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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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

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Ministers and others who make Statements or answer Questions are referred to only by name, not their ministerial or other title. The current list of ministerial and other responsibilities is as follows.

<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Baroness Evans of Bowes Park	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
Earl Howe	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
Lord Agnew of Oulton	Minister of State, 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
Lord Benyon	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
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
Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist	Whip
Lord Callanan	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Earl of Courtown	Deputy Chief Whip
Lord Frost	Minister of State, Cabinet Office
Baroness Goldie	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park	Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Lord Greenhalgh	Minister of State, Home Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Lord Grimstone of Boscobel	Minister of State, Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Department for International Trade
Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay	Whip
Baroness Penn	Whip
Baroness Scott of Bybrook	Whip
Baroness Stedman-Scott	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
Lord Stewart of Dirleton	Advocate-General for Scotland
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
Lord Wolfson of Tredegar	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Whip

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Written Statements

Wednesday, 16 June 2021

Counter-Terrorism and Security Act: Post-legislative Scrutiny

[HLWS91]

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:

The Government has today submitted a Memorandum to the Home Affairs Committee regarding post-legislative scrutiny of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

The Home Office has carried out the post-legislative scrutiny, which includes an assessment of how the Act has worked in practice, and set out its findings in a Command Paper to the Committee.

The Memorandum has been laid before the House as a Command Paper (CP 455) and published on GOV.UK. Copies will also be available from the Vote Office.

Electoral Commission's Performance Standards for Electoral Registration Officers

[HLWS90]

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

In accordance with section 9A of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, I am laying before

Parliament the Electoral Commission's new Performance Standards for Electoral Registration Officers.

The Electoral Administration Act 2006 gave the Electoral Commission powers to set and monitor performance standards for electoral services. Under these provisions, the Commission can determine and publish standards of performance for relevant electoral officers in Great Britain.

Following a consultation, the Electoral Commission established a new set of standards which will be used by Electoral Registration Officers and the Commission throughout the year to understand and improve Election Registration Officers' performance, ensuring that registers are as accurate and complete as possible, enabling everyone who is eligible and wants to, to be able to vote.

I welcome the Electoral Commission's updates to the performance standards to reflect the current environment for Electoral Registration Officers, though more broadly, further measures are needed to strengthen electoral integrity and prevent electoral fraud - which will be delivered through the forthcoming Elections Bill. It is important that performance standards keep pace as we improve electoral registration further.

The Statement includes the following attached material:

Performance Standards [(Unnumbered Act Paper) - Performance Standards for Electoral Registration Officers, Standard Print.pdf]

Performance Standards (Large Print) [(Unnumbered Act Paper) - Performance Standards for Electoral Registration Officers, Large Print.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2021-06-16/HLWS90/>

Written Answers

Wednesday, 16 June 2021

BBC: Broadcasting Programmes

Asked by *Baroness Benjamin*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take to ensure that the BBC does not reduce the number of quotas related to delivering public value content, including those related to (1) radio, and (2) children's programming. [HL914]

Baroness Barran: The government is clear that the BBC has to provide high quality, distinctive content and services. However, it is ultimately a matter for Ofcom as the independent regulator on how to enforce these obligations through appropriate regulation. It is therefore for Ofcom, not the government, to set and amend quotas for the BBC's public services.

BBC: Royal Charters

Asked by *Baroness Benjamin*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how their mid-term review of the BBC Charter will be informed by Ofcom's review of the BBC's operating licence. [HL913]

Baroness Barran: Ofcom is independent of the government and the government has no say over Ofcom's operational decisions. A review of the BBC's operating licence and service requirements is therefore for Ofcom as the BBC's regulator.

The Mid-Term Review of the Royal Charter offers an opportunity for the government to consider whether current governance and regulatory arrangements for the BBC are working effectively, including the effectiveness of the regulation by Ofcom.

We will start the preparations now, ahead of the review starting formally next year, as the Royal Charter sets out.

