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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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| <i>Minister</i> | <i>Responsibilities</i> |
|---|--|
| Baroness Evans of Bowes Park | Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal |
| Earl Howe | Deputy Leader of the House of Lords |
| Lord Agnew of Oulton | Minister of State, Treasury and Cabinet Office |
| Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office |
| Lord Ashton of Hyde | Chief Whip |
| Baroness Barran | Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport |
| 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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| 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 |
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| Baroness Williams of Trafford | Minister of State, Home Office |
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Written Statements

Tuesday, 13 April 2021

Bilateral Loan to Ireland

[HLWS902]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: My honourable friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I would like to update Parliament on the loan to Ireland.

In December 2010, the UK agreed to provide a bilateral loan of £3.2 billion as part of a €67.5 billion international assistance package for Ireland. The loan was disbursed in 8 tranches, and the final tranche was drawn down on 26 September 2013. Ireland has made interest payments on the loan every six months since the first disbursement.

On 26 March, in line with the agreed repayment schedule, HM Treasury received a total payment of £406,428,318.19 from Ireland. This comprises the repayment of £403,370,000 in principal and £3,058,318.19 in accrued interest.

HM Treasury has also provided a further Report to Parliament in relation to the loan as required under the Loans to Ireland Act 2010. The Report relates to the period from 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021. It reports fully on the two final principal repayments received by HM Treasury during this period. The loan has been repaid in full and on time.

A written ministerial statement on the previous statutory report regarding the loan to Ireland was issued to Parliament on 5 October 2020, Official Report, column 18WS.

Contingencies Fund Advance: Covid-19

[HLWS903]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: My right honourable friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs will incur new expenditure in connection with the government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021-22.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £765,000,000 for this new expenditure will be sought in a Main Estimate for Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £765,000,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

Further requests to the Contingencies Fund may be made as necessary to fund Covid-19 activity delivered by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

Covid-19 Vaccine Deployment

[HLWS906]

Lord Bethell: My Hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for COVID Vaccine Deployment) (Nadhim Zahawi) has made the following written statement:

I am tabling this statement for the benefit of Honourable and Right Honourable members to bring to their attention the contingent liabilities relating to the contracts signed between Her Majesty's Government (HMG) and COVID-19 vaccine suppliers for the Phase 2 deployment of vaccines.

Today, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has published its final advice about the next phase of the Covid-19 vaccine deployment. In line with their interim advice, they have recommended an age-based strategy for prioritisation as the best way to further reduce mortality and hospitalisations.

JCVI has advised that rapid vaccine deployment is the most important means to maximise public health benefits against severe outcomes from COVID-19. There is good evidence that the risks of hospitalisation and critical care admissions from COVID-19 increase with age, and that in occupations where the risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2 is potentially higher, persons of older age are also those at highest risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19. It is for these reasons that the Committee has recommended that the offer of vaccination be age-based, starting with the oldest adults first, and proceeding in the following order to facilitate rapid deployment:

- All those aged 40-49 years
- All those aged 30-39 years
- All those aged 18-29 years

Throughout the vaccination programme the independent regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's (MHRA), has published data on the effects and side effects of the vaccine. They have independently assessed that all three vaccines in use in the UK are safe and effective. The European Medicines Agency and the World Health Organisation have reached the same conclusion. Having considered this data, which has been published, and in order to make the vaccine programme as safe as it possibly can be, the JCVI advises that it is preferable for adults aged under 30 years without underlying health conditions that put them at a higher risk of severe COVID-19 disease, to be offered an alternative vaccine, if available.

JCVI has weighed the relative balance of benefits and risks, and advise that the benefits of prompt vaccination with the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine far outweigh the risk of adverse events for individuals 30 years of age and over and those who have underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of severe COVID-19 disease. The Government has accepted this advice in full, and the rollout will put this advice into operation.

With the deployment of Phase 2, I am now updating the House on the liabilities HMG has taken on in relation to further vaccine supply via this statement and attached Departmental Minute.

