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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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Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
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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
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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

Thursday, 25 March 2021

Civil Service Delegated Pay Remit Guidance

[HLWS880]

Lord True: My Hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Secretary (Julia Lopez MP) has today made the following written statement:

Today we publish this year's Civil Service Pay Remit Guidance. This document provides a framework for setting pay for civil servants throughout the Civil Service, including departments, non-ministerial departments and agencies, as well as for public sector workers in non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) and other arm's length bodies for the 2021/22 pay remit year.

Public sector pay context

In November 2020, the Chancellor announced at the Spending Review that the public sector workforces, excluding the NHS, would be subject to a pay pause for the 2021/22 pay year. The exception to this policy are organisations in legally binding pay deals (including those in multi-year deals).

This pay pause is necessary in order to help protect public sector jobs and protect investment in public services as well as ensuring fairness between the private and public sectors in this time of crisis. Performance pay, overtime, pay progression where it is in place, and pay rises from promotion will continue. Departments may continue to utilise existing allowances.

To protect the lower paid staff earning below the national median, those on full time equivalent base pay of under £24,000pa (excluding overtime and allowances) will receive a consolidated increase of £250. For those who will be receiving an increase to the new national living wage rate of £8.91 an hour, which from April 2021 will be extended to individuals aged 23 years and over, they will receive the National Living Wage increase or £250, whichever is greater.

Civil Servants benefit from a competitive employment offer including access to one of the best pension schemes available and flexible working arrangements in managing work and family life. In addition to this our ambition is for the Civil Service to be the most inclusive employer in the country, offering opportunities and a chance to progress in challenging roles delivering vital public services across the country.

Strategy for Civil Service modernisation

The Covid-19 pandemic has posed a huge challenge to the Civil Service over the last year and to civil servants at all levels both through the work required in response, but also through the significant changes to working practices individuals have faced, as well as the impact on their personal lives. The significant task of tackling the pandemic, as well as EU Exit Transition, has placed an immediate pressure on resources. The Civil Service has

been increasing its capacity and capability to meet this challenge, bringing on its own talent, investing in specialist skills and sourcing external support where necessary. Frequently this has meant the necessary redeployment of staff across and within departments, as well as the creation of and recruitment to new posts within departments at both junior and senior grades.

We intend to learn from the experience of both EU Exit Transition and the Covid-19 pandemic, modernising Government to respond to the big challenges facing the country and deliver our ambitious agenda. We will ensure that our people are closer to citizens and have the skills and experience to meet the needs of those we serve. We will put innovation at the core of how we work and seize the power of digital systems and data to improve our services. We will ensure the whole of Government works together with a common purpose to deliver outcomes for citizens rigorously and efficiently, improving the delivery of our major projects.

The Government has committed to level up across the UK, including relocating roles to the regions and nations of the UK. The Places for Growth programme within Cabinet Office is driving the necessary planning within departments and public bodies, with a commitment to relocating a minimum of 22,000 Civil Service roles over the next decade, with the majority of these in the regions and nations of the UK.

By 2030, large numbers of Civil Service roles and public bodies will be moved out of London and South East England – moving whole organisations, and business units and functions of larger bodies and departments, with a view to reducing our central London footprint but also to:

- Strengthen the Union;
- Support levelling-up of the regions and nations;
- Ensure that the Civil Service and administration of Government is better connected with communities across the UK;
- Tackle the recruitment and retention challenges of a London-centric Civil Service; and
- Reduce costs overall, especially estate and people costs.

A more regionally dispersed workforce has significant benefits for the UK Civil Service. Places for Growth is working closely with departments on their plans to relocate a number of Civil Service roles to the regions and nations, providing opportunities for civil servants to progress and build sustainable career paths.

Covid-19: Construction Industry and Retail Sector

[HLWS896]

Lord Greenhalgh: My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

As England moves towards step 2 of the Covid-19 response roadmap out of lockdown, which will take place no earlier than 12 April, the Government wants to ensure that planning measures are in place to support businesses to operate safely and drive the economic recovery.

Firstly, the Government recognises that the construction industry will need to continue to operate in a safe and productive way. Temporary extensions to working hours were introduced over the last year on some sites to facilitate safer working and allow tasks to be completed where social distancing can be challenging. These changes have also helped to protect and support jobs in the construction industry and reduced pressures on public transport at peak hours throughout the pandemic.

This Written Ministerial Statement confirms that the approach set out in my previous statement to the House of 13 May 2020, about construction working hours due to Covid-19, will remain in place until 30 September 2021. This continued flexibility is necessary due to the continued impact of Covid-19 and to support the construction industry to recover and operate safely as we emerge from the pandemic. This date will be kept under review.

Secondly, the Government would like local planning authorities to continue to take a positive and flexible approach to planning enforcement action to support economic recovery and support social distancing while it remains in place. The National Planning Policy Framework already emphasises that planning enforcement is a discretionary activity, and local planning authorities should act proportionately in responding to suspected breaches of planning control.

In particular, to ensure a safe and successful reopening of the non-essential retail sector from Step 2 of the roadmap, the Government wants to see retailers given the opportunity to extend their daily opening hours from Monday to Saturday, notwithstanding local planning restrictions on opening hours, where appropriate. This will help to spread footfall, ease transport pressures and make shopping in a socially distanced way easier by giving shoppers greater flexibility to choose when they shop and avoid peak times.

Accordingly local planning authorities, having regard to their legal obligations, should not seek to undertake planning enforcement action which would result in the unnecessary restriction of retail hours between 7am to 10pm, Monday to Saturday, from Step 2 of the roadmap (no earlier than 12 April) until the introduction of Step 4 of the roadmap (scheduled for no earlier than 21 June 2021).

Where appropriate, local planning authorities should also highlight this temporary relaxation to retailers in their area so that they can take advantage of longer opening hours if they wish to do so.

The Government recognises that longer retail opening hours could have a temporary impact on local residents, but this needs to be balanced by the significant public interest in ensuring there is a safe retail environment

when non-essential shops reopen. The 10pm limitation should also mitigate the impact for local residents. There will be no change in licensing restrictions on retailers.

Finally, I am through this Written Ministerial Statement extending the statement that I made to the House on 13 March 2020 about planning enforcement and the delivery of food and other essential goods to retailers until the introduction of Step 4 of the roadmap (scheduled for no earlier than 21 June 2021). This will help supermarkets and other retailers to continue to provide home deliveries while restrictions are still in place.

Covid-19: Support for Businesses

[HLWS894]

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

Covid-19 has presented a significant challenge for businesses in all sectors. The Government's response to the pandemic has been unprecedented in scale, with more than £280 billion provided to protect millions of jobs and businesses, and the Budget in March setting out an additional £65 billion support in 2020-21 and 2021-22.

On business rates specifically, at Budget 2020 the Government announced a 100% business rates relief to all eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties, given the acute and direct impact of Covid-19 restrictions (Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions) on these sectors. This was worth around £10 billion in 2020-21 and, alongside other business rate reliefs, ensured that over 1 million properties paid no business rates this year. At Budget 2021, the Government announced that it would extend the scheme for the first 3 months of 2021-22 at 100%, followed by a 9-month period of relief at 66%, subject to a cash cap for businesses. Taken together, this amounts to business rates relief worth £16 billion for retail, hospitality and leisure properties.

While support has been needed to support these sectors, our business rates system is designed to provide a stable source of income for local councils and help fund vital local services – such as street lighting and keeping streets safe and clean. It is based on the principle of regular revaluations, with changes in property values reflected at these revaluations. Market wide economic changes affecting property values, such as from Covid-19, can only be properly considered at these general revaluations, which is why we have changed the date of the next revaluation to 1 April 2023 (based on rental values at 1 April 2021) to ensure it can better reflect the impact of the pandemic.

Between these revaluations rateable values should only change for Material Change of Circumstances, which is a process intended to consider individual cases like roadworks near a property that affect its value. A number of businesses that do not qualify for our existing reliefs have sought to challenge their business rates liability by

seeking reductions to their property's value through this Material Change of Circumstances provision.

Relying on this system to help businesses that need further support from the pandemic is not the right mechanism. These appeals would seek to reduce rate bills, and funding for local councils, based on the estimated impact of Covid-19 on the market value of a property, and not on the economic circumstances of the business. This system was not designed to address the challenges we face and would mean significant amounts of taxpayer support going to businesses based in offices – like banks, large online retailers and technology businesses, law firms and consultancy firms – many of whom have been able to operate successfully throughout the pandemic.

The process of resolving these appeals and litigation through the courts could take years and would not provide the support now when it is most needed. It would also expose local authorities to uncertainty about their financial position – including whether they would need to return money spent on their response to Covid-19, and how much.

Without action and legislation, there would also be a significant impact on the entire business rates system, as the Valuation Office Agency faced working through these cases, further valuation tribunals, wider separate cases, and preparing for the next revaluation in 2023. This would be at the detriment of other ratepayers who would suffer as a result of the valuation system grinding to a halt.

Nevertheless the Government recognises that businesses outside of the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors have also been adversely affected by the pandemic, including through limitations on how their property can be used. So we are now going even further than the £16 billion of relief since Budget 2020 – and providing £1.5 billion of additional support to businesses that have not already received business rates relief. This is the fastest and fairest way to support businesses outside the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors who have been adversely affected by the pandemic.

The new relief will ensure a fairer and more proportioned allocation of support, by awarding funding through local authorities, who will be able to use their knowledge of their local businesses and the local economy to award dedicated support to those businesses who need it most. Funding will be allocated to councils taking into account the economic impact Covid-19 has had on specific sectors. This approach will ensure relief is awarded quicker than would be the case if businesses sought support under the sometimes drawn out process of a rating appeal, which can often last years.

At the same time we will legislate to ensure that the Government's response to Covid-19, including restrictions on the use of property, is reflected at the next revaluation in 2023, in line with the principle of the Business Rates system, and not through complicated and protracted property-by-property litigation. We will do this through:

- Introducing primary legislation with retrospective effect, when parliamentary time allows, to clarify that Covid-19 and the Government's response to it is not an appropriate use of Material Change of Circumstance provisions; and
- Laying a Statutory Instrument today with the same effect prospectively and bringing it into force on the same day.

Taken together, this will ensure support for Covid-19 continues to be directed to ratepayers through rate reliefs – including the additional £1.5 billion of support – in the fairest and fastest way, and not through valuation appeals made by rating agents. We will work with and support local government to enable ratepayers to apply as soon as possible this year, once the legislation relating to Material Change of Circumstance provisions has passed and local authorities have set up local relief schemes.

This will give local councils the certainty they have been seeking, and will ensure that support flows to businesses in need across England, rather than primarily to high value locations and the office market.

Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy 2

[HLWS888]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Transport (Chris Heaton-Harris), has made the following Ministerial Statement:

In 2017 the Government published the first statutory Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Strategy (CWIS 1) which covered the period 2016/17 to 2020/21. Since it was produced, the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister have significantly expanded the ambition and funding of the Government's cycling and walking programme, launching the Gear Change white paper in Summer 2020 with £2bn of additional funding over this parliament for active travel, the largest amount of dedicated spending ever committed to increasing cycling and walking in this country. Significant delivery on the ground has already occurred.

Because of the pandemic, the multi-year Spending Review planned for autumn 2020 was postponed. Instead, as with most other budgets, a single-year settlement for cycling and walking reflecting the ambitions set out in Gear Change has been set for the year 2021/22. The Government will set out plans for future years, including future funding for cycling and walking beyond 2021-22, at the Spending Review later this year.