Cryptocurrencies: Environment Protection

Asked by *Lord Mendelsohn*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the establishment of the Bitcoin Mining Council, what steps they will take (1) to encourage the use of renewable power and sustainable Bitcoin mining, and (2) to monitor the effectiveness of the Council. [HL787]

Asked by *Lord Mendelsohn*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether (1) the Cryptoasset Taskforce, or (2) any government department, collects or collates data on the environmental impact of cryptocurrencies; and if so, when any such data will be published. [HL788]

Asked by *Lord Mendelsohn*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the level of energy use in the mining of Bitcoin, as identified by the Cambridge Bitcoin Electricity Consumption Index; and what steps they will take to address the environmental harms of cryptocurrencies. [HL789]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Government has been monitoring developments within the cryptoasset industry, including rising energy usage.

The Cryptoasset Taskforce, comprising HM Treasury, the Financial Conduct Authority, and the Bank of England, considers the impact of cryptoassets and assesses what, if any, regulation is required in response. The Government stands ready to respond to emerging risks or changes in the market and will continue to monitor developments in cryptoassets.

In November 2020, the Chancellor announced that the UK will implement a green taxonomy – a common framework for determining which activities can be defined as environmentally sustainable – which will improve understanding of the impact of firms' activities and investments on the environment and support our transition to a sustainable economy. More details on the green taxonomy will be announced in due course.

The Government has already taken action to ensure the UK is the world-leading centre for green finance including through announcing an intention to make disclosures aligned with the Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) fully mandatory across the economy by 2025, making the UK the first country to do so.

Cryptocurrencies: Regulation

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of a report by TheCityUK Cryptoassets: Shaping UK regulation for innovation and global leadership', published on 25 May; and what steps they are taking to encourage crypto-based innovation in the UK. [HL821]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Government welcomes TheCityUK's contribution on the regulatory treatment of cryptoassets, including their view that the Government should take a proportionate, risk-based approach to regulation, and foster innovation.

The Government has taken a number of actions to mitigate risks and foster innovation in the cryptoasset industry.

The Government established a Cryptoassets Taskforce in 2018, consisting of HM Treasury, the Bank of England, and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). The Taskforce's objectives include exploring the risks and opportunities of cryptoassets, the potential benefits and challenges of Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) in

financial services; as well as assessing what, if any, regulation is required in response.

Last year, the Government issued a consultation on a proposal to bring certain cryptoassets, including Bitcoin, into the scope of financial promotions regulation. This would ensure that relevant cryptoasset promotions are held to the same high standards for fairness, clarity, and accuracy that pertain in the financial services industry. The Government will be publishing its response in due course.

The Government launched a consultation on its regulatory approach to cryptoassets and stablecoins on 7 January. This set out the Government's position that new innovations in the sector could deliver substantial benefits, but also present new challenges and risks.

The Government is considering responses and will outline next steps in due course. Any steps taken in light of this consultation will aim to balance the potential risk to consumers with the ambition to foster competition and innovation in the sector.

Education: Disadvantaged

Asked by Lord McNicol of West Kilbride

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Social Mobility Commission's report *The road not taken: the drivers of course selection*, published on 30 March, what steps they intend to take (1) to focus on educational inequalities up to age 16, and (2) to target specific disadvantaged groups. [HL782]

Asked by Lord McNicol of West Kilbride

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Social Mobility Commission's report *The road not taken: the drivers of course selection*, published on 30 March, what steps they intend to take to provide targeted support resources to address the challenges faced by disadvantaged pupils. [HL783]

Baroness Berridge: Enabling every child, irrespective of their background, to realise their potential at school has been at the centre of this government's education policy since 2010. We do not design education policy that exclusively targets specific groups of pupils, for example based on their ethnicity or gender. Our policies are aimed at improving the education of all disadvantaged children and young people, especially as we know that their education has been impacted most heavily by the COVID-19 outbreak.

In June 2020, as part of the £1 billion Covid catch up package, we announced £350 million to fund the National Tutoring Programme for disadvantaged students for the academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22. There is extensive evidence that tutoring is one of the most effective ways to accelerate pupil progress, and we want to extend this opportunity to disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils. The programme provides additional, targeted support for those children and young people who have been hardest hit from disruption to their education as a result of school

closures. Teachers and school leaders should exercise professional judgement when identifying which pupils would benefit most from this additional support. This investment was announced in tandem with the £650 million Catch-Up Premium, additional funding for all schools to support education recovery in academic year 2020/21.