It has been and remains the Government's strategy to manage COVID-19 until an effective vaccines can be deployed at scale. Putting in place appropriate indemnities for vaccine suppliers has helped to secure access to vaccines much sooner than may have been the case otherwise.

Given the exceptional circumstances we are in, and the terms on which developers are willing to supply a COVID-19 vaccine, we along with other nations have taken a broad approach to indemnification proportionate to the situation we are in.

Even though the COVID-19 vaccines have been developed at pace, at no point and at no stage of development has safety been bypassed. The independent MHRA's approval for use of the currently deployed vaccines clearly demonstrates that these vaccines have satisfied, in full, all the necessary requirements for safety, effectiveness, and quality. We are providing indemnities in the unexpected event of any adverse reactions that could not have been foreseen through the robust checks and procedures that have been put in place.

I will update the House in a similar manner as and when other COVID-19 vaccines are deployed.

The Statement includes the following attached material:

Departmental Minute [DEPARTMENTAL MINUTE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE1.docx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2021-04-13/HLWS906/>

Covid-19 Vaccine: Moderna

[HLWS905]

Lord Bethell: My Hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for COVID Vaccine Deployment) (Nadhim Zahawi) has made the following written statement:

I am tabling this statement for the benefit of Honourable and Right Honourable members to bring to their attention the contingent liabilities relating to the contract signed between Her Majesty's Government (HMG) and Moderna for their COVID-19 vaccine.

On 1 April 2021, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) granted a Conditional Market Authorisation (CMA) for use of the COVID-19 vaccine being manufactured by Moderna. With deployment of this vaccine beginning on 7 April 2021, I am now updating the House on the liabilities HMG has taken on in relation to this vaccine via this statement and the attached Departmental Minute.

The agreement to provide an indemnity as part of the contract between HMG and Moderna creates a contingent liability on the COVID-19 vaccination programme. It has

been and remains the Government's strategy to manage COVID-19 until an effective vaccine/s can be deployed at scale. Putting in place appropriate indemnities to be given to vaccine suppliers has helped to secure access to vaccines much sooner than may have been the case otherwise.

Given the exceptional circumstances we are in, and the terms on which developers are willing to supply a COVID-19 vaccine, we along with other nations have taken a broad approach to indemnification proportionate to the situation we are in.

Even though the COVID-19 vaccines have been developed at pace, at no point and at no stage of development has safety been bypassed. The independent MHRA's approval for use of the Moderna vaccine clearly demonstrates that this vaccine has satisfied, in full, all the necessary requirements for safety, effectiveness, and quality. We are providing indemnities in the unexpected event of any adverse reactions that could not have been foreseen through the robust checks and procedures that have been put in place.

Given the pace of vaccine development and our ambition to deploy the vaccine as soon as it has been authorised, it has not been possible to provide you with the normal 14 sitting days to consider this issue of contingent liabilities. Therefore, with immediate effect, all vaccination services are now able to extend their vaccination offer to those aged 45-49 years.

I will update the House in a similar manner as and when other COVID-19 vaccines are deployed.

The Statement includes the following attached material:

Departmental Minute [DEPARTMENTAL MINUTE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE.docx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2021-04-13/HLWS905/>

Further Education Capital Transformation Fund

[HLWS900]

Baroness Berridge: My honourable friend, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Apprenticeships and Skills (Gillian Keegan) has today made the following statement:

The FE Capital Transformation Programme delivers the government's £1.5 billion commitment to upgrade the FE college and designated institutions' estate in England. It builds on the £200 million Further Education Capital Allocation paid in September 2020 to support FE college and designated institutions to undertake immediate remedial works and provide a boost to the economy and the education system.

