Since that date, Ireland has made one further regular interest payment, and one further tranche repayment with associated interest. Ireland is scheduled to repay the final tranche in March 2021. The Government continues to expect the loan to be repaid in full and on time.

### Peat

*Asked by Lord Greaves*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they plan to publish the England Peat Strategy. [[HL11663](#)]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** In the 25 Year Environment Plan, we committed to publishing an England Peat Strategy to create and deliver a new ambitious framework for peat restoration in England. It will set out a holistic plan for the management, protection and restoration of our upland and lowland peatlands so that they deliver benefits for climate and nature. We expect to publish the strategy in early 2021.

### Pectus Excavatum: Surgery

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by NHS England Clinical Commissioning Policy: Surgery for pectus deformity (all ages) Reference: 170113P, published on 22 February 2019, in particular its conclusions that existing published studies on the effectiveness of corrective pectus surgery had "serious weaknesses"; and what steps they are taking (1) to commission, and (2) to encourage, research into the effectiveness of such surgery in response to that finding. [[HL10290](#)]

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the conclusion contained in the report by NHS England Clinical Commissioning Policy: Surgery for pectus deformity (all ages) Reference: 170113P, published on 22 February 2019, that "there is not sufficient evidence to support the routine commissioning of surgical treatment for pectus deformity", under which circumstance surgical treatment can be considered for pectus deformity. [[HL10291](#)]

**Lord Bethell:** NHS England and NHS Improvement published a clinical commissioning policy in February 2019 about surgical treatment for patients with physical complications arising from pectus deformity. Following a review of clinical practice and options for treatment, they determined that there is insufficient evidence to routinely commission a surgical intervention. However, this policy states that if new evidence is presented, the position can be reviewed.

It is right that decisions about either further research required or surgical funding are made by clinical experts. The position for commissioning surgery for individuals is for clinicians to make an individual funding request where they feel it is clinically appropriate - for example because of exceptional circumstances in terms of either clinical presentation or the ability of a patient to benefit.

### Protective Clothing: Procurement

*Asked by Lord Scriven*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Department of Health and Social Care spoke with representatives of (1) Tulchan Group, and (2) Meller Designs, on 6 April; and if so, whether (a) the procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE) was discussed, (b) whether any records were kept of that discussion, and (c) whether the contact details of anyone working for the Government on the procurement of PPE was given to any such representatives. [[HL10449](#)]

**Lord Bethell:** I did not meet with any representative of Tulchan Group on 6 April.

I spoke with a representative of Meller Designs on 6 April to discuss the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE). A draft note of the meeting was made. The representative of Meller Designs was already in contact with Government officials involved in the procurement of PPE.

### Re-employment

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have had with (1) employers, and (2) trade unions, on the use of so-called 'dismissal and re-engagement' strategies in negotiations with employees. [[HL11691](#)]

**Lord Callanan:** Using threats about firing and re-hiring as a negotiating tactic is unacceptable. If the employer changes an employee's terms and conditions without their agreement, the employee may be entitled to seek legal redress.

The Government has been working with ACAS on this issue, who are seeking insights and views from employer bodies and trade unions, as well as professional bodies with advisory contact with employers, such as employment lawyers, accountants, and payroll services.

This work is generating valuable information on the circumstances when fire and hire practices have been used and their impact on the workplace.

### Selahattin Demirtaş

*Asked by Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, following the ruling by the European Court of Human Rights on 22

December that Selahattin Demirtaş must be released from prison, what representations they intend to make to the government of Turkey about his release. [[HL11668](#)]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We regularly raise human rights issues with the Turkish authorities. My colleague the Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas did so last month with her Turkish counterpart. With regard to this specific ruling, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe will supervise the implementation of the judgment in *Demirtaş (No.2) v Turkey*, a process in which the United Kingdom actively participates. We will continue to encourage Turkey, including at Ministerial level, to act in line with the conventions of the Council of Europe and to make greater progress on wider human rights reforms.

### SolarWinds

*Asked by Lord Clement-Jones*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many direct contracts they have with SolarWinds; and of any such contracts, (1) which (a) departments, or (b) agencies, they are with, and (2) which contracts specify the use of the Orion Platform. [[HL11643](#)]

*Asked by Lord Clement-Jones*

To ask Her Majesty's Government which (1) departments, or (2) agencies, have suppliers who have been affected by the SolarWinds cyberattack, first reported on 13 December. [[HL11644](#)]

*Asked by Lord Clement-Jones*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the impact of the SolarWinds cyberattack, first reported on 13 December 2020, on their (1) departments, and (2) agencies. [[HL11645](#)]

**Lord True:** The reported SolarWinds compromise is a complex, global cyber incident, and the Government is working with international partners to understand its scale and assess any UK impact. This work is ongoing.

The National Cyber Security Centre has published guidance on their website.

### Sports: Foreign Investment in UK

*Asked by Lord Hain*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what criteria they have proposed to sports administrators for the assessment of applications for the acquisition by foreign investors of (1) total, or (2) majority, ownership of sporting assets in the UK. [[HL11811](#)]

**Baroness Barran:** Acquisitions of sporting assets in the UK by foreign investors are a matter for the sports businesses themselves. The Government does not stipulate assessment criteria to sports bodies on acquisitions.