On 24 February 2021, we announced a £700 million Education Recovery package, building on the £1 billion from last year. As well as a range of measures to support all pupils to recover lost learning, the package includes significant funding aimed at addressing the needs of disadvantaged pupils. This includes a new one-off £302 million Recovery Premium, which includes £22 million to scale up proven approaches, for state funded schools in the 2021/22 academic year. This grant will further support pupils who need it most. Allocations will reflect disadvantage funding eligibility and will have additional weighting applied to specialist settings, recognising the significantly higher per-pupil costs they face.

In addition to this we announced a further recovery package on 2 June 2021, which provides an additional £1.4 billion to support education recovery for children aged 2 to 19 in schools, colleges and early years settings. It focuses on high quality tutoring and great teaching, where the evidence shows that this investment will have the greatest immediate impact on disadvantaged children.

The government has also invested over £400 million to support vulnerable children in England to continue their education at home. To date, over 1.3 million laptops and tablets have been delivered to schools, trusts, local authorities and further education providers.

The ongoing provision of Pupil Premium funding, which is worth £2.5 billion this financial year, aims to close the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. School leaders use this extra funding to tailor their support, based on the needs of their disadvantaged pupils, and invest in proven practice to improve outcomes, such as that showcased in resources published by the Education Endowment Foundation.

Asked by Lord McNicol of West Kilbride

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Social Mobility Commission's report *The road not taken: the drivers of course selection*, published on 30 March, what steps they intend to take (1) to promote progression routes, (2) to combine technical and academic courses, and (3) to ensure T Levels are properly recognised and fully transferable qualifications. [HL784]

Baroness Berridge: The department is reviewing post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below, to ensure that every qualification approved for public funding has a distinct purpose, is high quality and supports progression to positive outcomes.

Our recent consultation on level 3 qualifications and call for evidence on study at level 2 and below set out

proposals to ensure students have the best opportunities for progression into further or higher education, or into skilled employment, including support for students not ready to start level 3 at age 16. The consultation set out our proposals for clear academic and technical routes post-16, with A levels and T Levels as the qualifications of choice for each route. We are considering responses to the consultation and call for evidence, and will publish a full response to the level 3 consultation, and proposals for consultation at level 2 and below, later this year.

Alongside this, we need outstanding information, advice and guidance to support students to make the best decisions at age 16, including both academic and technical options. The Skills for Jobs White Paper set out a roadmap for how we will achieve this, including support for students to choose the route that best supports their career and study aims.

The consultation above recognised the need for mixed programmes on the academic route to allow students to combine A levels with a number of high quality alternative qualifications. T Levels are technical programmes but are classroom-based delivered by a further education provider, where students will spend 80% in the classroom and 20% on the job during an industry placement of a minimum of 315 hours.

Higher Technical Qualifications are largely classroom based, taught in further education colleges, universities or independent training providers. Although Higher Technical Qualifications are primarily designed for entry into skilled employment or those looking to retrain or upskill, they can also allow progression to further study and/or training.

T Levels, once fully rolled out, will give access to high-quality technical education for thousands of young people, so they can progress to the next level, whether that is getting a job, going on to further study or an apprenticeship. T Levels are more rigorous and substantial than most existing technical qualifications and earn UCAS points in line with 3 A levels. Therefore, we expect T Levels to provide a route into higher level technical study, including degree courses and higher apprenticeships in relevant subject areas. We are working with a wide range of higher education providers and employers to ensure that they are able to make a judgement about the suitability of T Levels for their courses and recruitment approach.

The content of T Levels has been developed in collaboration with panels of over 250 employers ranging from leading national businesses to small and medium sized enterprises. These panels set out the knowledge and skills needed to perform skilled occupations in their industry, using the approved standards which are common to apprenticeships. They also advised on specific maths, English and digital requirements necessary for occupational competence. The core content of the T Level provides underpinning knowledge and breadth of skills to support adaptability and prepare the student for work in their chosen industry. This breadth of knowledge and understanding, combined with core employability skills

relevant to all occupations in the route, like problem solving, teamwork or communication skills, provides a firm foundation for a variety of roles. The occupational specialism, which students will choose, will develop technical competence in the area the student wishes to work in.

