



## Daily Report

Wednesday, 16 October 2019

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 16 October 2019 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:33 P.M., 16 October 2019). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

## ANSWERS

### HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

#### ■ Community Housing Fund

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will extend the Community Housing Fund to beyond March 2020; and if he will make a statement.

**Esther McVey:**

The Community Housing Fund is currently scheduled to close in March 2020. Ministers are considering all budgets in the round and allocations will be announced following a business planning exercise later in the year

The government recognises that the community-led housing sector offers significant potential for helping to meet housing need across England. In addition to helping increase the rate of delivery of new housing, it will help deliver a range of benefits including: diversifying the house building sector, improving design and construction quality, developing modern methods of construction, and sustaining local communities and local economies. The support and close involvement of the local community enables the community-led approach to secure planning permission and deliver housing that could not be brought forward through speculative development.

### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

#### ■ Overseas Trade: Australasia

**Henry Smith:** [\[167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent assessment she has made of trading opportunities between the UK and (a) Australia and (b) New Zealand after the UK leaves the EU.

**Conor Burns:**

Australia and New Zealand are close economic partners and allies. Trade between Australia and New Zealand was worth a combined total of £19.4 billion (in the four quarter to the end Quarter 1 2019). Through our on-going engagement with UK stakeholders, including our work to promote UK exports overseas, and with the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, we have assessed that the UK could increase its trade and investment relationship with both countries, benefiting both UK businesses and consumers. We have committed to starting Free Trade Agreement negotiations with both countries as soon as we are able to do so.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

#### ■ Professional Qualifications and the Common Travel Area

**Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Andrea Leadsom):**

[\[HCWS12\]](#)

As set out in the Memorandum of Understanding signed on 8 May 2019, the Common Travel Area between the UK and Ireland means that British citizens in Ireland and Irish citizens in the UK can work in either country, including on a self-employed basis, without any requirement to obtain permission from the authorities.

Her Majesty's Government remains committed to ensuring the continuation of adequate and appropriate provisions to enable the recognition of Irish professional qualifications in the UK after Brexit.

We seek to build on the highly effective working relationships that currently exist between the UK and Ireland in this area. Many professional bodies and regulators in the UK and Ireland have close and longstanding links, rooted in mutual trust and familiarity. Some operate as a single body across jurisdictions. The Government will support and encourage continued close collaboration and communication between UK and Irish regulators.

My department, along with colleagues across Whitehall, have been working closely with UK regulators and professional bodies to ensure that, as far as possible, there are appropriate systems and procedures in place for the recognition of Irish professional qualifications, whether through retained EU legislation or alternative profession-specific pathways. Some individuals will continue to benefit from bilateral arrangements already in place between UK and Irish regulators.

We recognise that it is in our mutual interest to ensure that these routes to recognition are in place to allow Irish professionals to continue in their important participation within the UK economy.

Her Majesty's Government will continue to encourage UK and Irish regulators to work together to strengthen their relationships and minimise the impact on individuals of any necessary changes after EU Exit. By building on longstanding relationships and established good practice we seek to ensure minimal disruption for all stakeholders.

Finally, Her Majesty's Government would like to reassure professionals with Irish qualifications who have already had those qualifications recognised in the UK under the current EU Directives, that their recognition decisions will still stand and they will continue to be recognised.

**CABINET OFFICE****■ Office for Veterans' Affairs**

**Paymaster General and Minister for Cabinet Office (Oliver Dowden):** [\[HCWS15\]](#)

I would like to update the House on the work of the new Office for Veterans' Affairs, which was announced by the Prime Minister in July.

As the Minister attending Cabinet with responsibility for veterans, I have been appointed to oversee the Office with the Minister for Defence People and Veterans.

Veterans have offered to make the ultimate sacrifice in defence of our country, so the Government has a moral duty to them and their loved ones to provide the best possible support after they leave service.

Our ambition is for the UK to be the best place in the world to be a veteran and the Office for Veterans' Affairs will be a champion for our ex-servicemen and women at the centre of government. It will promote the outstanding contribution veterans are already making to our economy and society and ensure no individual who needs help is left behind after they leave service.

As part of the recent spending round, £5 million of Government funding was secured to staff and resource the new Office.

Colonel (Retired) David Richmond CBE has now been appointed as the Head of the Office for Veterans' Affairs and has started work in the Cabinet Office this week. David Richmond was the most senior officer injured in combat in Afghanistan and subsequently became the Director of Recovery at Help for Heroes.