## Sports: Human Rights

*Asked by Lord Hain*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to international sporting organisations about the adoption of human rights principles for nations chosen to host international sporting events. [[HL11810](#)]

**Baroness Barran:** Participation in international sports events is a matter for the relevant international sports federations, and the national representatives to those federations. These bodies operate independently of government, and enshrine this political freedom in their rules and regulations.

## Takeovers: Disclosure of Information

*Asked by Lord Lee of Trafford*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of existing transparency requirements of public company directors regarding takeover approaches; and what plans they have, if any, to require such directors to disclose to shareholders any such approaches at the earliest appropriate time. [[HL11670](#)]

**Lord Callanan:** The Takeover Code, which has a statutory basis under the Companies Act 2006, sets out a clear and orderly framework for takeovers, including measures to ensure fairness to stakeholders.

The Code sets out rules regarding disclosure of takeover offers made, including that a public announcement must be made when a firm intention to make an offer is notified to the board of the offeree company by or on behalf of an offeror, irrespective of the attitude of the board to the offer.

The Code is issued and administered by the independent Panel on Takeovers and Mergers. The Panel has enforcement powers for breaches of the Code. Changes to the Code itself are a matter for the Panel.

## Taxation: Self-assessment

*Asked by Lord Randall of Uxbridge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, what plans they have to extend the deadline for submitting personal tax returns beyond 31 January 2021. [[HL11685](#)]

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** The Government has carefully considered the arguments for extending the Self-Assessment filing date deadline from 31 January but presently has no plans to extend that deadline. The January deadline has been in place for many years and changing it could undermine taxpayer understanding and trust in how the Self-Assessment system works. However, the Government recognises that some taxpayers will have difficulty submitting their Self-Assessment return due to the impact that COVID-19 has had on their personal or business circumstances.

HMRC do not charge penalties for failure to submit a return on time where taxpayers have a reasonable excuse. HMRC's guidance explains that they will accept the impact of COVID-19 as a reasonable excuse for submitting a return late, provided that taxpayers explain how they were affected and submit the return as soon as they can. More information is available in the HMRC online guidance covering the reasonable excuse provisions.

Once they have submitted their return, taxpayers who are unable to pay all of their Self-Assessment tax due on 31 January can then access HMRC's enhanced online Time to Pay arrangements. This allows Self-Assessment liabilities of up to £30,000 – increased from £10,000 – to be paid in up to 12 instalments without having to contact HMRC beforehand. Taxpayers with Self-Assessment liabilities over £30,000 can contact HMRC directly to agree a Time to Pay instalment arrangement.

## Trade Agreements: Human Rights

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have had with trade partners about the insertion of clauses on safeguarding human rights in future trade agreements. [[HL11688](#)]

**Lord Grimstone of Boscobel:** The United Kingdom has long promoted her values globally. We are clear that more trade does not have to come at the expense of rights and responsibilities.

While our approach to agreements will vary between partners, it will always allow HM Government to have open discussions on these issues.

## UK Trade with EU: Legal Profession

*Asked by Lord Smith of Finsbury*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to change the UK–EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement to clarify the definition of a 'lawyer' to include patent attorneys and trade mark attorneys to ensure that an attorney whose title is acquired in the UK is not disadvantaged in relation to an attorney whose title is acquired in the EU. [[HL11704](#)]

**Lord Wolfson of Tredegar:** The Future Relationship Act received Royal Assent on 31 December 2020 and the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement is now enshrined into UK law. There are no plans to amend this agreement with respect to the definition of a 'lawyer'.

The legal services practice rights captured in the UK–EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement are a novel provision covering policy areas where the EU was reluctant to take on new commitments. The government's policy intention in respect of these provisions was to secure commitment to home title practice rights in home and international law for those within the scope of the EU's lawyer-related directives. This scope does not include patent or trade mark attorneys.

Recognising the sector's concerns in this area, the government has amended the Intellectual Property Office's (IPO) address for service rules to remove reference to the EEA. This means that, since 1 January 2021, only a UK, Gibraltar, Isle of Man or Channel Island address for service is accepted for new applications and requests to start contentious proceedings before the IPO.

### **Urban Areas: Pollution Control**

*Asked by Lord Truscott*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to accelerate plans (1) to improve air quality, and (2) to reduce pollution, in city centres. [HL11708]

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** Our Clean Air Strategy sets out an ambitious programme of action to reduce air pollution from a wide range of sources in our towns and cities. We have also put in place a £3.8 billion plan to tackle roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations. Our Environment Bill makes a clear commitment to set a legally binding target to reduce fine particulate matter and enables greater local action by ensuring responsibility for tackling air pollution is shared across local government structures and with relevant public authorities. We are

also strengthening the ability of local authorities to tackle smoke emissions from domestic solid fuel burning, which is a major source of fine particulate matter.

Under the Local Air Quality Management Framework, local authorities are required to review and assess local air quality and to declare an Air Quality Management Area if monitoring indicates exceedance of local air quality standards and objectives, and are then required to develop an Air Quality Action Plan to address the exceedance.

The UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations outlines how councils with the worst air pollution concentrations must take robust action to improve air quality. The plan requires local areas to produce their own plans to accelerate air quality improvement. These plans include Clean Air Zones (CAZs) which will deliver targeted action in air pollution hot spots. Bath & North East Somerset Council will introduce a CAZ on 15 March 2021 with Birmingham City Council following on 1 June 2021. We have committed a further £2.5 billion to support a number of cities improve their local transport systems through the Transforming Cities Fund - a number of these projects will help deliver air quality improvements.

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