I am today informing Parliament of my intention to publish as soon as possible thereafter a second four-year statutory Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS 2), reflecting the new policies in Gear Change and the multi-year funding settlement. The Government will consult on CWIS 2, with relevant stakeholders, ahead of its publication, as required by the legislation.

Early Years Healthy Development Review and The Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days

[HLWS891]

Lord Bethell: My Hon. friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care) (Jo Churchill), has made the following statement:

Completion of phase one of the Early Years Healthy Development Review and publication of The Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days

In summer 2020 the Prime Minister commissioned the *Early Years Healthy Development Review*. Chaired by the Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP, the Review looks across the '1,001 critical days' from conception to the age of two, ensuring babies and young children in England can be given the best start in life.

The focus on these 1,001 critical days from pregnancy to the age of two is important. They are a unique period of time, when the foundations for an individual's cognitive, emotional and physical development are developed and set. It is also a period of time when babies are at their most vulnerable and susceptible to, and influenced by, the environment around them.

It is for these reasons, and many more, that I am pleased to share the first publication from the Early Years Healthy Development Review entitled: *'The Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days'*.

This comes at a timely moment for our nation as we reflect on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and begin to turn our focus on building back better. As we do this, we must place our youngest citizens at the centre of our ambition.

Our vision sets out an ambitious programme of work to transform how we support families across England throughout these 1,001 critical days. It sets out six action areas (below) to ensure that families have access to the services they need, when they need them. We want to enable the system to work even better together to provide this support.

Action Area 1: Seamless support for families - our vision is for seamless support for families, with local areas encouraged to publish a Start for Life offer. The offer should explain clearly to parents and carers what services they are entitled to and how they can access them.

Action Area 2: A welcoming Hub for the family - all families need a welcoming space to access services. Our vision is that Family Hubs are a place for families to access Start for Life services.

Action Area 3: The information families need when they need it - all families need to have access to trustworthy information at the times they most need it. This includes digital, virtual and telephone services designed around the needs of the family.

Action Area 4: An empowered Start for Life workforce - our vision is that every family will be supported by a range of professionals and volunteers, each of whom brings skills, knowledge and empathy to interactions with families. From their first appointment, every parent and carer must feel that they are heard and that they can ask for help.

Action Area 5: Continually improving the Start for Life offer - we want every parent and carer to have confidence that the services and support in their area will help them give their baby the best start for life. A brilliant Start for Life offer will continuously improve with better data, evaluation, and proportionate inspection.

Action Area 6: Leadership for change - leadership is critical to the success of the vision. There must be local and national commitment and accountability.

This is just the beginning of our work, and the Early Years Healthy Development Review will continue with a second phase where we will focus on the implementation and delivery of these six action areas.

EU Emissions Trading System: Sale of Allowances

[HLWS884]

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

In April 2019, the Government entered into a commercial agreement with British Steel Ltd in relation to its annual obligations under the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS). This agreement was needed to support the operator in complying with their 2018 EU ETS obligations, in the absence of receiving its expected 2019 free allowances, due to restrictions placed on the UK's participation in the EU ETS during negotiations on the Withdrawal Agreement.

The Rt Hon Greg Clark informed the House of this agreement on 1st May 2019 - a bridge facility valued at around £120 million under Section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 at an interest rate of LIBOR plus 7%. Under this commercial agreement, the Government was entitled to recover the next allocation of allowances issued to British Steel Ltd, and sell these back to the ETS market to recover the full cost of the bridge facility.

Following ratification of the Withdrawal Agreement, restrictions on the UK's participation in the EU ETS market were lifted in February 2020 and the Government successfully recovered the allowances to which it was entitled. The Government has since successfully sold these allowances back to the EU ETS market, and concluded the contractual obligations with British Steel (in compulsory liquidation), under control of the Official Receiver.

I am pleased to inform the House that sale proceeds of nearly £140 million have been received. This exceeds the

total cost owed to the Government from this bridge facility, delivering value for money for the UK taxpayer.

The Government has also sold a separate 3,191 allowances in its possession. These allowances were transferred to the UK national government holding account within the EU ETS Union Registry, over several years, following the closure of several operator and trader accounts, in line with EU ETS Registry Regulations. The net sale proceeds from this transaction is around £80,000. This transaction is not related to the agreement with British Steel Ltd, and the sale of 3,191 allowances was undertaken separately for administrative reasons to provide value for money to UK taxpayers.

Households Below Average Income and Separated Families Statistics 2019-20

[HLWS890]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: My Right Honourable Friend, The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Dr Thérèse Coffey MP) has made the following Written Statement.

The Department for Work and Pensions has today published annual statistics covering 2019/20 including on Households Below Average Income (HBAI) and Separated Families. HBAI covers a range of information, including household incomes and a range of low-income indicators for 2019/20, derived from the Family Resources Survey of around 20,000 households.

Between 2018/19 and 2019/20, the proportion of people below the absolute low income line fell. Before housing costs, this was a decrease of 1 percentage point to 14% or 9.2 million people. After housing costs, it was a fall of 2 percentage points to 18% or 11.7 million people. There were also decreases in absolute low income after housing costs for children, pensioners, working-age people and individuals living in a household where someone is disabled. Compared to 2009/10, there were over 1.3 million fewer people in absolute low income, after housing costs: 260,000 fewer children, 890,000 working age adults and 180,000 pensioners.

In 2019/20, median household incomes grew by 4.5% after inflation, an increase of over £1,000 a year to reach an all-time high, alongside a record high employment rate. This was the strongest annual income growth since 2001/02. Incomes increased across the entire income distribution, with the poorest 20% of households seeing their real incomes increase by over 6% on average after housing costs. This growth in median income reflects the success of government policies we have taken to help people move into work and keep more of what they earn, for example, raising the National Living Wage and increasing the personal tax allowance.

The statistics show increases in the proportions of households below the relative low income lines, reflecting the very strong growth in median income in 2019/20. The proportion of households below the relative low income line, before housing costs, increased by one percentage

point to 18% or 11.7 million individuals, and, after housing costs, the proportion remained the same at 22% or 14.5 million individuals. There were increases in relative poverty both before and after housing costs for children, pensioners and those living in households where someone is disabled.

Rates of combined low income and material deprivation for children were lower in 2019/20 than in 2010/11 and rates of material deprivation for pensioners remained at a record low of 6%.

Today's statistics also show that 44% of separated families did not have a child maintenance arrangement in place in 2019/20. We know that child maintenance payments have a significant impact on reducing the number of children living in low income households. For the first time, estimates relating to the income distributions of parents in separated families have been published, showing that 60,000 children move out of absolute low income before housing costs; 120,000 after housing costs as a result of child maintenance payments from 2017/18 to 2019/20.

We have also published data on household food security from the Family Resources Survey for the first time, to get a better understanding of the lived experience of families. This shows that 8% of households are classed as food insecure, with 4% of households in low food security and 4% in very low household food security.

Overall, these statistics reinforce that the economy entered the pandemic in a strong position, with people seeing rising incomes. The Government has built on this firm financial foundation with an unprecedented package of measures to protect livelihoods and incomes, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the Self Employment Income Support Scheme and an extra £7.1 billion of welfare support in 2020/21. Our Plan for Jobs and the support provided through Universal Credit are helping people to raise their incomes by moving into and progressing in work.

Infected Blood: Victim Support

[HLWS882]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: My Rt. Hon. Friend, the Paymaster General (Penny Mordaunt MP) has today made the following written statement:

Today I am providing an update on parity of financial support, the commitment to considering a compensation framework, and enhancements to the psychological support for the victims of the Infected Blood tragedy.

Parity

In July 2019, a UK-wide agreement was reached in principle to resolve disparities in levels of support for people infected and affected. In January 2020 at a meeting with campaigners, the UK Government committed to resolving the disparities in financial support in Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland as well as addressing broader issues of disparity, including support for bereaved partners.

I am pleased to confirm that the following changes are planned to the four separate schemes to bring them into broader parity. Increases in annual payments will be backdated to April 2019. Where lump sum payments are being increased, this will apply to all current scheme members. We will work with the four schemes to communicate the changes to beneficiaries. Beneficiaries will continue to receive their current payments until the changes can be made. We hope that the schemes will be able to make additional payments where required by the end of the calendar year, and sooner if possible.

The key elements of change for the England Infected Blood Support Scheme are:

- annual payments for bereaved partners will be increased to an automatic 100% of their partners annual payment in year 1, and 75% in year 2 and subsequent years, in line with the position in Scotland;
- the lump sum bereavement payment will move from a discretionary £10,000 to an automatic £10,000, in line with the position in Wales;
- the lump sum payment paid to a beneficiary in the scheme with Hepatitis C Stage 1 will increase by £30,000 from £20,000 to £50,000, in line with the position in Scotland; and
- the lump sum payment paid to a beneficiary in the scheme with HIV will increase from up to £80.5k maximum in England, to an automatic £80.5k.

In addition, the schemes managed by the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will be similarly adapted so that across the UK there is broad parity of payments to infected and affected people. These adaptations are in line with the UK-wide agreement reached in July 2019.

In Scotland, the changes are to increase annual payments for infected beneficiaries and bereaved partners, and to introduce £10,000 lump sum bereavement payments for the families of those beneficiaries who have died since the scheme began.

In Wales, the changes are to increase annual payments for infected beneficiaries, increase both the payments and length of payments for the bereaved partners, in line with the position in Scotland, and changes to the lump sums for Hepatitis C & HIV.

In Northern Ireland, the changes are to annual payments for non-infected bereaved spouses/partners, lump sum bereavement payments, and a commitment to introduce enhanced financial support for Hepatitis C (Stage 1), at the same payment levels as in England, as soon as a system can be put into operation.

We have agreed with health Ministers that any future changes to national schemes would be subject to consultation between the UK Government and devolved administrations.

Compensation framework

To meet the Government's commitment to consider a framework for compensation, we can confirm our intention to appoint an independent reviewer to carry out

a study, looking at options for a framework for compensation, and to report back to the Paymaster General with recommendations, before the Inquiry reports.

The terms of reference of this study will be finalised in consultation between the independent reviewer and those infected and affected. The study will include consideration of the scope and levels of such compensation, and the relationship between a compensation framework and the existing financial support schemes in place.

The study is entirely separate from the public inquiry, which continues to have this Government's full support; it will not duplicate the work of the Inquiry, or cut across the Inquiry's findings. The study shall provide the Paymaster General with advice on potential compensation framework design and solutions which can be ready to implement upon the conclusion of the Inquiry, should the Inquiry's findings and recommendations require it.

The name of the independent reviewer will be announced shortly.

Psychological support

Since May 2020, there have been important improvements to how beneficiaries of the England Infected Blood Support Scheme can access psychological support. Beneficiaries are now able to receive funding for counselling directly from the scheme without GP approval or the need to access waiting lists. This change has been communicated to beneficiaries.

The Department of Health and Social Care will continue to work with EIBSS and NHS England and Improvement to review if further improvements are necessary to the psychological support which is available for beneficiaries.

Finally I would like to place on record my thanks to the Inquiry Chair, Sir Brian Langstaff, and his team for the way the Inquiry has managed to continue its work throughout the last 12 months despite the challenges presented by Covid-19, and for consistently putting the interests of the infected and affected victims at the heart of their decision-making when dealing with significant logistical and planning challenges.

Law Commission's Review of the Land Registration Act 2002: Government Response

[HLWS883]

Lord Callanan: I am grateful to the Law Commission for its review of the Land Registration Act 2002 which it published on 24 July 2018. The Government has today published its full response to the review recommendations.