All students who take T Levels will undertake a substantial industry placement for a minimum of 45 days, so students can be confident that they will get the opportunity to gain real experience of work and develop many transferable skills that employers look for.

Education: Finance

Asked by Lord McNicol of West Kilbride

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Social Mobility Commission's report *The road not taken: the drivers of course selection*, published on 30 March, what steps they intend to take to reintroduce a form of Education Maintenance Allowance in England. [HL786]

Baroness Berridge: The department provides a range of financial support for students to enable them to participate in post-16 education. This includes free meals, bursaries to help with the cost of education (travel, books and equipment), support for childcare and assistance with residential costs.

We have recently changed the way we allocate funding for discretionary bursaries to colleges, school sixth forms and other providers of 16-19 education, following a consultation. As a result, institutions whose students will tend to face higher travel costs, who travel further or live in rural areas, will receive more funding to provide support to students who need it. As normal with the 16-19 bursary fund, it will be for those institutions to identify which students need this support and how to provide this, for example, to purchase or contribute to the cost of a travel pass. We are now transitioning to the new allocation method, beginning in the 2020/21 academic year. Overall, this will ensure a better match between bursary allocations and the needs of students.

We have no plans to reintroduce an Education Maintenance Allowance.

Financial Services: Carbon Emissions

Asked by Baroness Hayman

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Greenpeace UK and WWF-UK report *The Big Smoke*, published on 26 May, what assessment they have made of the recommendation that legislation should be introduced before COP26 to require all UK-regulated financial institutions to adopt and implement a transition plan that is in keeping with the goal of limiting global temperature rises to 1.5 degrees C. [HL745]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The UK was the first major economy to commit to Net Zero by 2050, and to achieve

that ambition, we want to ensure that every financial decision takes climate change into account. This will require a drastic increase in the quantity, quality and comparability of climate-related disclosures, to provide the information necessary for everyone to make informed decisions.

That is why, in November 2020, the Chancellor announced the UK's intention to make disclosures in line with the recommendations of the Task Force for Climate-related Financial Disclosures – including that firms must disclose how they identify, assess and manage climate-related risks – fully mandatory in the UK across the economy by 2025. This includes the financial services sector. This commitment is world-leading and significant progress towards achieving our ambition, including new requirements for premium-listed firms, has already been made.

We have also committed to implementing a green taxonomy that will establish a common definition for 'sustainable economic activities' and improve understanding around the impact of firms' activities and investments on the environment.

Together, these measures will ensure that firms across the whole economy are disclosing robust and comparable climate and sustainability-related information that is decision-useful for investors. This will help close the sustainability data gap, as well as preventing greenwashing and supporting the greening of the UK economy.

In addition to this work, ahead of COP26, the UK launched the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero (GFANZ), a global net zero alliance for the whole financial sector to ensure credibility and generate momentum behind private sector commitments to reach net zero emissions by 2050. GFANZ will mobilise and elevate net zero ambition by motivating financial institutions to make credible net zero commitments by the time of Glasgow and beyond and establishing defined and agreed ways for all financial institutions to meaningfully commit to net zero by 2050.

Financial Services: Technology

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to assist financial technology companies in pursuing environmentally sustainable technology. [HL822]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The Government set out via a Written Statement to Parliament on 26th April the actions being taken in response to the Kalifa Review of UK Fintech.

This Statement included confirmation that the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) will be taking forward various initiatives as part of a Regulatory Scalebox, including to build on its existing Regulatory and Digital Sandboxes, which enable firms to test innovative products and services. As part of these initiatives, the FCA will soon

launch the second phase of its Digital Sandbox pilot, inviting applications from industry to test proof of concepts to solve sustainability and climate change financial challenges. This in line with the Government's wider vision for an increasingly green financial services sector.