There are two elements to the FE Capital Transformation Programme. The first element was announced on 21st January 2021, when we launched the open bidding fund to which all FE colleges and

designated institutions can bid for larger projects to tackle their condition need and upgrade their estate. We are now announcing the second element today: we will be working in partnership with sixteen colleges, with some of the highest condition need in the country. High quality buildings and facilities will aid colleges in supporting their students to gain the skills they need to progress and help the economy to grow. The sixteen college sites, which are spread across England, and with which we are working to develop plans are:

- Beacon Centre, Blackburn College;
- Lansdowne Site, Bournemouth & Poole College;
- Brooksby Melton College, SMB Group;
- Ashington Campus, Education Partnership North East (Northumberland College);
- St Austell Campus, Cornwall College;
- Houghall Campus, East Durham College;
- Rochdale site, Hopwood Hall College;
- Isle of Wight College;
- Great Yarmouth Campus, East Coast College;
- Stafford site, Newcastle & Stafford College Group;
- North Lindsey College, DN College Group;
- Merrist Wood College, Activate Learning;
- Strode College;
- Parsons Walk, Wigan & Leigh College;
- Yeovil College;
- Stanmore College.

The FE Capital Transformation Programme means that colleges will be able to make strategic investment decisions which will lead to a transformation of the FE college estate, providing excellent places to learn.

This investment should be seen in the wider context of our reforms to further education. The White Paper '*Skills for Jobs Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth*' sets out our vision of enabling everyone to get the high-quality skills employers need in a way that suits them. The reforms set out plans to transform technical education, boost UK productivity, build back better from the Coronavirus pandemic, and create a more prosperous country for all. This is an exciting moment for technical education and training and an opportunity for real change.

High Needs Provision Capital Allocations

[HLWS901]

Baroness Berridge: My Right Honourable Friend the Minister of State for School Standards (Nick Gibb) has today made the following statement:

On 9th April, the Department for Education announced £280 million of capital funding to support local authorities to create new places and improve existing provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or who require alternative provision (AP). This investment will support our manifesto commitment to deliver more school places for children

with complex special educational needs and will help ensure that every child has the opportunity to receive a world-class education, whatever their background.

The funding announced today is for places required for September 2022 and will allow local authorities to invest strategically to ensure they deliver a good quality and appropriate place for every child who needs one. It is on top of the £365 million we invested between 2018 and 2021 to support Local Authorities to deliver new places for children with Education, Health and Care Plans, and the additional places we are creating through our continued investment in new Special and AP Free Schools.

Full details of this announcement, including allocations broken down by local authority and the methodology used to distribute funding, have been published on the Department for Education section on the GOV.UK website here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-provision-capital-allocations>.

Higher Education

[HLWS904]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: Today my honourable friend The Minister of State for Universities (Michelle Donelan) has made the following statement:

The government recognises the disruption that COVID-19 has caused for many students and their families because they have not yet been able to return to their university. Last academic term we advised that all students on practical and creative courses could return to in-person teaching from 8 March and committed to reviewing further returns by the end of the Easter holidays.

Today my department has announced that remaining students will be advised to return to in-person teaching alongside Step 3 of the Roadmap, when restrictions on social contact will be eased further and the majority of indoor settings can reopen. This will take place no earlier than 17 May, following a further review of the data against the four tests. As was announced in February, students and higher education providers will be given a week's notice of any further easing of restrictions as it affects them in accordance with the timing of Step 3. Until then all students should continue to learn remotely and remain where they are living, wherever possible.

Universities have a strong track record of delivering excellent remote learning, students in Higher Education are well equipped to study and meet their learning outcomes remotely. The government remains clear that the quality and quantity of taught hours must be maintained and that all learning must be accessible.

The government and I recognise just how difficult and disruptive the last year has been for students. However, the Roadmap is designed to maintain a cautious approach to the easing of restrictions, to ensure that we can maintain progress towards full reopening. By Step 3,

more of the population will be vaccinated, and there is also more time to increase testing to reduce risk further.

The movement of students across the country poses a risk for the transmission of the virus – particularly because of the higher prevalence and rates of transmission of new variants. Students who have returned to higher education settings should not move back and forward between their permanent home and student home during term time unless they meet one of the exemptions.

Our advice remains that some students, such as those with inadequate study space and/or mental health and wellbeing issues, may need to return to their term-time address despite their teaching still being online. We have asked providers to consider opening facilities to support those who have returned to their term-time accommodation alongside those who have resumed in-person teaching and learning; this is to safeguard students' wellbeing and to prevent isolation and mental ill health.