HM Land Registry is committed to becoming the world's leading land registry for speed, simplicity and an open approach to data. The land registration regime provides essential trust and confidence to the property and lending markets. It does so by providing efficient access

to secure and accurate information needed to transact land and use it as security for borrowing. The regime is underpinned by a state-backed guarantee of title. It is important the regime is examined, from time-to-time, to ensure that it is working effectively.

The Law Commission made 53 recommendations, most of which are quite technical in nature and narrowly focused. That should give us confidence that the land registration system is generally working well.

The full response sets out the Government's conclusions in respect of each of the recommendations.

Once again, I thank the Law Commission for the diligence that has gone into its work examining the land registration regime, and for the clarity of its conclusions expressed in its report.

Local Elections: May 2021

[HLWS893]

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

I am updating Parliament today on the progress being made to support delivery of the local polls on 6 May 2021 and to outline our expectations for the respective verification and count process. I have also today separately laid before Parliament the indemnity the Government is providing to Returning Officers and Counting Officers, in relation to Covid-19, for the local elections and referendums in England taking place between 6 May 2021 and 4 May 2022 inclusively.

Safe and secure elections are the cornerstone of our democracy. On 5 February, the Government published a [Delivery Plan](#) outlining how these polls will be delivered in a Covid-secure way. The Government has been working closely with Public Health England, the Electoral Commission, the Association of Electoral Administrators, the Local Government Association, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), political parties and independents to support the delivery of these polls.

On 26 February, the Government published guidance on [Covid-secure campaigning](#) for the May polls, supporting a level playing field for candidates and ensuring that voters can make a well-informed choice while continuing to protect the NHS and save lives.

Parliament has made changes to the nomination process to reduce the amount of movement and person-to-person contact that might otherwise be necessary, but ensuring there remains a democratic check and balance for candidates.

Legislation has also been made to change the rules for proxy voting, enabling those who need to self-isolate close to polling day to request an emergency proxy vote at very short notice, right up to 5pm on polling day itself.

Building on these changes to legislation and guidance, the Government is also continuing to provide practical support to Returning Officers where appropriate,

including the sourcing of over 2000 additional volunteer staff for the polls to date.

This work supports the significant preparations already being undertaken by local authorities and is backed up by Government funding. The Government is directly providing around £95 million for the running of the polls, which includes an additional allocation of around £32 million to specifically cover additional Covid-19 related costs.

As outlined in my written statement of 9 March 2021, the Government is also committed to tackling intimidation in public life. Further to this, we are today publishing security guidance for Returning Officers and candidates to support the May 2021 polls.

Of course, polling day is not the end of the electoral process and I am aware that many Returning Officers are considering carefully how they can conduct the verification and count, which are often large and complex events, in a Covid-secure way. It is vital for free and fair elections that polls are transparent and effectively scrutinised. However, minimising the transmission of Covid-19 and protecting public health is a priority during these elections. A strong set of measures will therefore be in place to ensure every aspect of the polls are Covid-secure for voters, staff and observers.

It is the responsibility of Returning Officers to manage the conduct of the count and to ensure that appropriate reasonable measures are taken to comply with Covid-19 regulations and to allow fair scrutiny of the count. Returning Officers will want to put in place arrangements to allow the effective scrutiny of their counts while ensuring the count is Covid-secure for everyone present. To support Returning Officers with this, the Government has been working with the Electoral Commission to update their [guidance on the verification and count process](#) in the context of the pandemic, in line with prevailing Covid-19 restrictions. I have also written today to election administrators to provide guidance on there being no public health need to quarantine ballot papers or postal votes.

The announcement of results will, as usual, be made as soon as is practicable after the close of the polls. However, it is important to be clear that counts, like other aspects of these polls, may look and feel different to previous occasions. Due to Covid-secure measures, each stage of the count may take longer than in previous years. It is essential that all involved recognise the need to work together to support them taking place effectively and safely.

Democracy should not be cancelled because of Covid-19, and the Government has every confidence in the ability of the Returning Officers and their teams to run these polls in a way that meets the highest standards of both public safety and democratic integrity. The Government is committed to supporting the sector to achieve this. I would like once again to express gratitude for the tireless efforts and exceptional dedication of all those involved.

The associated documents have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Local Government Elections and Referendums: Covid-19 Indemnity

[HLWS892]

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

On 5 February, the Government confirmed that the council, mayoral and Police & Crime Commissioner elections scheduled for 6 May 2021 will be going ahead as planned, and published a Delivery Plan outlining how these polls will be delivered in a Covid-secure way. Since then, the Government has put in place a number of measures to support statutorily independent Returning Officers to deliver these elections successfully and with the right precautions in place. I have also today updated Parliament separately on the wider progress being made to support delivery of the local polls on 6 May 2021.

The Government has already, in line with usual practice, provided an indemnity in relation to Police & Crime Commissioner elections. The Delivery Plan also included a commitment to provide a further indemnity for local elections and referendums^[1], in respect of Covid-19 risks, in order to address any gaps in coverage of existing local authority insurance.

It is necessary to indemnify Returning Officers and Counting Officers in England against uninsured claims in this way because, for the purposes of local elections and referendums, Returning Officers and Counting Officers are statutorily independent officers and are separate from both central and local government. As such, they are personally liable for the conduct of the local elections and referendums. Existing insurance that covers Returning Officers and Counting Officers in discharging their statutory duties at local elections will not, in most cases, cover them against claims in relation to Covid-19.

In light of this, I have today laid a Minute setting out the Cabinet Office's intention to indemnify Returning Officers and Counting Officers on this very limited basis at local elections and referendums in England taking place between 6 May 2021 and 4 May 2022 inclusively. The Treasury has approved the proposal in principle.

The purpose of the indemnity is to ensure that Returning Officers are financially supported if any Covid-19 related claims are brought against them in relation to the local polls. Whilst the indemnity provides for reimbursement of costs incurred once a claim has been concluded, we want to support Returning Officers wherever possible to deal effectively with claims brought against them. We will look at any such claims on their merits and seek to provide Returning Officers with any relevant support we are able to give them to effectively and robustly defend such claims. It is right that Returning Officers can be held to account for the conduct of the polls but it is also right that we support these individuals financially in that process.

The indemnity covers (but is not limited to) a Returning Officer's or Counting Officer's liabilities to the public, as an employer, or otherwise incurred in his or her professional capacity:

- in relation to any claim for personal injury or death where the cause of action relates to the contracting of Covid-19 due to participation in the election or referendum process in the context of the Returning Officer's or Counting Officer's exercise of their functions, or
- as a result of a challenge to the conduct of the election or referendum by an election or referendum petition arising from alleged poll irregularities caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The indemnity only covers losses, liability, damages, costs, claims, proceedings or expenses incurred in relation to the conduct of the local government election or referendum arising from Covid-19 related issues. There is no limit on the number of claims which a Returning Officer may make under this indemnity.

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.

[1] This refers to council tax referendums, neighbourhood planning referendums and governance referendums held in England under the relevant legislation.

Myanmar

[HLWS889]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Dominic Raab), has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The UK condemns the coup in Myanmar and reiterates our deep concern at the violent crackdown on peaceful protestors. We call on the military to hand back power to the democratically elected government; protect rights and freedoms, including the right to peaceful protest; and to ensure unobstructed humanitarian access.

The UK has been at the forefront of a strong, co-ordinated international response. On 10 March we secured a Presidential Statement at the UN Security Council that condemned the violence against peaceful protestors and called for respect of Myanmar's democratic transition and the release of all those detained arbitrarily. This followed further UK-led statements by the UN Security Council on 04 February and G7 Foreign Ministers on 03 February and 23 February.

Working closely with partners in the US, Canada and the EU, the UK has already sanctioned nine individuals

responsible for serious human rights violations during the coup, including three military cabinet members and all the military members of the State Administration Council. This is in addition to 16 individuals already sanctioned for their role in serious human rights violations against the Rohingya and other minorities.

Today, I am announcing, further measures to target the Myanmar military's economic interests in conjunction with the US.

The UK will enforce sanctions against Myanmar Economic Holdings Ltd (MEHL), the military owned conglomerate supporting the Tatmadaw. We have found credible evidence that MEHL contributed funds to support the Tatmadaw in their campaign on ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya in 2017, knowing or having reasonable cause to suspect that the funds would or may contribute to the serious human rights violations committed, and that MEHL is associated with the Commander in Chief and Deputy Commander in Chief.

Designating MEHL will immediately impose an asset freeze on any assets that MEHL may hold in the UK and a ban on any UK individual or company from providing funds or economic resources to MEHL directly or indirectly. This will also prohibit funds being made available to any subsidiaries "owned or controlled" by MEHL as defined by the Global Human Rights sanctions regime.

These sanctions complement the ongoing strategic review of the UK's trade and investment approach led by the Department for International Trade. The Government's position is that UK businesses should not be supporting the military or their businesses.

Along with the UN Security Council and the wider international community, we will continue to make clear that military must stop killing its own people, release all those who have been detained arbitrarily and respect the democratic wishes of the people of Myanmar.

NHS England and NHS Improvement: Mandate for 2021-22

[HLWS885]

Lord Bethell: My Hon Friend the Minister of State (Minister for Health) (Edward Argar) has made the following written statement:

The Prime Minister paid tribute to the extraordinary success of the UK's Covid-19 vaccination programme when setting out on 22 February 2021 his roadmap for easing lockdown restrictions in England. This vaccination programme would not be possible without the dedication and commitment of many thousands of NHS staff who have already worked tirelessly for many months to support the Covid response whilst doing their utmost to reduce the impact on wider NHS services.

I am today laying before Parliament the Government's 2021-22 mandate for NHS England and NHS Improvement. It will make clear that Covid-19 – including further roll out of the vaccination programme to

ensure that every adult in England will be offered a first vaccination by 31 July - remains the NHS's top priority in 2021-22. At the same time, and taking account of the pandemic's impact, the NHS will return to implementation of the important transformative ambitions set out in its Long Term Plan and our 2019 manifesto. These will underpin recovery, and support the NHS' longer term resilience and sustainability. There will be a renewed focus on prevention to empower people to live as healthily as possible, and on tackling those health challenges which have been highlighted by the pandemic. The NHS will also work to recover performance of non-Covid services that were unavoidably impacted by the pandemic – including elective care.

The new mandate is underpinned by our further funding commitments to the NHS. In addition to the substantial support made available for the pandemic response in 2020-21, and the further £6.3 billion increase in NHS funding already confirmed as part of its Funding Settlement to 2023-24, we are providing a further £3 billion in 2021-22 to support NHS recovery. This includes £1.5 billion for indirect Covid pressures in 2021-22 as well as £1 billion for tackling backlogs in elective activity, and £500 million for mental health and workforce, for which operational delivery will be agreed in due course. This is in addition to the £6.6 billion announced last week for operationally necessary costs arising from the pandemic in the first half of 2021-22.

As in previous years, I will also today lay a revised 2020-21 mandate. As required by the NHS Act 2006, this revision is to reflect changes to the capital and revenue resource limits included in it that result from in-year funding decisions.

Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal

[HLWS895]

Lord Greenhalgh: My Rt. Hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Housing (Christopher Pincher) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

In March 2017 the Government committed to the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal (the deal), to support ambitious plans to deliver 100,000 homes by 2031. The deal committed to an Oxfordshire-wide Joint Statutory Spatial Plan to be adopted by 2021, and to be supported by £215 million of funding to help deliver more affordable housing and infrastructure improvements to support sustainable development across the county.