More broadly, the UK is leading by example in both climate-related financial disclosures and environmental impact reporting. In November 2020 we became the first country in the world to announce our intention to make Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosures' (TCFD)- aligned disclosures fully mandatory across the UK economy, and urge others to follow suit. Concurrently, the Chancellor announced the creation of a UK green taxonomy to help companies and investors determine which activities are sustainable. Both policies will facilitate transition finance and prevent greenwashing.

Football: Flags

Asked by Lord Triesman

To ask Her Majesty's Government what advice they are providing to national teams visiting the UK for the upcoming UEFA European Football Championship tournament about the public display of partisan flags or other signs in the context of conflict in the Middle East and the implications for crowd unrest. [HL825]

Baroness Barran: Advice to competing national teams at EURO 2020 is a matter for UEFA. Any crowd unrest will be addressed through effective policing and stewarding, as is the case at all football matches

Future News Pilot Fund

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have (1) to provide funding for, and (2) to further the work of, the Future News Pilot Fund. [HL967]

Baroness Barran: The government invested £2 million in the pilot Future News Fund, which sought to invest in new technological prototypes, start-ups and innovative business models to explore new ways of sustaining public interest news in a changing landscape. The pilot received 178 applications and grants were awarded to 19 projects.

The pilot fund came to an end in June 2020. We are considering options for taking forward innovation funding, building on the model set by the Future News Fund pilot and taking into account Nesta's independent evaluation, sector feedback, and the changing landscape as a result of Covid-19.

Hammersmith Bridge: Closures

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the social cost, and (2) the loss to

the UK economy, of the closure of Hammersmith Bridge. [HL706]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Hammersmith bridge is owned by the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham (LBHF) and therefore the Department for Transport has not undertaken any independent assessments of the social or economic impact of the closure of the bridge. The submission of a satisfactory full business case, including analyses of the impact of closure and the benefits of reopening, is a condition for the release of any Government funding contribution to the cost of repairing the bridge, as agreed in the TfL extraordinary funding and finance agreement of 1 June 2021.

Offences against Children

Asked by Baroness Eaton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress has been made on the Department for Education's work to tackle child sexual abuse following the publication of the Government's Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy. [HL729]

Baroness Berridge: The department is working closely with the Home Office and other government departments on delivering the Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy. Work is well underway with the rollout of statutory Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) in schools, the appointment of national facilitators to support safeguarding partners to embed effective local practice and the launch of the online resource Together We Can Stop Sexual Abuse to build public awareness and signpost access to support.

On 10 June, the department went further in its commitment to tackling child sexual abuse, announcing a range of measures in response to Ofsted's recommendations following their review of sexual abuse in schools. Measures include better supporting teachers and school leaders to recognise sexual harassment and abuse and teach confidently about issues of consent, online pornography and healthy relationships, encouraging schools to dedicate inset day time to help train staff on how to deal with sexual abuse and harassment among pupils and how to deliver the government's new RSHE curriculum, strengthening safeguarding guidance to boost teacher confidence in identifying and responding to these issues and providing supervision to dedicated members of school and college staff in up to 10 more local authorities, whose role it is to identify safeguarding concerns among pupils.

Shipping: Contracts

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the terms of the Levelling Up Fund allow for the direct award of contracts without competitive tender for (1) harbour

alterations, (2) the purchase of new vessels, (3) the ownership of new vessels, (4) the operation of passenger and freight maritime services, and (5) other maritime works; and if so, what are the circumstances in which such contracts may be awarded without competitive tender. [HL704]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: It is for local areas to decide what bids they submit into the Levelling Up Fund, but any investment from the Fund must be compliant with the UK's obligations on subsidy control (or State Aid in Northern Ireland) and other relevant procurement legislation and regulations. This will be tested as part of the appraisal process and monitored thereafter.

State Retirement Pensions

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to contact all people aged over 80 who are receiving less than the basic State Pension of £82.45 per week, including those receiving no State Pension, so they can be paid their entitlement. [HL1034]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: We encourage everyone to apply for the support they are entitled to. Information on how to make a claim can be found on GOV.UK.

The correction activity, which started on 11 January 2021, is identifying people over age 80 who may have been underpaid Category D State Pension in accordance with the law.

