

**Session 2021-22**  
**No. 23**



**Friday**  
**25 June 2021**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**  
**(HANSARD)**

# **HOUSE OF LORDS**

## **WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS**

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# Written Statements

Friday, 25 June 2021

## Public Service Pensions: Cost Control Mechanism and Discount Rate Methodology

[HLWS118]

**Baroness Penn:** My right honourable friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Steve Barclay) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

The Government has today published two consultations relating to public service pensions. These consultations seek views on two important aspects of the framework governing public service pension schemes: proposed reforms to the cost control mechanism and the methodology used to set the discount rate used at valuations of unfunded public service pension schemes.

One of the proposed reforms to the cost control mechanism could mean that the discount rate used at valuations of unfunded public service schemes to set employer contribution rates may also become relevant to the outcome of the cost control mechanism in the future. These consultations are therefore being published in parallel to ensure that respondents are fully informed of any potential interactions and to allow them to consider their responses across both areas of the public service pension framework.

### *The cost control mechanism*

The first consultation document published today is titled 'Public Service Pensions: Proposal to Reform the Cost Control Mechanism'.

Following recommendations from the Independent Public Service Pensions Commission recommended in 2011, the cost control mechanism was introduced into the valuation process for public service pension schemes in the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 following consultation with member representatives. It was designed to ensure a fair balance of risk regarding the cost of providing defined benefit (DB) public service pensions between members and the taxpayer.

In September 2018, the Government announced it would ask the Government Actuary to conduct a review of the mechanism amidst concerns that it was not operating in line with its original objectives, which are:

- To protect taxpayers from unforeseen costs.
- To maintain the value of pension schemes to the members.
- To provide stability and certainty to benefit levels – the mechanism should only be triggered by 'extraordinary, unpredictable events.'

The Government Actuary's final report, which sets out his findings and recommendations, was published on 15 June. The Government has considered this report and is now consulting on reforms it proposes to make to the mechanism to ensure it operates as intended. All of the Government's proposed changes are recommendations by the Government Actuary.

The consultation will last for 8 weeks and close on 19 August. The consultation document can be found at: [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/public-service-pensions-cost-control-mechanism-consultation](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/public-service-pensions-cost-control-mechanism-consultation).

### *The discount rate methodology*

The second consultation is titled 'Public Service Pensions: Consultation on the discount rate methodology'.

'SCAPE' (Superannuation Contributions Adjusted for Past Experience) is the name of the process for setting employer contribution rates at valuations of unfunded public service pension schemes. The 'SCAPE discount rate' is the discount rate used as part of this process. It is used to express the pension promises being built up in a scheme as a present-day cost and is set by HM Treasury following a prescribed methodology.

The Government previously consulted on the methodology used to set the SCAPE discount rate in 2010. In response to that consultation, it announced that the SCAPE discount rate methodology would be based on expected long-term GDP growth.

In response to the 2010 consultation, the Government expressed an intention to review the SCAPE discount rate methodology every ten years. This consultation meets that intention and seeks views on the most appropriate methodology for setting the SCAPE discount rate going forward.

The consultation will last for 8 weeks and close on 19 August. The consultation document can be found at: [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/public-service-pensions-consultation-on-the-discount-rate-methodology](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/public-service-pensions-consultation-on-the-discount-rate-methodology).

## Written Answers

Friday, 25 June 2021

### Accident and Emergency Departments: Standards

*Asked by Lord Crisp*

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they plan to publish the statistics on the number of patients who have had to wait in excess of 12 hours for admission to the hospital from the time of their arrival in accident and emergency departments in England. [HL144]

**Lord Bethell:** NHS England and NHS Improvement are considering a 12 hour measure in emergency departments as part of its clinically-led review of standards. It has undertaken a public consultation and will respond in due course.

### Health: Disadvantaged

*Asked by Lord Crisp*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the value of making health creation a priority for a post-COVID-19 health and social care service. [HL1166]

**Lord Bethell:** We have not made a formal assessment. However, the community and place-based approach aligns with our priorities in promoting integrated care and provisions through integrated care systems in the forthcoming Health and Care Bill.