As part of the deal, to support this strategic approach to supporting housing delivery through joint working, Oxfordshire was granted flexibility from the National Planning Policy Framework policy on maintaining a five year housing land supply. Since 2018, Oxfordshire have had to provide proof of a three-year land supply for planning purposes. This has worked to support the delivery of the local plans for the area and ensure that the local authorities could focus their efforts on their Joint Spatial Strategy.

This flexibility was laid out by Secretary of State at the time the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP in a Written Ministerial Statement on 12 September 2018 - <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2018-09-12/hcws955>.

Since 2018, Oxfordshire have not finalised and adopted their Joint Statutory Spatial Plan. Therefore, in the best interests of housing delivery in the region, my Department have extended the time afforded to Oxfordshire for the delivery of this plan to 2023. This extension however will not be subject to the original land supply flexibilities. From today, Oxfordshire will need to maintain a five year housing land supply in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

This statement is a material consideration in planning decisions and applies to those local planning authorities in Oxfordshire with whom the Government agreed the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal with, namely Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council. This statement applies from today.

Prosperity Fund: Change of Ministerial Accountability

[HLWS887]

Lord True: My Rt Hon. Friend, the Paymaster General (Penny Mordaunt MP) has today made the following written statement:

The cross-government Prosperity Fund arrangement will end on 31 March and prosperity programming will move to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) as part of a Machinery of Government transfer. The transfer will help drive strategic coherence across Official Development Assistance (ODA) programmes. This will allow the Foreign Secretary to make decisions on aid to implement the UK Government's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.

The Machinery of Government change will take effect on 1 April 2021.

Recovery Loan Scheme: Departmental Contingent Liability Notification

[HLWS897]

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 details of the Recovery Loan Scheme (RLS) announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 3 March 2021.

RLS will be facilitated by the Government-owned British Business Bank and delivered through its delivery partners. Lenders will offer facilities of up to £10 million to support businesses that are affected by the coronavirus outbreak. There will be no limit on the number and aggregate value of loans that can be made under the scheme.

The scheme is based on the British Business Bank's existing Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) but is open to all businesses regardless of turnover.

The key parameters of the scheme are as follows:

- The percentage of the remaining balance of each loan that is guaranteed by the Government is 80 per cent.
- The maximum facility size will be £10 million per business, and the minimum facility size will be £25,001 for loans and overdrafts and £1,000 for asset and invoice finance.
- Businesses will be required to meet the costs of interest payments and any fees from the outset.
- Businesses who have made use of the current Coronavirus loan schemes will be able to access the new scheme.
- The lender must establish that the borrower has a viable business proposition assessed according to its normal commercial lending criteria. This may, but is not required to, be determined without regard to any concerns over the borrower's short-to-medium term business performance due to the uncertainty and impact of Coronavirus.

The scheme launches on 6 April and is open until 31 December, subject to review. The Government will be subject to an equivalent contingent liability as for CBILS. The maximum contingent liability for assumed initial lending of £12 billion (our central estimate) is £9.6 billion.

I will be laying a Departmental Minute today containing a description of the liability undertaken.

Roads

[HLWS881]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Right Honourable friend, the Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps), has made the following Ministerial Statement:

Since becoming Secretary of State for Transport, I have shared the concerns of many regarding All Lane Running (ALR) motorways. Any question about safety on our road network must be taken with the upmost seriousness. Therefore, one of my first actions as Secretary of State was to commission a stocktake to set out recommendations to raise the bar on safety. While the evidence has suggested that ALR motorways are in most ways as safe as, or safer than, conventional ones, I am determined to go further and ensure that they are the safest roads in Britain.

To this end, in March 2020, I announced a package of 18 measures, costing £500million, including the faster rollout of a radar-based stopped vehicle detection (SVD) across the ALR motorway network.

Earlier this year, I asked for a one-year on report from Highways England detailing its progress in delivering the 18-point Action Plan and identifying actions that can be delivered ahead of schedule. I asked for this by 12 March 2021.

Highways England has now provided my Department with that Anniversary Report, and work is rapidly being completed to assess it, including stocktake actions, and to establish next steps. The report will be published by summer, once I am assured that the proposals are sufficiently robust.

The publication of this report will not, however, mark the end of the process, and I am determined to ensure all possible actions to make ALR motorways safer still are explored. I have therefore ordered my officials to continue to work with Highways England on developing possible future options, working closely with road safety groups and Parliamentarians, as well as the Transport Select Committee which currently has an active inquiry into this issue. I am interested to receive their final report.

The latest safety evidence drawn from data and analysis of the 2019 STATS19 official statistics has been produced by Highways England and will be contained within its report. There has been considerable public and media interest in understanding motorway accident and fatality data and I have commissioned the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) to independently review the data to provide further analytical assurance and ensure that the conclusions arrived at are robust. The ORR is the independent statutory monitor of Highways England and its management of the strategic road network.

Within this role, the ORR already scrutinises Highways England's delivery of the smart motorway stocktake actions, and its performance against its road safety KPIs. However, I believe there may be scope to go further. In addition to asking ORR to undertake an independent review of the available safety evidence on ALR motorways, my officials will explore what further independent scrutiny may be appropriate.

Ensuring our roads are safe for those who use them is my top priority.

Strengthening the Union and Intergovernmental Relations

[HLWS879]

Lord True: My Rt Hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Michael Gove MP), has today made the following written statement:

Today I am providing an update on the UK Government's work on the Union and intergovernmental relations (IGR) with devolved administrations. These are:

i) A progress update on the joint IGR review.

ii) The inaugural quarterly report on the UK Government's engagement with the devolved administrations.

iii) The Dunlop Review into UK Government Union Capability, alongside our response to Lord Dunlop which sets out UKG's progress in implementing recommendations.

Copies of all these documents have been laid in the libraries of both Houses of Parliament and are available on GOV.UK.

The UK Government is steadfast in its commitment to protect and promote the hundreds of years of shared history, beliefs and interests embodied in our Union – the most successful political and economic partnership the world has seen.

Our response to the coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the importance of the broad shoulders of the UK Government in supporting the whole country. It has shown we are at our strongest when we come together as one United Kingdom. Together we are better able to tackle big problems, from defending our borders and fighting national cyber security threats, to delivering the furlough scheme to protect our jobs, and being first to secure the Covid-19 vaccine for citizens across the UK.

Today demonstrates the UK Government's commitment to putting the foundations in place for our Covid-19 recovery. For our family of nations to thrive – for the Union of the UK to prosper – the UK Government will continue to work smarter for people in every part of the country, building back better and stronger from Covid-19 and able, outside the European Union, to target money where it is most needed.

Progress update on the IGR review

The IGR review is a joint review by the UK Government and devolved administrations to make sure intergovernmental structures are fit for purpose. This publication is the product of months of detailed analysis of how the UK Government and devolved administrations can work together effectively, reconciling a range of goals and aspirations from all parts of the UK. It details our ambitious and forward-looking approach to future IGR, ensuring an effective culture of collaboration and cooperation, protecting the integrity of our Union and shaping our common future. Where discussions are ongoing, the UK Government's suggested position is included in square brackets. We are committed to continuing discussions with our devolved administration colleagues on these areas after the May elections.

Work has already begun to implement these measures across UK Government departments, allowing this improved collaboration between the UK Government and the devolved administrations to begin as soon as possible. We will continue to reflect on these arrangements to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

The UK Government and devolved administrations continue to work together on the Common Frameworks programme. This has resulted in further frameworks being agreed - including Food Compositional Standards and

Labelling; Blood Safety and Quality; Organs, Tissues and Cells Safety and Quality; and Public Procurement - which have been laid in Parliament.

Quarterly report on the UK Government's engagement with the DAs

Our first quarterly report on the UK Government's engagement with the devolved administrations reflects the value the Government places on the core principles of transparency of intergovernmental relations. Due to the pre-election periods in Wales and Scotland, we are publishing this information early, covering a shorter period of two months; the next quarterly report will be published in July 2021.

This report predominantly provides information from all UK Government departments on their participation in intergovernmental meetings with the devolved administrations in January and February 2021. It is supplemented with a summary of engagement which has taken place since July 2019. The report will support the UK Parliament's capacity to scrutinise our role in intergovernmental relations, so that parliamentarians can help guide our approach to strengthening our Union, while also demonstrating our commitment to transparency of IGR.

Dunlop Review into UK Government Union Capability

We are very grateful to Lord Dunlop for his independent and expert assessment and analysis of the UK Government's operations in the areas of devolution and IGR. We have carefully studied all of his recommendations and his Report has provided the impetus for a wide ranging programme of reform that I and my colleagues will continue to pursue vigorously.

Temporary Indemnity for Designated Care Home Settings: Contingent Liability

[HLWS886]

Lord Bethell: My Hon Friend the Minister of State for Care (Helen Whately) has made the following written statement:

Further to the Minister for Covid Vaccine Deployment's written statement on 18 January 2021, I am tabling this statement for the benefit of Honourable and Right Honourable members to bring to their attention the undertaking of a contingent liability. This relates to an extension of the Designated Settings Indemnity Support (DSIS), which offers targeted and time-limited state-backed indemnity arrangements to care homes registered, or intending to register, as "Designated Settings", and which are unable to obtain sufficient insurance cover.

On 18 January 2021, the Minister for Covid Vaccine Deployment announced in a Written Ministerial Statement, and accompanying Departmental Minute, provision of these temporary indemnity arrangements under the DSIS. The DSIS includes cover for clinical negligence, employer's and public liability where a care provider seeking to become a Designated Setting is unable to secure sufficient commercial insurance, or

where an existing provider has been operating without sufficient cover. Employer's and public liability is covered under the new Coronavirus Temporary Indemnity Scheme; clinical negligence is covered by the Clinical Negligence Scheme for Trusts. The DSIS is supervised by DHSC and administered by NHS Resolution, and to date, has proved to be an effective package of support to Designated Settings.

DSIS initially provided cover for Designated Settings until the end of March 2021. Following a review of DSIS, it will now be extended until 30 June 2021, in order to maintain the current level of support for these vital settings. This extension will benefit current DSIS participants, as well any additional settings who may wish to apply for the support and who meet the criteria for inclusion. A review of DSIS will take place in early June.

I regret that in this circumstance, due to the need to ensure that there are no gaps in DSIS cover after the current 31 March end-date, the normal 14 sitting days for consideration has not been possible. A Departmental Minute will be laid in the House of Commons providing more detail on this contingent liability.

Troubled Families Programme

[HLWS898]

Lord Greenhalgh: My Hon. Friend, the Minister for rough sleeping and housing (Eddie Hughes) has today made the following statement:

As required by the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, section 3(1), today my Department has published the 2020/21 annual report of the Troubled Families Programme. The report sets out how the programme has been supporting our most disadvantaged families who face multiple and complex problems. We are laying this report today and will place a copy in the House of Commons library.

The Troubled Families Programme has been at the heart of our ambition to strengthen families and improve their futures since 2015. In last year's Spending Review the Chancellor announced £165 million of new investment to extend the programme until the end of 2021-22.

Improving families' lives: annual report of the Troubled Families Programme 2020-2021 includes an update on the programme's performance and a summary of the latest research findings and policy developments for the programme.

It sets out how the programme has driven a profound shift in the way that local services respond to entrenched problems and support our most disadvantaged families. The programme assigns a single key worker to each family, backed by multi-agency partners and coordinated data. This joined up 'wrap-around' support for families has been shown to be successful in tackling the range of issues they face.