The law, which has been in place under successive governments, is that anyone who is not getting any State Pension when they reach age 80, is required to make a claim to get Category D State Pension (Social Security Administration Act 1992 (Section 1)). There is information on how to make a claim on GOV.UK.

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have identified why the Pensions Service helpline has been giving incorrect advice to women whose State Pension payments were too low about the accuracy of their payments; and what steps they are taking to improve the quality of the advice offered by the helpline. [HL1036]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The Department strives every day to deliver the highest possible customer service to millions of people we support.

It is not possible to comment on substantive assertions.

Department staff receive comprehensive training to ensure that they provide customers with accurate information. If a customer feels that we may have given inaccurate information, we will investigate this thoroughly.

The Department is delivering enhanced training for all staff dealing with State Pension cases and we have ensured that all staff, including our partner G4S, have updated lines to take when handling calls from customers.

Students: Travel

Asked by Lord McNicol of West Kilbride

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Social Mobility Commission's report *The road not taken: the drivers of course selection*, published on 30 March, what steps they intend to take to help disadvantaged young people with travel costs so they are not priced out of travelling to certain courses or apprenticeships which should otherwise be available to them. [HL785]

Baroness Berridge: The statutory responsibility for transport to education and training for those aged 16 to 19 rests with local authorities. This enables them to make decisions that best match local needs and circumstances. Local authorities must publish a policy statement each year setting out the support available. They are expected to make reasonable decisions based on the needs of their population, the local transport infrastructure and the resources they have available. This does not, however, have to include free or subsidised transport.

The options available to young people to participate, and meet Raising the Participation Age legislation, mean that young people travel to diverse and widespread locations. It would not be financially feasible for local authorities to fund every young person's post-16 transport, particularly where the young people are receiving pay through, for example, an apprenticeship. Parents and students have a right to appeal if they are unhappy with the arrangements the local authority have put in place.

We do recognise that the cost of transport can be an issue for some young people, and the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund is allocated directly to 16-19 providers to support young people who may need additional support with costs such as transport.

Beginning in the 2020/21 academic year, we have recently changed the way we allocate funding for discretionary bursaries to providers of 16-19 education, following a consultation. As a result, institutions whose students will tend to face higher travel costs, who travel further or live in rural areas, will receive more funding to provide support to students who need it. This ensures a better match between bursary allocations and the needs of students.

In August 2019, the 16 and 17-year-old railcard was made available nationally offering half price rail fares for those in further education and apprenticeships.

We also support local authorities and their duty by facilitating the regular sharing of good practice and conducting annual compliance checks on their policy statements.

Teaching Methods: Finance

Asked by Lord Baker of Dorking

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many disadvantaged students they have funded personal

tutoring for since March 2020; and (1) in what subjects, and (2) at what level, such tutoring has been provided. [HL699]

Asked by Lord Baker of Dorking

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much they have spent on personal tutoring for students since March 2020. [HL700]

Baroness Berridge: In summer 2020 a £1 billion catch up package was announced to help to tackle the impact of lost teaching time as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, including a £350 million National Tutoring Programme (NTP) for disadvantaged students.

The NTP programme for 5–16-year-olds has two pillars:

- Schools can access high quality, subsidised tuition support from approved Tuition Partners.
- Schools in the most disadvantaged areas have been supported to employ in house Academic Mentors to provide tuition to their pupils.

In addition to the 5-16 programme, the government made available up to £96 million to support small group tuition for 16–19-year-olds, which is delivered through the 16-19 tuition fund, and £9 million to support the improvement of early language skills in reception classes this academic year.

Schools can choose from a variety of tuition models through Tuition Partners, including online, face-to-face, small-group and one-to-one tuition, dependent on the needs of pupils. Tuition is available in English, Mathematics, humanities, modern foreign languages, and science for secondary pupils, and literacy, numeracy, and science for primary aged pupils.

Since the launch of the NTP in November 2020, over 232,000 pupils have been enrolled to receive tutoring from over 5,400 schools. Our ambition is to offer tuition to 250,000 pupils. Of those enrolled, over 173,000 have already commenced tutoring.