One of the Office's first tasks will be to produce a detailed work programme informed by the responses to the government consultation on the Strategy for our Veterans. David Richmond and his team will be engaging widely with veterans, charities, the Devolved Administrations, local authorities and Parliamentarians so that the work of the Office reflects the needs of veterans and their families, with a particular focus on:

- Pulling together all functions of Government, and better collaboration with charity sector provision, in order to ensure this Nation's life-long duty to those who have served
- Ensuring that every single veteran and their family knows where to turn to access support if required
- Helping to generate a 'single view of the veteran' by making better use of data to understand veterans' needs and where gaps in provision exist
- Improving the perception of veterans and showcasing the brilliant contribution they make after leaving service.

## DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### ■ ONLINE HARMS

**Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Nicky Morgan):** [\[HCWS13\]](#)

Protecting children is at the heart of our online harms agenda, and is key to wider government priorities. Going online can be beneficial for children, who use the internet for connecting with peers, to access educational resources and for entertainment. However, the government is concerned about the prevalence of adult content online, which is easily accessible to children, and believes it is vital that children are protected from accessing inappropriate, harmful content.

The government published the Online Harms White Paper in April this year. It proposed the establishment of a duty of care on companies to improve online safety, overseen by an independent regulator with strong enforcement powers to deal with non-compliance. Since the White Paper's publication, the government's proposals have continued to develop at pace. The government announced as part of the Queen's Speech that we will publish draft legislation for pre-legislative scrutiny. It is important that our policy aims and our overall policy on protecting children from online harms are developed coherently in view of these developments with the aim of bringing forward the most comprehensive approach possible to protecting children.

The government has concluded that this objective of coherence will be best achieved through our wider online harms proposals and, as a consequence, will not be commencing Part 3 of the Digital Economy Act 2017 concerning age verification for online pornography. The Digital Economy Act objectives will therefore be delivered through our proposed online harms regulatory regime. This course of action will give the regulator discretion on the most effective means for companies to meet their duty of care. As currently drafted, the Digital Economy Act does not cover social media platforms.

The government's commitment to protecting children online is unwavering. Adult content is too easily accessed online and more needs to be done to protect children from harm. We want to deliver the most comprehensive approach to keeping children safe online and recognised in the Online Harms White Paper the role that technology can play in keeping all users, particularly children, safe. We are committed to the UK becoming a world-leader in the development of online safety technology and to ensure companies of all sizes have access to, and adopt, innovative solutions to improve the safety of their users. This includes age verification tools and we expect them to continue to play a key role in protecting children online.

We will continue to engage with members of Parliament on the provisions of the online harms regime to ensure the most comprehensive online harms proposals which deliver on the objectives of the Digital Economy Act.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Publication of Professor Sir Mike Richards' Review of National Adult Screening Programmes

**Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock):** [\[HCWS11\]](#)

I would like to inform the House that Professor Sir Mike Richards' review of adult screening has been published today. The review was commissioned in November 2018, following two high-profile screening incidents in the NHS breast and cervical cancer screening programmes.

Screening is an essential component of early diagnosis and a way of preventing more serious ill-health or death. Professor Richards' recognises the value of our national screening programmes, which result in over 10 million screening appointments and save approximately 10,000 lives each year. The success of our programmes is in large part due to the expertise and dedication of staff across the NHS and Public Health England (PHE).

However, there is a serious need to improve the existing arrangements to achieve our vision for effective screening programmes and to harness powerful new technologies. We will use the findings from Professor Richards' review, and other recent independent screening reviews, to inform the actions we need to take to improve our screening programmes and save even more lives.

I agree that there is a need for robust governance and clarity of responsibility and accountability for the different elements of screening. Working closely with Public Health England and NHS England we will ensure functions are located in the best place to deliver a high-quality service, building on the joint work that both organisations have already been implementing. I also agree it is important that screening programmes receive independent external scrutiny and we will continue to work with PHE and NHS England to design an optimum quality assurance process.

I agree with Professor Richards that there should be a single source of national expert advice on both population-wide and targeted screening. Public Health England, our national public health agency, hosts world-class scientific and expert advice on screening and will host this function, building on its current role providing support to the UK National Screening Committee. I have asked the Chief Medical Officer for England, Professor Chris Whitty, to work with his counterparts across the UK to consider the detail of the proposed new advisory mechanism and how it could meet the needs of all four UK countries. By extending and consolidating our arrangements for providing independent expert advice on all screening programmes, we will improve delivery and exploit the huge scientific progress that is being made to deliver faster and better access to the latest and

best screening interventions. NHS England will become the single body responsible for the delivery of screening services.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the invaluable advice received from the current UK National Screening Committee on both existing and potential screening programmes to ensure the programmes achieve the right balance of benefit versus harm and that our national screening programmes are effective and of high quality.