Since 2015 the programme has supported 401,719 families to achieve successful outcomes. This includes 32,382 adults who were helped into sustained

employment. These families faced multiple and complex problems including a combination of crime, truancy, neglect, anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, poor mental health, worklessness and financial exclusion. Every successful family outcome represents a family's life changed for the better – a considerable achievement for the families and the local services supporting them.

The report sets out how local services funded by the programme have responded to the Covid-19 pandemic. The programme has been a key part of the local response to Covid-19 by supporting families with immediate needs such as food and equipment for home learning. The programme will play an important role in the recovery, supporting families with longer term impacts of the pandemic such as unemployment and mental ill health.

The report summarises the latest research findings relating to the programme. Staff survey research showed consistent support for the programme from local teams. 95% of Troubled Families Coordinators agree the programme is effective at achieving whole family working and 89% agree it's successful at achieving long term change for families. An independent evaluation of the Supporting Families Against Youth Crime fund shows that the fund improved the provision of local services addressing youth crime. The fund supported a number of

innovative approaches in 21 local areas. Local areas reported that whole family interventions, role model based and mentoring interventions were most successful.

This builds on previous analysis which found that the programme has made a significant impact in reducing the proportion of children who are taken into care. A cost benefit analysis showed that for every £1 spent on the programme it delivers £2.28 of economic benefits (*includes economic, social and fiscal benefits*) and £1.51 of fiscal benefits (*only budgetary impacts on services*).

'Improving families' lives: annual report of the Troubled Families Programme 2020-2021 is accompanied by a range of publications that evaluate the programme's progress which can be accessed at Gov.uk. These are:

- 1) Evaluation report: Supporting Families Against Youth Crime.
- 2) Staff Surveys: Troubled Families Coordinators: part five.
- 3) Staff Surveys: Troubled Families Keyworkers: part five.
- 4) Staff Surveys: Troubled Families Employment Advisors: part five.

Written Answers

Thursday, 25 March 2021

Abdulahdi Mushaima

Asked by *Lord Collins of Highbury*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Minister for Middle East and North Africa at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office on 5 March (158193), what representations they intend to make to the government of Bahrain about securing the early release of Abdulhadi Mushaima from prison. [HL14139]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Abdulhadi Mushaima was released on 11 March 2021. He served 3 weeks of a 3 month prison sentence. He was released under alternative sentencing measures.

Airports: Birmingham

Asked by *Baroness Burt of Solihull*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential benefits of the Birmingham Airport Connectivity Scheme for the levelling up agenda. [HL14209]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: This Government is committed to ensuring that transport and infrastructure investment levels up economies across the country. In examining the case for the Birmingham Airport Connectivity, as with all rail projects, it will be necessary to assess its contribution to the Government's strategic priorities as part of the consideration of the business case for this proposal.

Armenia: Politics and Government

Asked by *The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the current political situation in Armenia; and, in particular, (1) the reports of an attempted military coup, and (2) the recent protests in the country. [HL14148]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government supports both the democratically elected Government in Armenia and the right of the Armenian people to protest peacefully. We followed closely the events surrounding public comments made by senior Armenian military figures, and have urged all parties to abide by democratic and constitutional processes in a calm and peaceful manner.

Bahrain: Human Rights

Asked by *Lord Collins of Highbury*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment have they made of the news release by the Bahrain

Institute for Rights and Democracy and Human Rights Watch Bahrain: Police Beat, Threaten Children, published on 10 March; and what representations they intend to make to the government of Bahrain about the human rights concerns raised in that article. [HL14137]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have read the news release, along with the Bahraini Ombudsman's response to the Human Rights Watch report which provides important clarification and invites Human Rights Watch to provide further details of the cases in question. We believe the recent ratification of the Correctional Justice Act is a positive development for the protection of children in Bahrain, and will monitor its implementation.

Biofuels: Northern Ireland

Asked by *Baroness Hoey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether forthcoming legislation to require the sale of E10 petrol in 95 grade will apply to Northern Ireland. [HL14275]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: We plan to legislate for the mandating of E10 petrol in Northern Ireland. In line with our obligations under the Northern Ireland Protocol we will notify the European Commission of our intention first.

Bulgaria: Migrants

Asked by *Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Bulgaria about reports of (1) police assaults, and (2) valuables being confiscated, from Afghan and Pakistani migrants near the border with Turkey. [HL14190]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government is aware of recent reports of a small number of alleged cases of mistreatment of migrants upon arrival in Bulgaria. The number of irregular migrants transiting Bulgaria has reduced in recent months and, although these cases have not been raised specifically, our Embassy in Sofia regularly engages with the government of Bulgaria and international partners on the need to address irregular migration and the challenges it presents.

While the UK fully supports the right of States to control their borders, we also expect States to fulfil their international obligations and protect and promote the human rights of migrants, including by investigating reports of alleged mistreatment and by putting appropriate procedures in place to ensure that migrants are treated fairly and appropriately, in line with international standards.

Disability and Terminal Illnesses: Health Services and Social Services

Asked by *Baroness Browning*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what definitions they use for the purpose of assessing health and welfare

needs for (1) severe disability, (2) long-term disability, and (3) terminal illness. [HL14372]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: Other than the definition for people who are terminally ill, there is no common definition used for assessing health and welfare needs. What is meant by “severe disability” and/or “long-term disability” will be specific to the benefits or schemes which apply them and could be defined in the legislation applicable and/or the guidance available. The definition of whether a person is “terminally ill” is that they “suffer from a progressive disease and their death in consequence of that disease can reasonably be expected within 6 months.”

Electric Scooters

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effect of the e-scooters trials on (1) pedestrian safety, and (2) the capacity of the police to enforce road safety laws. [HL14294]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Department is putting in place a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation programme. Surveys and interviews with e-scooter users and members of the public living in e-scooter trial areas will be conducted across a range of trial areas to track and understand instances of pavement riding and pavement parking. This will be carried out by our contractors Arup and NatCen Social Research.

Enforcement of offences relating to unlawful use of powered transporters is an operational matter for individual Chief Officers of police in conjunction with local policing plans. In trial areas, e-scooter operators and local authorities are working with the police to enforce operational rules and monitor rider behaviour.

Events Industry: Insurance

Asked by Lord Aberdare

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the decision not to offer a Government-backed reinsurance scheme on the number of live music events that will go ahead in the summer. [HL14128]

Baroness Barran: We are aware of the concerns which have been raised about the challenge of securing indemnity for live events. Department officials have been working closely with the affected sectors to understand the challenges and to keep the situation under review.

Understandably, the bar for considering government intervention is set extremely high, especially in light of recent announcements including the considerable extension to the furlough scheme and local business support. My officials are continuing to collect evidence of all of the barriers live events are facing to reopening. There are a number of factors which influence the viability of music festivals, and indemnity insurance is only one aspect of this.

We are keeping the situation under review and working closely with Her Majesty's Treasury on this issue to determine the appropriate and most effective response for the sector within the public health context.

Forced Marriage: Children

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 8 March (HL13499), what estimate they have made of the number of girls resident in the UK who were married abroad when they were underage and brought back to the UK in (1) 2014, (2) 2015, (3) 2016, (4) 2017, (5) 2018, (6) 2019, and (7) 2020. [HL14165]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The UK is a world-leader in the fight to end the practice of forced marriage, with our dedicated Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) leading efforts to combat it both at home and abroad. The FMU provides support and advice for victims, those at risk, and professionals, through its public helpline, and delivers training and awareness raising activities to professionals and others across the country.

The Home Office does not have estimates of the number of girls who are resident in the UK who were married abroad when they were underage and who were brought back to the UK. Information on the cases of actual or potential forced marriage dealt with by the FMU, including age breakdowns, can be found at this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/forced-marriage-unit-statistics>. Statistics for 2020 will be added to this page later this year.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Forced Marriage Stats 2019
[Forced_Marriage_Unit_statistics_2019 (1).pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2021-03-11/HL14165>

High Speed 2 Railway Line: Chilterns

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Environment Agency has given full approval for the construction works of the HS2 Chiltern Tunnel and, if so, when; what risk assessments have been made in connection with this approval in respect of the Chiltern Aquifer regarding, (1) the risk of pollution to the water supply for (a) local residents, and (b) residents of London, and (2) the loss or diversion of the River Misbourne; and whether they will place copies of any such assessments in the Library of the House. [HL14205]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Approval for the construction of the Chilterns Tunnel has not yet been granted, pending the finalisation of the necessary risk

assessments and monitoring plans, which are in an advance stage of production and review.

The following assessments have been produced in respect of tunnelling through the Chalk aquifer:

- Groundwater Assessment for Construction Tasks: Tunnel and Cross Passages.
- Chiltern Tunnel Construction Water Environment Assessment (currently in draft).
- Construction of Chiltern Tunnel Site Specific Groundwater Monitoring (currently in draft).

This work provides a full assessment of the risks to groundwater quality, groundwater flow, public water supplies and the River Misbourne. Such assessments are not routinely placed in the House Library as the work is ongoing, and they are updated as and when necessary. Individual assessments may be released upon request, subject to any required redactions.

HS2 Ltd manages all risks associated with the delivery of the railway through their Corporate Risk registers. As we [the Govt.] has made clear, they must demonstrate compliance with the requisite technical, safety and environmental standards at all times.

High Speed 2 Railway Line: Noise

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the risk of HS2 train noise exceeding the limits set out in the information paper by HS2 Ltd, E20: Control of Airborne Noise from Altered Roads and the Operational Railway, published on 30 July 2014, as a result of (1) operational noise assumptions, and (2) noise prediction model uncertainty; and whether that risk has been recorded in the HS2 costs and risk estimates. [[HL14202](#)]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: HS2 Ltd is integrating the design of HS2 by developing requirements and specifications for each of the of the parts of the railway that contribute to the end-state noise generated by operational services, so that the objectives set out in HS2 Information Paper E20 are delivered.

HS2 Ltd is continually monitoring planned performance against these requirements, and against the overall compliance with our noise commitments. HS2 Ltd manages all risks associated with the delivery of the railway through their Corporate Risk registers. This includes all risks relating to compliance with HS2 Information Paper E20, and includes the development of mitigation measures and treatment strategies intended to avoid or reduce the probability of the risk occurring and to reduce or control the impact of the risks should they occur.

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assurances have they received from HS2 Ltd that they will not seek to derogate responsibilities on noise limits set out in its

information paper E20: Control of Airborne Noise from Altered Roads and the Operational Railway, published on 30 July 2014, should HS2 operational noise levels exceed agreed noise limits. [[HL14203](#)]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: HS2 Ltd will build on the work of existing high speed networks, utilising best practice from other European high speed projects, and improving on those railways where it is possible to do so. HS2 Information Paper F4: Operational Noise and Vibration Monitoring Framework sets out HS2 Ltd's commitments to monitor the noise and vibration performance of the operational railway. Paragraph 3.2 describes the actions to be taken where the performance deviates from the expected conditions:

a) If the measured performance is better than the expected conditions:

- A study to document the reasons why assets are achieving a higher performance than expected.

- A review of further improvements to other assets that could potentially benefit from the technology transfer of the high performing assets.

b) If the measured performance is worse than the expected conditions:

- A study to identify the root cause and all possible solutions to the low performance.

- An investigation of other similar assets that could also be underperforming.

- Corrective action to improve existing performance and prevent future loss of performance so far as this may be required to achieve the objectives set out in the Information Papers E20, E21 and E22.