*Asked by Lord Crisp*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Health Creation Alliance Primary Care Networks and place-based working: addressing health inequalities in a COVID-19 world. A partners perspective, published on 13 April. [HL1167]

*Asked by Lord Crisp*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the report by the Health Creation Alliance Primary Care Networks and place-based working: addressing health inequalities in a COVID-19 world. A partners perspective, published on 13 April, what consideration they have given to ensuring every Primary Care Network employs a Strategic Relationship Development Lead whose role is to build relationships between primary care, communities and local partners. [HL1168]

**Lord Bethell:** No assessment has been made. However, the Department and NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to work with key stakeholders to consider the best ways to tackle health inequalities.

The [five-year framework for the General Practitioner Contract](#) included a commitment to introduce a service

specification through which Primary Care Networks will identify and address the most pressing health inequalities in their local area. This will be supported by new members of staff employed under the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme. This scheme includes roles such as social prescribing link workers, whose focus includes identifying and supporting local voluntary and community groups to become sustainable and that community assets are nurtured.

*Asked by Lord Crisp*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the summary by the Health Creation Alliance Building Back Together: 10 key messages, published on 13 April. [HL1169]

**Lord Bethell:** We welcome the key messages set out by the Health Creation Alliance and their view that 'health creation' is a route to wellbeing through local partnership working. At the core of the 10 key messages are principles of community level engagement with health and social care, ensuring a voice and a role for the community for the benefit of wider population health. These principles align closely with the proposals for integrated care systems (ICS) we have set out in the upcoming Health and Care Bill.

By placing ICS on a statutory footing, we are embedding more power and autonomy in the hands of local systems, to deliver seamless person-centred health and social care services. This will enable more joined up planning and provision, both within the National Health Service and with local authorities, enhancing the services people receive.

### Hospitals: Waiting Lists

*Asked by Baroness Merron*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to promote NHS England's and NHS Improvement's Good Communication with Patients Waiting for Care, published on 25 May, to local integrated care systems and NHS trusts. [HL1253]

**Lord Bethell:** NHS England and NHS Improvement have been working to promote the guidance via corporate channels, including a range of system-facing bulletins and networks. The guidance and communication principles have also been built into other relevant publications including the Clinical Prioritisation of Diagnostic Waiting Lists Framework.

### In Vitro Fertilisation

*Asked by Baroness Deech*

To ask Her Majesty's Government on what date they will publish the outcome of their consultation on gamete (egg, sperm) and embryo storage limits, which closed on 5 May 2020. [HL1299]

**Lord Bethell:** We aim to publish the Government's response to the consultation before the summer recess.

**UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland**

*Asked by Lord Browne of Belmont*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the reported statement by President Macron that Northern Ireland is not a full part of the United Kingdom. [[HL1108](#)]

**Lord Frost:** We do not comment on private diplomatic exchanges. The Government believes it is important that all discussions related to the Northern Ireland Protocol take place on the basis of the clear statements in the Protocol itself that it respects the UK's territorial integrity (Article 1(2)) and that Northern Ireland is part of the UK's customs territory (Article 4) and internal market (Article 6(2)).

**World Heritage Sites: Liverpool**

*Asked by Lord Storey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of Liverpool's UNESCO World Heritage status following the decision by the Secretary

of State not to call in the planning application for the Everton Stadium. [[HL1181](#)]

**Baroness Barran:** The UK is a world leader in cultural heritage protection and Liverpool's World Heritage Status reflects the important role the city has played in our nation's history. We are working closely with UNESCO, Liverpool City Council and Historic England to ensure that Liverpool retains its World Heritage status.

*Asked by Lord Storey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to UNESCO to ensure that Liverpool does not lose its UNESCO World Heritage status. [[HL1182](#)]

**Baroness Barran:** The UK is a world leader in cultural heritage protection and Liverpool's World Heritage Status reflects the important role the city has played in our nation's history. DCMS continues to work closely with UNESCO, Liverpool City Council and Historic England to ensure that Liverpool does not lose its UNESCO World Heritage status. Most recently, the Minister for Digital and Culture met senior UNESCO representatives on 10th June.

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