In his report, Professor Richards also notes the need for significant investment in diagnostic capacity. I have recently announced £200m investment in new cancer screening equipment, including x-ray mammography machines and MRI and CT scanners, with priority given to replacing the oldest machines with new cutting-edge technology. This will significantly improve the ability of the NHS to diagnose cancer and will support the commitment in the NHS Long-term Plan to ensure 55,000 more people survive cancer each year.

I recognise the immense value that research adds to our understanding of screening and I am determined to ensure we use cutting-edge data techniques. NHSX will lead the vital work to drive this forward to save more lives.

Professor Richards has delivered a significant body of work, together with a substantial number of recommendations. His full recommendations will need further consideration, taking into account the potential impact on current service delivery to ensure any changes can be delivered safely and consistently. We will consider the review's report and recommendations and develop an implementation plan, which we will publish in due course.

I would like to record my thanks to Professor Richards for his report, and to colleagues across the health system who have contributed, and to pay tribute to all those who work to deliver the screening system across the country.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Government Response to the SNP Opposition Day Debate - A Fair Immigration System

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Immigration (Seema Kennedy):**  
[\[HCWS14\]](#)

People from all over the world have come to the UK and helped make this nation what it is today, and this Government welcomes the contribution migrants make to the UK's economy, society and culture.

Leaving the EU allows us to introduce a new points-based immigration system and we have commissioned the independent Migration Advisory Committee to conduct a review of the Australian immigration system and other international comparators, as the first step in creating our new fairer immigration system.

The new immigration system will be a single system, where it is people's skills that matter, not where they come from. For example, our new Graduate route will be open to



international students who have successfully completed a course of study in any subject at undergraduate level or above at an approved UK Higher Education Provider. It will build on action to help recruit and retain the best and brightest global talent.

But a fair system also means a controlled system. My Right Honourable Friend, the Prime Minister, has confirmed he is not getting into a numbers game in respect of migration, but it is only fair to those who play by the rules and everyone else that those working, living and accessing public services are doing so legally. It is right that the system distinguishes effectively between those with lawful status and those here illegally.

In that respect, we are keen to ensure that the experiences of the Windrush generation are not repeated. One of the key lessons we have learnt is that declaratory systems do not work. The EU Settlement Scheme means that, in years to come, EU citizens will always have the evidence that they need to continue living in the UK as they do now. Simply to grant all EU citizens a status in law, and not require them to obtain evidence of this, would significantly increase the risk of another Windrush.

The EU Settlement Scheme, is a fair, simple and straightforward system for EU citizens to secure their immigration status in UK law. The system is working well, and the latest internal figures show we have received two million applications and are processing up to 20,000 a day.

Settled and pre-settled status reflects the residence rights that EU citizens currently have under EU free movement rules. EU citizens resident in the UK for less than five years can get pre-settled status, which protects their current rights to live, work, receive benefits and access services, qualifying for settled status once five years residence is complete.

Fairness also means ensuring we provide protection to those most in need of it. This Government has great respect for human rights and has evidenced this through a long and proud history of supporting refugees and other vulnerable people. Over 75,000 individuals have been granted some form of protection since 2010.

In 2015 we committed to resettle up to 20,000 refugees affected by the conflict in Syria by 2020 – and we are well over three-quarters of the way there, resettling over 17,000. We have re-affirmed this commitment to resettlement beyond the current commitments by creating a new consolidated global resettlement scheme, resettling in the region of 5,000 refugees in its first year of operation.

Immigration is a reserved matter and this Government believes it is right that it stays that way, but we do recognise the need for some regional variation, which is why Scotland already benefits from a separate Shortage Occupation List.

It is also why, earlier this year, we commissioned the MAC to advise on issues concerning potential future salary thresholds.

This Government believes that a controlled immigration system that serves the best interests of the whole of the UK, that rewards hard work and talent, that is based on a person's skills and what they have to offer rather than where they come from; and that provides protection to the most vulnerable, is a system that constitutes fairness. That is the system that this Government is working to deliver.



## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Domestic Abuse Support

**Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
(Robert Jenrick):**

**[[HCWS10](#)]**

My Department has published the government response to the consultation on the Future Delivery of Support for Victims and their Children in Accommodation-Based Domestic Abuse Services.

Through the consultation we heard from victims and survivors, service providers, local authorities and other public agencies, as well as other professionals who support victims including children every day. All responses to the consultation were carefully considered – I am grateful to everyone who took the time to respond, providing vital insight and evidence.