The relevant paragraphs of Information paper F4 are included as binding assurances (numbers 1041 and 1042) on the public register of HS2 Undertakings and Assurances.

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Vere of Norbiton on 8 March (HL13565), whether they will place in the Library of the House a copy of the HS2 noise prediction model data from high speed trains in France. [[HL14204](#)]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Appendix SV-001-000: Annex D2 in Volume 5 of the publicly available HS2 Phase 1 Environmental Statement relates to the validation of the HS2 prediction methodology for operational noise from the railway, as set out in the attached document.

Figure 1 in Annex D2 presents measured maximum noise levels for French TGV and German ICE trains compared with the maximum level forecast using the original HS1 calculation method. These measurements were referenced in the Written Answer further to my last answer on 8 March. All Environmental Statement documents have been published online.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Vol 5 [Vol5_Appendix_SV-001-000.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2021-03-15/HL14204>

Immigration Controls: Heathrow Airport

Asked by *Baroness Randerson*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the remarks by the Chief Operating Officer of Heathrow Airport that queues at border control (1) regularly exceed three hours, and (2) sometimes exceed six hours; what plans they have to provide more staff to process border procedures; and what assessment they have made of the impact of border control waiting times on the UK's international reputation. [HL14155]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Wait times in airports can be caused by a number of factors, not just related to resourcing. This includes all mandated border security activity, the volume of immigration case working, additional support, specific security activity and, like many other international destinations, checks in relation to ensuring border health measures relating to the Covid-19 have been complied with.

Our teams seek to balance this range of tasking each day. Whilst mindful of passenger wait times and experience, our primary objective is to ensure the security of the border and compliance with border health measures.

Like all public services operating throughout this unprecedented global pandemic, there have been additional pressures placed on Border Force and the safety of the public and our staff remains our priority.

Resource and staffing requirements at every port, including Heathrow, are continually reviewed by Border Force working with airport operators including Heathrow Airport Ltd.

Iran: Nuclear Power

Asked by *The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress has been made on re-engaging with the government of Iran on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. [HL14149]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Iran's continued systematic non-compliance with its nuclear commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA) is undermining the non-proliferation benefits of the deal and jeopardising our efforts to preserve it. On 23 February 2021, the Foreign Secretary, alongside his French and German counterparts, expressed our deep regret at Iran's suspension of the Additional Protocol and urged Iran to return to compliance with its JCPoA commitments.

On 10 March 2021 the Prime Minister in his call with President Rouhani of Iran stressed that while the UK remains committed to making the Iran nuclear deal a success, Iran must stop all nuclear activity that breaches

the terms of the JCPoA and come back into compliance. The Prime Minister stressed the importance of Iran seizing the opportunity presented by the United States' willingness to return to the deal if Iran comes back into compliance. Our priority is now, with the parties of the JCPoA and the new US Administration, to find a diplomatic way forward that realises the benefits of the deal.

Jamal Khashoggi

Asked by *The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the United States' Office of the Director of National Intelligence Assessing the Saudi Government's Role in the Killing of Jamal Khashoggi, declassified on 26 February, and what discussions they have had with the government of Saudi Arabia about the conclusions of that report. [HL14153]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has always been clear that Khashoggi's murder was a terrible crime. We condemn his killing in the strongest possible terms, which is why we have sanctioned twenty Saudi nationals involved in the murder under the global human rights regime.

The Foreign Secretary raised the killing of Khashoggi during his visit to Riyadh last year, and we continue to raise it in our engagement with the Saudi government.

Labour Party and Liberal Democrats: Peers

Asked by *Lord Grocott*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Lord True on 11 February (HL12711) and 8 March (HL13422), whether they will now answer the question put, namely, what is their assessment of the equivalent figures for (1) the Labour, and (2) the Liberal Democrat, Party when following a similar methodology to the one used to determine underrepresentation of the Conservative Party in the House of Lords. [HL14037]

Lord True: Reflecting the method in my previous answers, the Liberal Democrat party is over-represented; the Conservative Party is significantly under-represented; the Labour Party has a proportion of seats in this House that is less than its seat share in the Commons, but not by a significant amount.

Notwithstanding that, there are different ways of assessing the issue. For example, one may wish to consider the share of this House excluding cross-benchers and bishops, or look at composition of peers taking a political whip. Under both measures, Liberal Democrats are significantly over-represented.

The noble Lord will be able to make his own further calculations from public domain information, if he wishes.

Lifetime Skills Guarantee: Older Workers

Asked by **Baroness Sherlock**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether any of the funding for the Lifetime Skills Guarantee is ring-fenced for workers aged 50 or over. [HL14169]

Asked by **Baroness Sherlock**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many workers aged 50 or over are both (1) on Government-funded retraining or reskilling programmes, and (2) in receipt of furlough payments. [HL14170]

Baroness Berridge: The Lifetime Skills Guarantee was announced by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, in September 2020 and aims to ensure that people across the country can access the education and training they need to succeed throughout their lives. This includes a level 3 adult offer, Skills Bootcamps, a Lifelong Loan Entitlement, and wider work around improving quality and access to apprenticeships.

From this April, the level 3 adult offer will support any adult aged 24 and over who does not have an advanced technical certificate, diploma, or equivalent qualification, to access around 400 fully funded level 3 courses. This offer, a long-term commitment backed by £95 million from the National Skills Fund in year one, removes major cost barriers that have confronted adults who want to access training and progress in the labour market. Eligible adults aged 50 and over are equally able to access these qualifications and will be able to benefit significantly from this offer.

We have also introduced a series of Skills Bootcamps, starting in six local areas (West Midlands, Greater Manchester and Lancashire, Liverpool City Region, Leeds City Region, Heart of South West, and Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire). We will invest a further £43 million in the 2021/22 financial year to expand Skills Bootcamps across England. Following a competitive application, successful bids will be announced in the spring to ensure many more thousands of adults benefit from this offer.

Skills Bootcamps are there to provide in demand skills that help people to get good jobs and progress in their careers. It is vital that all eligible adults have equal opportunities to benefit from the Skills Bootcamps, including those aged 50 or over. No specific portion of funding is ring-fenced for workers aged 50 and above, but local areas and Skills Bootcamps providers target their marketing to encourage diverse participants.

Information about age of participants is collected by providers of Skills Bootcamps and will form part of our evaluation to ensure Skills Bootcamps are meeting the needs of all age groups, but figures are not yet available. The level 3 and Lifelong Loan Entitlements have not yet been introduced so there are no participant figures available. The department does not hold information on furloughed workers.

Last April the department introduced the Skills Toolkit, an online platform providing free courses to help individuals build the skills that are most sought after by employers. As of 24 January 2021, there have been an estimated 162,300 course registrations and 30,300 course completions. This data is not broken down by age or employment status.

Middle East: Peace Negotiations

Asked by **Lord Hylton**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the re-opening of the Rafah Border crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip, what discussions they have had with the governments of (1) Egypt, (2) Jordan, (3) France, and (4) Germany, about action to support the Middle East Peace Process. [HL14141]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We welcome the decision by Egypt to open the Rafah crossing. The UK will continue to urge the parties to prioritise progress towards reaching a durable solution for Gaza and to take the necessary practical steps to ensure Gaza's reconstruction and economic recovery.

The UK is committed to making progress towards a two state solution. We believe that negotiations will only succeed when they are conducted between Israelis and Palestinians, supported by the international community. The UK has regular discussions with the Governments of Egypt, Jordan, France and Germany on the Middle East Peace Process, including at Ministerial level. UK officials in Cairo, Amman, Paris and Berlin have discussed the Middle East Peace Process with their respective host governments in March 2021.

Military Aid

Asked by **Lord Tunnicliffe**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what countries the British Armed Forces provided training to on UK territory in (1) 2020, and (2) 2021. [HL14177]

Baroness Goldie: Personnel from the countries listed in the table below have attended defence education or training in the UK in 2019-20 and 2020-21.

Year	Countries
2019/20	AFGHANISTAN ALBANIA ALGERIA ANGOLA ANTIGUA & BARBUDA ARGENTINA ARMENIA AUSTRALIA AUSTRIA AZERBAIJAN BAHAMAS BAHRAIN BANGLADESH BARBADOS BELARUS BELGIUM BELIZE BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA BRAZIL BRUNEI CAMEROON CANADA CHILE CHINA COLOMBIA CROATIA CYPRUS CZECH REPUBLIC DENMARK EGYPT ESTONIA ETHIOPIA FIJI FINLAND FRANCE GAMBIA GEORGIA GERMANY GHANA GREECE GRENADA GUYANA HUNGARY INDIA

INDONESIA IRAQ IRELAND
ISRAEL ITALY JAMAICA JAPAN
JORDAN KAZAKHSTAN KENYA
KOSOVO KUWAIT
KYRGYZSTAN LATVIA
LEBANON LESOTHO LITHUANIA
LUXEMBOURG MALAWI
MALAYSIA MALDIVES MALI
MALTA MAURITIUS MEXICO
MOLDOVA MONGOLIA
MONTENEGRO MOROCCO
MOZAMBIQUE NEPAL
NETHERLANDS NEW ZEALAND
NIGER NIGERIA NORTH
MACEDONIA NORWAY OMAN
PAKISTAN OCCUPIED
PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES
PAPUA NEW GUINEA
PARAGUAY PHILIPPINES
POLAND PORTUGAL QATAR
ROMANIA RWANDA SAUDI
ARABIA SENEGAL SERBIA
SIERRA LEONE SINGAPORE
SLOVENIA SOUTH AFRICA
SOUTH KOREA SPAIN SRI
LANKA SWEDEN SWITZERLAND
THAILAND TONGA TRINIDAD
AND TOBAGO TURKEY
UGANDA UKRAINE UNITED
ARAB EMIRATES URUGUAY
USA UZBEKISTAN VIETNAM

2020/21

AFGHANISTAN ALBANIA
ARMENIA AUSTRALIA AUSTRIA
AZERBAIJAN BAHAMAS
BAHRAIN BANGLADESH
BELGIUM BELIZE BHUTAN
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA
BOTSWANA BRAZIL BRUNEI
CAMEROON CANADA CHILE
COLOMBIA CYPRUS CZECH
REPUBLIC DENMARK EGYPT
ESTONIA ETHIOPIA FIJI
FINLAND FRANCE GEORGIA
GERMANY GHANA GREECE
HUNGARY INDIA INDONESIA
IRAQ IRELAND ISRAEL ITALY
JAMAICA JAPAN JORDAN
KENYA KOSOVO KUWAIT
LEBANON LITHUANIA MALAWI
MALAYSIA MALDIVES MALI
MALTA MOLDOVA MONGOLIA
MONTENEGRO MOROCCO
NEPAL NETHERLANDS NEW
ZEALAND NIGER NIGERIA
NORTH MACEDONIA NORWAY
OMAN PAKISTAN OCCUPIED
PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES
PARAGUAY POLAND
PORTUGAL QATAR ROMANIA
SAUDI ARABIA SIERRA LEONE
SINGAPORE SLOVAKIA SOUTH
KOREA SPAIN SRI LANKA
SWITZERLAND THAILAND
TONGA TUNISIA UGANDA
UKRAINE UNITED ARAB
EMIRATES URUGUAY USA

Note: MOD records information on International Defence Training (IDT) by financial year, rather than by calendar year. Information is taken from a central IDT database. Some activity may not be captured on that database.