The department estimates that over 400,000 young people will have been eligible for tuition through the 16-19 tuition fund in academic year 2020/21. The 16-19 tuition fund enables further education colleges and sixth forms, including independent training providers, to arrange one-to-one and small group tuition for disadvantaged students whose education has been disrupted because of the COVID-19 outbreak.

In February 2021, the department announced a £700 million plan to continue to support young people to catch up on lost education, including an £83 million expansion of the NTP for 5–16-year-olds. This brings the total funding for the next academic year to £215 million. We also announced an additional £102 million to extend the 16-19 tuition fund for next academic year.

As part of the education recovery plan announced on 2 June, the department shared plans to invest additional funding to help further expand tuition support. This includes:

- £218 million of new funding to be directed to the Tuition Partner and Academic Mentor pillars of the NTP. This is in addition to the £215 million already announced to be invested in the academic year 2021/22.
- £579 million of funding will be provided to schools to develop localised school-led tutoring provision using new or existing school staff. This will work alongside the NTP offer and will see tutors directly employed by schools.
- £222 million to fund an extension to the 16-19 tuition fund for two further years from academic year 2022/23.

Television Licences

Asked by Lord Truscott

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the statement from Annabel Denham, the Director of Communications at the Institute for Economic Affairs that after 75 years the BBC licence is “no longer fit for purpose” and should be replaced by a “subscriber-owned mutual.” [HL978]

Baroness Barran: The government has committed to maintain the licence fee funding model for the duration of this 11 year Charter period, until 2027.

We will revisit the licence fee model in advance of the next Charter.

The government is committed to ensuring that the BBC and all public service broadcasters adapt to a fast changing market, and keeping them at the heart of our world class TV sector.

The BBC has already committed to consider how alternative funding models, such as subscription, could supplement licence fee income before the next Charter Review.

Television Licences: Non-payment

Asked by Lord Truscott

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to decriminalise the non-payment of the BBC licence fee by senior citizens. [HL979]

Baroness Barran: A government response on the issue of decriminalisation of TV licence evasion was published earlier this year. The responses to the consultation show that a significant number of people oppose the criminal sanction with some highlighting the considerable stress and anxiety it can cause for individuals, including the most vulnerable in society, such as older people.

The government is therefore keeping the issue of decriminalisation under active consideration while more work is done to understand the impact of alternative enforcement schemes.

Tunnels: Irish Sea

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had about an underwater tunnel connecting Holyhead and Dublin; and which (1) ministers, and (2) civil service teams, have been involved in any such discussions. [HL799]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: As part of the Union Connectivity Review (UCR), independently chaired by Sir Peter Hendy CBE, an assessment will be made on the feasibility of a fixed transport link between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This study will solely focus on the technical viability of such a construction and will outline an estimation of its potential costs and timescales.

As with the wider UCR, the Fixed Link Feasibility Study is independent of Government and is being led by Professor Douglas Oakervee CBE and Professor Gordon Masterton OBE, with support from a dedicated engineering function.

As with any assessment at this early stage, it is important to consider the broad range of options, so a route between Holyhead and Dublin is being assessed as a comparator. Since this route is not the main focus of the study, only high-level discussions around it have taken place. These have been facilitated by the independent technical team leading the study.

Visas: EU Countries

Asked by Lord Stevenson of Balmacara

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Lord Frost on 27 May (HL Deb, cols 1103–6), which EU countries were involved in bi-lateral discussions with the UK Government about touring visas for workers in the cultural sector; and whether the Home Office was party to these discussions. [HL973]

Baroness Barran: As the Secretary of State has said, we have moved at pace and with urgency on plans to support the creative sectors to tour in Europe. We are engaging on a bilateral basis with all 27 EU Member States, and through this engagement we have established that in at least 17 out of 27 Member States some touring activities are possible without visas or work-permits. The UK has significantly more generous arrangements for touring professionals than many Member States. We are now working closely with individual Member States to encourage them to adopt a more flexible approach, in line with the UK's own rules which allow creative professionals to tour easily here. We are working with a number of departments on this engagement strategy, including the Home Office.

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