The majority of respondents agreed with the proposals as set out. Government will therefore introduce a statutory duty on local authorities, placing clearer accountability on local areas to ensure the needs of survivors and victims within safe accommodation are met in a consistent way across England. By introducing this statutory duty, we want to ensure all victims of domestic abuse are able to access support within safe accommodation that meets their specific individual needs. All victims, no matter their background, should feel safe and supported as they recover from this terrible crime.

Under this new duty Tier One authorities (County Councils, Metropolitan, and Unitary Authorities, and the Greater London Authority) in England will be required to convene a Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board to support them in undertaking local needs assessments and developing local strategies. Tier One authorities will also be required to effectively commission services based on a robust needs assessment, and report back to Government demonstrating how they have met the needs identified. The duty will also require Tier Two authorities in two-tier areas (District, City, and Borough Councils) to co-operate with the lead Tier One authority.

To support local authorities, my department will develop statutory guidance which will set out government's expectations of local authorities in delivering this duty. We will also establish a ministerial-led National Steering Group to monitor and evaluate delivery of support within safe accommodation – working closely with the newly appointed Domestic Abuse Commissioner.

The full response can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse-in-safe-accommodation>

The Domestic Abuse Bill demonstrates the Government's commitment to supporting all victims of domestic abuse. The Government will now introduce this new statutory duty as an amendment to the Domestic Abuse Bill at the earliest opportunity, to enable proper parliamentary scrutiny.

My officials will continue to work closely with local authorities, national organisations, and specialist domestic abuse service providers to ensure the proposals are effectively delivered on the ground.

I am also pleased to announce ahead of this new duty coming into force in 2021, that we are confirming today a further domestic abuse accommodation services funding round for 2020/21. Councils will be invited to bid for a share of £15 million – a 20% increase on 2019/20 – to ensure essential support services are able to run for those that need them.

A copy of the Government response to the consultation will be placed in the Library of the House.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Justice and Home Affairs post-Council statement

**The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Robert Buckland):**

[\[HCWS16\]](#)

The Justice and Home Affairs Council of the Finnish EU Presidency recently took place in Luxembourg. The JHA Counsellor at the Permanent Representation of the UK to the EU attended Justice Day on 7<sup>th</sup> October. The UK did not attend Interior Day on 8<sup>th</sup> October.

The UK Government decided that from 1 September until Brexit day, UK Ministers and officials will only attend EU meetings where the UK has a significant national interest in the outcome of the discussions.

Justice Day began with a discussion on the EU Action against corruption, in the broader context of the debate on rule of law and mutual recognition. All Member States supported the need to take action against corruption. The Presidency concluded that there was support for a new comprehensive EU Strategy or Action Plan. The EU work should bring added value and as such should look first at using its existing tools. Member States also supported the EU becoming a full member of the Group of States against corruption (GRECO), so that the EU Institutions are held to the same standards as GRECO members.

Ministers adopted the supplementary negotiating directives on EU accession to the ECHR. The Commission committed to restarting negotiations as soon as possible, whilst ensuring that the EU would reform its internal rules ahead of agreement with the Council of Europe.

The Council Conclusions on the “EU Charter of Fundamental Rights after 10 Years: a State of Play and future work” were waved through without debate.

During lunch, Ministers discussed the rights of victims of crime, particularly the most vulnerable, including children and victims of domestic and sexual violence. The Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) cited the 2.5 million children across the EU who are involved in criminal proceedings in different forms. The need for a multi-agency approach was noted, with care of victims being about more than the criminal justice system alone. It

also entailed medical, social and psychological care. The Presidency concluded that they would consider this issue further at the December Council.

After lunch, the FRA Director presented the 'Fundamental Rights Challenges in 2020 and Beyond' paper. Many Member States touched on the importance of the link between rule of law and fundamental rights and the importance of the EU moving forwards on artificial intelligence with a fundamental rights focus.

The Commission then welcomed the progress made following the introduction of the Code of Conduct but called for further work to be done by the next Commission on disinformation and online hate speech.

Ministers also approved the Council Conclusions on Eurojust. Eurojust presented the Counter Terrorism Register which was launched in September. Member States agreed that the register would build upon the spirit of cooperation reached in the 2005 Council Decision to support the work of Eurojust.

The Commission briefed the Council on the latest EU-US senior officials meeting, reiterating the limited mandate due to the ongoing E-Evidence negotiations. The second senior officials meeting would take place in early November to make progress before the EU-US Ministerial on 10<sup>th</sup> December. Security Commissioner Sir Julian King briefed on the progress made on the Budapest Convention. The Presidency concluded that it would return to the issue in December.

The Commission considered that the appointment of the European Public Prosecutor would give a boost to the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) being set up and reminded participating Member States to nominate their three nominees as to be ready before November 2020.