Music: Education

Asked by Lord Aberdare

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the provision of practical music education in England. [HL14124]

Baroness Berridge: The government is committed to all pupils and students receiving a high-quality education and it has continued to be the case that music education, including one-to-one lessons, can be undertaken in school, college or university so long as safety precautions are undertaken.

In relation to schools, advice has been provided in Covid-19 guidance since August 2020, setting out how teaching music can be conducted safely. This includes visits by peripatetic teachers, including music teachers from music education hubs. The hubs acted swiftly and innovatively to support schools through the Covid-19 outbreak, including the continuation of continuing professional development to classroom teachers.

During the Covid-19 outbreak, the department also introduced several initiatives for schools and parents including signposting to a range of online music education resources such as BBC Education, Oak Academy and other professional organisations such as Music Mark.

Following the announcement by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, on 22 February 2021, the government published updated guidance for full opening of schools on 8 March. The guidance continues to make clear that the curriculum should remain broad and ambitious so that the majority of pupils are taught a full range of subjects over the year, including music. The guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>.

In addition, updated guidance for out-of-school venues, such as supplementary schools providing part-time music provision and private music tutors for under 18s, can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

Nagorno-Karabakh: Peace Negotiations

Asked by Lord Kilclooney

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the implementation of the agreement to end military conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh region; and, in particular, what progress has been made with (1) identifying, and (2) removing, land mines in that region. [HL14195]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government welcomed the ceasefire agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas has been in regular contact with the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers since the outbreak of hostilities in September. During recent visits to Armenia and Azerbaijan she encouraged both sides to abide by the 10 November trilateral peace deal and settle all outstanding matters through talks under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group. The UK Government is aware of the significant dangers posed by large numbers of unexploded ordnance in the region. We continue to evaluate what support we might provide Armenia and Azerbaijan to take forward their removal.

National Tutoring Programme

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what qualifications an individual must have to be a tutor on the National Tutoring programme. [[HL14064](#)]

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether tutors on the National Tutoring Programme will require enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks; and, if so, how they plan to ensure all these tutors have completed such checks. [[HL14065](#)]

Baroness Berridge: High-quality tuition is one of the fundamental principles of the National Tutoring Programme (NTP), and we have worked closely with our delivery partners to ensure that this can be delivered across both pillars of the NTP.

There is strong evidence which suggests that additional support (delivered by highly trained tutors that may or may not be qualified teachers) can have a positive impact, and can boost pupils' progress by up to 5 months. The NTP has been designed to provide additional capacity to schools so that teachers and existing school staff can concentrate on high-quality teaching, which we recognise will make the most difference to pupils.

Whilst each Tuition Partner is responsible for setting their own criteria for tutor qualifications, there is an expectation that tutors will be at least highly qualified graduates. We recognise that the education and experience of tutors is important to the delivery of quality tuition. However, tutors will still require training to ensure that delivery is in line with the model offered by the Tuition Partner. That is why when selecting tutoring organisations, our delivery partner, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) took into consideration the training offer available for tutors, and funding was allocated to those organisations with robust training programmes in place for all tutors to undertake.

Individual Tuition Partners are responsible for managing their own safeguarding policies and procedures, with oversight from the EEF to ensure processes remain robust. However, all tutors are required to be enhanced

Disclosure and Barring Service and Barred list checked (or best available equivalent for international tutors), and complete appropriate safeguarding training in order to work on this programme. Individual Tuition Partners are responsible for managing their own safeguarding policies and procedures, with oversight from the EEF to ensure processes remain robust and required standards are met.

Newton Rigg College

Asked by Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the contribution to agriculture in the UK (a) regionally, and (b) nationally, by Newton Rigg College in Cumbria, and (2) the potential future contribution of the College to agriculture in the UK; and what steps they plan to take to ensure longevity for the College and its resources. [[HL14194](#)]

Baroness Berridge: In 2020, the Further Education Commissioner undertook a local provision needs analysis of Newton Rigg Campus, located near Penrith, at the request of the governing body of Askham Bryan College. Its purpose was to establish whether there is a need for further education provision in the general location of the current campus. The analysis provided the governing body with options to consider regarding the future of provision at the campus. The analysis considered travel to learn data and mapping for young people and adult students, including enrolment density by ward and travel to learn time and pattern, based on public transport and by actual travel time by car. Most students studying agricultural provision at Newton Rigg at the time of the analysis tended to live closer to the campus and were mainly from Cumbria and surrounding counties.

Further Education Colleges in England are independent of government and the decision to close Newton Rigg Campus in July 2021 and subsequently dispose of the site has been made by the governing body of Askham Bryan College.

From September 2021, Kendal College have confirmed they will offer agricultural and other land-based provision from level 1 to level 3, which will be delivered in the Penrith area. In addition, a partnership between Myerscough College and Ullswater Community College will provide further education for young people in animal management and agriculture in the local area surrounding Newton Rigg.

Old Oak Common Station

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what are the latest estimated costs of the portions of Old Oak Common station attributable to (1) HS2, (2) Crossrail 1, and (3) Great Western services; and what are the other costs for Old Oak Common station which make up the total estimated cost. [[HL14250](#)]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Within the Target Cost for Phase One, the budget allocated by HS2 Ltd for Old Oak Common station, including contingency for risk, is £1.67bn (2019 prices). A more detailed breakdown of costs cannot be provided as this information is commercially sensitive.

Old Oak Common is being designed and delivered as a single, integrated station and therefore costs cannot be neatly apportioned between the HS2 and conventional rail elements.

Outdoor Education: Disability

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask Her Majesty's Government what funding they have provided in the last 12 months for residential outdoor education for children and families with disabilities; and what plans they have to provide further funding for such education. [HL14135]

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the level of funding that is required to enable (1) the Bendrigg Trust, (2) the Exmoor Calvert Trust, (3) the Northumbria Calvert Trust, and (4) the Lake District Calvert Trust, to remain open following the financial losses sustained by those specialist residential outdoor centres for children and families with disabilities in England as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic; and what plans they have to provide such funding. [HL14136]

Baroness Berridge: Throughout the Covid-19 outbreak, the government has sought to protect people's jobs and livelihoods across the UK, and support businesses and public services. The government has spent over £280 billion to do so. This includes small business grants, the Covid-19 loan guarantee schemes, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), the deferral of VAT and income tax payments, and more. The measures introduced have been designed to be accessible to businesses in most sectors and across the UK. In January 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced the extension of the deadline for applications for the Bounce Back Loan scheme and other loan schemes until 31 March 2021. Further measures were announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the 2021 Budget on 3 March including the extension of the CJRS until the end of September 2021, and increased support for the self-employed through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grants, with a fifth grant available from July 2021. The Recovery Loans Scheme will launch to make finance available to help businesses of all sizes through the next stage of recovery. More details of the scheme will be announced in due course.

The government will continue to work closely with local authorities, businesses, business representative organisations, and the financial services sector to monitor

the implementation of current support and understand whether there is additional need.

The government would encourage businesses who are unable to access support or who are unsure of the support available to access free tailored advice through the Business Support Helpline (Freephone 0800 998 1098), via the Business Support website at: www.gov.uk/business-support-helpline or through local Growth Hubs in England: www.lepnetwork.net/local-growth-hub-contacts. Firms in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland can access business support through the devolved governments.

Pakistan: Religious Freedom

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Kavita Kumari was (1) abducted at gunpoint, and (2) forcibly converted, in Kandhkot, Sindh when she was 13 years old. [HL14129]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government strongly condemns the forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls in Pakistan. The FCDO does not comment on individual cases.

Pakistan remains a FCDO Human Rights Priority Country. We regularly raise our concerns on these issues with the Government of Pakistan. Most recently, I raised our human rights concerns, including Freedom of Religion or Belief, with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights, Dr Shireen Mazari, on 20 February 2021. I also raised the human rights situation in Pakistan with the Advisor to the Prime Minister on Accountability and Interior, Shahzad Akbar, on 7 December 2020.

Through the UK's development support, we have worked with the Government of Pakistan to strengthen and improve Pakistan's police and judicial systems.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the custodian of Bharchundi Shareef Dargah, Mian Mithu, has been responsible for forcibly converting underage Hindu girls in Sindh, including Kavita Kumari. [HL14130]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government strongly condemns the forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls in Pakistan. The FCDO does not comment on individual cases.

Pakistan remains a FCDO Human Rights Priority Country. We regularly raise our concerns on these issues with the Government of Pakistan. Most recently, I raised our human rights concerns, including Freedom of Religion or Belief, with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights, Dr Shireen Mazari, on 20 February 2021. I also raised the human rights situation in Pakistan with the Advisor to the Prime Minister on Accountability and Interior, Shahzad Akbar, on 7 December 2020.

Through the UK's development support, we have worked with the Government of Pakistan to strengthen and improve Pakistan's police and judicial systems.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of Hindu girls who have been forcibly (1) converted, and (2) married, at the Bharchundi Shareef Dargah. [HL14131]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government strongly condemns the forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls in Pakistan. The FCDO does not comment on individual cases.

Pakistan remains a FCDO Human Rights Priority Country. We regularly raise our concerns on these issues with the Government of Pakistan. Most recently, I raised our human rights concerns, including Freedom of Religion or Belief, with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights, Dr Shireen Mazari, on 20 February 2021. I also raised the human rights situation in Pakistan with the Advisor to the Prime Minister on Accountability and Interior, Shahzad Akbar, on 7 December 2020.

Through the UK's development support, we have worked with the Government of Pakistan to strengthen and improve Pakistan's police and judicial systems.

Performing Arts: Coronavirus

Asked by Baroness Bull

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the financial impact on performance venues resulting from reduced capacity audiences when they reopen whilst restrictions to address the Covid-19 pandemic are in place; and what plans they have to introduce proposals (1) to cover the shortfall in ticket sales, and (2) to assist such venues to remain viable. [HL14259]

Baroness Barran: The Government has been "Here for Culture" throughout the pandemic, and, as we emerge from it, we know that the public will want to be there, too. As our performance venues reopen, we will encourage people to get out there and support them, and we will continue to provide guidance to ensure venues are safe for the public.

DCMS has been working closely with the performing arts sectors to ensure that they are ready for reopening. The government published the roadmap on 22 February, which sets out a step-by-step plan to ease restrictions in England cautiously. The design of the roadmap has been informed by the latest scientific evidence and seeks a balance between our key social and economic priorities, whilst preserving the health and safety of the country. The scientific evidence shows that opening too early or too quickly risks a further lockdown.

Over the spring, the Government will run a scientific Events Research Programme. This will include a series of pilots using enhanced testing approaches and other measures to run events with larger crowd sizes and

reduced social distancing to evaluate the scientific outcomes.

Government recognises the significant financial impact of Covid 19 on the performing arts sector and venues. In light of this, the Government is investing an unprecedented £1.57 billion support package for the culture sector, of which over £1 billion has now been allocated, including £800 million to almost 3,800 arts and culture organisations across the country. This includes the many theatres and performing arts venues, which have been supported through this funding. On 4 March, the Chancellor announced £300 million additional funding for the CRF, to continue to support key cultural organisations as audiences begin to return.

The first round of the Culture Recovery Fund supported the sector to survive the immediate impact of the pandemic, whilst the second is supported organisations to transition from the challenging months of lockdowns and social distancing to welcoming audiences and visitors back to the country's theatres, museums, cinemas, music venues and heritage sites.

Performing Arts: Insurance

Asked by Baroness Bull

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Barran on 3 August 2020 (HL7208), what discussions they have had about the creation of a Government-backed reinsurance scheme for live performance following the launch of the Film and TV Production Restart Scheme. [HL14256]

Baroness Barran: The Government is aware of the concerns which have been raised about the challenge of securing indemnity cover for live events. My officials continue to work closely with the affected sectors to understand all barriers to reopening, including financial support, certainty around the public health situation, and the potential challenges of insurance.

The bar for considering Government intervention is set extremely high, especially in light of the considerable extension to the furlough scheme and local business support as well as the uncertainty when mass gatherings can take place safely.

Police: HIV Infection

Asked by Lord Black of Brentwood

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the National AIDS Trust HIV and the police, published on 11 March; and what steps they intend to take forward on the recommendations about tackling HIV stigma. [HL14133]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: It is critical that the police have access to the most accurate and up to date information on HIV transmission, so that they can accurately assess any risks posed to their own safety in the course of their work and respond appropriately. This

will also enable them to help reduce stigma in the communities in which they work.

We are pleased that policing stakeholders, such as the Police Federation of England and Wales, have been actively engaged in this review to support police forces in addressing this longstanding issue.

The Department of Health and Social Care will consider issues relating to HIV stigma as part of the development of their Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and the HIV Action Plan, which they plan to publish in 2021.

Asked by Lord Black of Brentwood

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the report by the National AIDS Trust HIV and the police, published on 11 March, what steps they are taking to ensure that police forces have the sufficient resources to tackle HIV stigma effectively. [HL14134]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Department of Health and Social Care will consider issues relating to HIV stigma as part of the development of their Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and the HIV Action Plan, which they plan to publish in 2021.

The Home Office have announced a police funding settlement of up to £15.8 billion for 2021/22. This is a total increase of up to £636 million on 2020/21 for the policing system.

Pupils: Sexual Offences

Asked by Lord Field of Birkenhead

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps a school is legally obliged to take in response to an accusation of sexual assault being made by one pupil against another. [HL14215]

Baroness Berridge: 'Keeping children safe in education' (KCSIE) is statutory guidance to which all schools and colleges must have regard to when carrying out their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>.

Part 1 of KCSIE, which all staff should receive at induction, sets out what peer on peer abuse looks like, with detailed information covering child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment for staff who work directly with children. All staff should receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training which is regularly updated.

Part 5 of KCSIE sets out how schools and colleges should respond to reports of child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment.

We also provide detailed advice to support schools and colleges to understand what sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges looks like, how to prevent it, how to respond to reports of it, and on how to support victims. This advice is available

here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexual-violence-and-sexual-harassment-between-children-in-schools-and-colleges>.

The guidance is very clear that all school staff should know what to do if a child tells them they are being abused or neglected.

The guidance is also very clear that concerns about a child should be responded to immediately and referrals (generally led by the designated safeguarding lead) made to children's social care and the police.

Railways: Repairs and Maintenance

Asked by Baroness Burt of Solihull

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect a decision will be made on the Birmingham Airport Connectivity scheme, as part of the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline process. [HL14208]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) for the North and Midlands is considering how best to deliver schemes such as HS2 Phase 2b, Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) and Midlands Engine Rail in the North and Midlands.

Birmingham Airport Connectivity project is part of the Midlands Engine Rail proposals and it will be appropriate to consider the case for this scheme when the Integrated Rail Plan concludes. We intend to publish the IRP this Spring.

Redundancy: Coronavirus

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of job losses and business closures as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic on (1) women, and (2) ethnic minorities; and what action they are taking as a result. [HL14152]

Lord Callanan: Throughout this crisis, the Government has sought to protect people's jobs and livelihoods whilst supporting businesses and public services across the UK. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) is specifically designed to protect jobs, and it has been used by 1.3m employers to support 11.2m jobs. Since July, more than half of the jobs that have been furloughed were held by women, and we have ensured that women will not lose Statutory Maternity Pay if their roles have been furloughed.

We recognise that unfortunately it has not been possible to protect every business and every job and our thoughts are with those who have been impacted by this virus. While the pandemic has had a significant impact across the whole labour market, certain groups have been more affected than others. For example, the latest official statistics show that individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to be out of work. Existing Covid-19 support measures and the measures announced at Budget 2021 seek to address this.

The new Restart Grants will provide up to £6k for non-essential retail businesses and up to £18k for hospitality, accommodation, leisure, personal care and gyms, for example. The hospitality and personal care sectors have a higher proportion of employees that are young, female, BAME and without qualifications when compared to other industries. By contributing to business survival, these grants will therefore benefit these groups as a result.

Moreover, VAT reductions and extending business rates relief for businesses in the hospitality sector will continue to protect both the UK economy and the livelihoods of people across the country, in particular BAME employees and women.

Regional Planning and Development: Finance

Asked by Baroness Valentine

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Agnew of Oulton on 4 March (HL13627), whether there are funds remaining from (1) the £1.6 billion Stronger Towns Fund, announced on 4 March 2019, and (2) the £675 million Future High Streets Fund, announced on 29 October 2018; whether any such remaining funds are now included as part of the total of their £4.8 billion Levelling Up fund, announced on 25 November 2020; and if so, whether the criteria that must be met for local authorities to bid for such funds has changed. [HL14353]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The £4.8bn Levelling Up Fund will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK and will operate UK-wide, extending the benefits of funding for priority local infrastructure across all regions and nations. It supersedes and brings together previous funding streams, including allowing towns to apply for funding for high street and town centre regeneration previously funded from the Towns Fund and the Future High Streets Fund. The prospectus sets out further detail for local areas on how to submit bids for the first round of funding for projects starting in 2021-22.

Sanctions

Asked by Baroness Northover

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 10 March (HL13681), to provide a list of the individuals, companies and countries that were not sanctioned because the UK statutory tests were not met. [HL14154]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Sanctions List provides details of all individuals and entities designated in UK law under each of the UK's 35 sanctions regimes established under the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018. This is available online here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-sanctions-list>. The EU publishes a similar list of all individuals and entities designated under EU sanctions law. This is available here:

<https://www.sanctionsmap.eu/#/main>. The UK does not publish a comparison of the two lists.

Sayed Hasan Ameen

Asked by Lord Collins of Highbury

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by the Minister for Middle East and North Africa at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office on 1 March (158190 and 158191), whether a UK Government representative attended Sayed Hasan Ameen's hearing in Bahrain (1) on 4 March, and (2) on 11 March. [HL14138]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Covid restrictions prevented Embassy staff from attending the hearings in person. Sayed Hasan Ameen was sentenced to 6 months imprisonment, which was replaced with a rehabilitation program under alternative sentencing arrangements within the spirit of the new Child Reform Justice Act. We welcome the retroactive application of the new law's content and purpose, and will monitor its implementation.

Shipping: Carbon Emissions

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Agnew of Oulton on 12 March (HL Deb, col 1977), what steps they are taking to contribute to decarbonisation of the maritime sector. [HL14246]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: For a greener maritime sector, Government is investing £20 million into a Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition, to support the UK design and development of clean maritime technologies. This programme builds on the vision set out in the Department's Clean Maritime Plan and underlines our commitment to addressing emissions from this sector.

Further plans for the decarbonisation of the maritime sector will be set out in the forthcoming Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

Students: Disability

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase the number of disabled people undertaking higher education courses. [HL14297]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: Her Majesty's Government is committed to ensuring that all students with disabilities receive the support they need to enable them to study alongside their fellow students on an equal basis.

It is more important than ever that we tap into the brilliant talent that our country has to offer, and make sure that university places are available to all who are qualified by their academic ability and attainment to pursue them if they wish to do so.

Higher education providers wishing to charge higher levels fees (£9,250) must have an access and participation plan agreed by the Office for Students (OfS).

These plans set out how they will support students from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-represented groups – including students with disabilities – to access, to participate and succeed in higher education, and to progress from it. This includes setting targets where the provider identifies the inequalities that it intends to address.

The OfS has set itself and the sector a number of long-term target measures to reduce inequalities, including eliminating the gap in degree outcomes between students with and without disabilities.

The government expects all higher education providers to fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 to be making reasonable adjustments for all higher education students with disabilities.

Wherever possible, students with disabilities should expect to have their needs met through inclusive learning practices, and to have individual reasonable adjustments made by their higher education provider.

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) is available to help students with the additional costs they may face because of their disability. It is not means-tested and does not have to be repaid. From the academic year 2021/22, eligible students will be able to access up to £25,000 a year in DSA support, with DSA-funded travel costs uncapped.

Syria: Human Rights

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Commission of Inquiry of the Syrian Arab Republic A decade of arbitrary detention and imprisonment, published on 1 March; and what action they intend to take as a result. [HL14150]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: This latest UN report from the Commission of Inquiry shows further confirmation of a decade of appalling atrocities in Syria and is a shocking reminder of why Syria remains one of the worst human rights crises in the world.

The UK has repeatedly condemned a number of issues raised in the report, including the use of illegal detention by the Assad regime, affiliated militias and proscribed terrorist organisations. We have raised the plight of detainees at the UN Security Council, most recently during our national statement on 15 March and through our leadership at the Human Rights Council, where this month we are hosting a side event to discuss next steps for accountability. We will also shortly complete an information sharing agreement with the International, Independent and Impartial Mechanism for Syria (IIIM) to strengthen accountability for international crimes and human rights abuses committed in Syria.

Treasury: Reorganisation

Asked by Lord Allen of Kensington

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to divide Her Majesty's Treasury into (1) a department for economic and industrial policy, and (2) a ministry of finance; and if they have no such plans, whether they have any plans to change the structure of Her Majesty's Treasury. [HL14359]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: There are no plans to divide the Treasury. The only significant structural change planned, as announced at the Budget, is the establishment of an economic campus in Darlington. The campus is expected to include at least 750 roles from across the Treasury, the Department for International Trade, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Office for National Statistics.

Turing Scheme: Northern Ireland

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether students studying in Northern Ireland will be eligible for the Turing Scheme. [HL14274]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: Yes, the Turing scheme is UK-wide. Universities, colleges, and schools in Northern Ireland are eligible to bid for funding under the scheme, so that students in Northern Ireland can benefit from the opportunities of study and work placements abroad on the same basis as students elsewhere in the UK. The scheme is open for applications now.

Veterinary Medicine: UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to secure a veterinary agreement with the EU. [HL14159]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) chapter of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement puts in place a framework that allows the UK and the EU to take informed decisions to reduce their respective SPS controls, with a commitment to avoid unnecessary barriers. It is in both Parties' interests for this framework to reduce the rate of SPS checks required. We are open to discussion with the EU on an agreement that goes further in reducing trade frictions between us, but it cannot be on the basis of alignment with EU rules as this would compromise UK sovereignty over our own laws.

Visas: British National (Overseas)

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many people accessed the British National (Overseas) visa scheme within its first month. [HL14161]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office will release application figures, including those for other routes, in the quarterly migration statistics, which are due to be published on 27 May.

Voluntary Service Overseas

Asked by Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) (1) to continue its overseas development work, and (2) to offer voluntary opportunities; and what assessment they have made of the contribution of the experience gained by returning VSO volunteers to wider society in the UK. [[HL14146](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The impact of the global pandemic on the UK economy has forced us to take the tough but necessary decision to temporarily reduce our aid budget. We are now working through the implications of these changes for individual programmes, including for the Volunteering for Development grant. No decisions have yet been made. We understand the need to communicate with VSO in a timely manner regarding this grant.

The UK Government is proud of the outstanding contribution of returned volunteers to their home communities in the UK, particularly during the UK's Covid-19 pandemic response.

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