We are supporting universities to provide regular, twice-weekly, asymptomatic testing for all students residing in their term-time accommodation, or accessing university facilities, and to all staff. In May 2021, we will be making home test kits available to universities to supply to their staff and students as appropriate. In addition, staff and students can make use of the universal testing offer by ordering home tests online or visiting a pharmacy. Students returning to university should undertake three supervised tests at an on-site test facility. They should then test twice a week, either using home test kits or at an on-site facility. This is in line with the expectation in most other education settings and will help break chains of transmission of the virus. We strongly encourage all universities to ensure that all students and staff get tested regularly and report their result when testing at home.

I realise that a delay to a return to university may cause some students to face additional costs. With this in mind, I have now announced that we will be making a further £15m of funding available for student hardship this academic year. This is in addition to the £70m of funding already distributed in the previous financial year. As with the £70m, international and postgraduate students will be eligible for this funding along with domestic undergraduates. We will work with the Office for Students to allocate these funds and will set out the details of this shortly.

I recognise that these unprecedented circumstances are also affecting student and staff mental health and wellbeing, and I am committed to addressing these concerns. The Mental Health in Education Action Group, which I convened with the Minister for Children and Families, Vicky Ford, will continue to prioritise the mental health and wellbeing of students and staff, alongside the HE Taskforce Mental Health and Wellbeing subgroup. We have continued to ask universities to prioritise mental health support and have worked with the Office for Students to provide Student Space, which is a mental health and wellbeing platform designed to work

alongside existing services, to support students throughout the pandemic. I have asked the OfS to look at extending the platform and I am delighted they have done so for the 2020/21 academic year. This resource, which is funded by the OfS, provides dedicated one-to-one phone, text and web chat facilities as well as a collaborative online platform. In addition to this, the Office for Students has recently published its consultation on the distribution of the £15m for student mental health support in the coming academic year, focusing on supporting transitions to university.

We are continuing to explore other ways to provide further support for students and particularly appreciate how vital it is that we support graduates and new students as they move into their next stage. We are working in parallel with Universities UK, the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services, the Institute of Student Employers, the Office for Students, and the wider sector to understand what we can do to complement their planned support. We know that providers are best placed to lead on this and have assured them that we will work with them to signpost students to useful resources, share good practice, and communicate effectively with schools, colleges, and employers.

More broadly, the Government is doing all it can to help people who are at the start of their career journey. The Department for Work and Pensions has successfully recruited over 13,500 new work coaches as of the end of March 2021. This will ensure that high-quality work search support is available to those who need it. We are also investing additional funding in the National Careers Service up to March 2022. This investment will support delivery of individual careers advice for those whose jobs/learning have been affected by the pandemic (by end of FY21/22). We have also added additional courses to the Skills Toolkit to develop 'work readiness' skills that employers report they value in their new recruits.

I want to assure all students, staff and parents that student welfare continues to be a priority and I will continue to work closely with the sector to ensure that our additional hardship funding and our transition support reaches those who need it most. As always, I want to thank students for their resilience and university staff and student unions for their determination to ensure that students are supported at this challenging time.

Overseas Operations Bill: MOD Support to Service Personnel

[HLWS899]

Baroness Goldie: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence (The Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

The Overseas Operations Bill was introduced to provide greater legal protections to armed forces personnel and veterans serving on military operations overseas. The Bill will provide a better legal framework for dealing with allegations arising from any future overseas operations,

recognising the unique burden and pressures placed on our personnel.

As part of the debate on this Bill, there has rightly been a focus on the support which MOD provides to those personnel who may find themselves subject to investigations and prosecutions. We are grateful to Right Honourable and Honourable members of both Houses for the interest they have taken in this issue and their commitment to ensuring service personnel and veterans who are impacted by historical allegations are properly supported.

As a matter of MOD policy, service personnel are entitled to legal guidance at public expense where they face criminal allegations that relate to actions taken during their service, and where they were performing their duties. This principle is at the heart of the MOD's approach to supporting our people and is enshrined in the relevant Defence Instruction Notices. It is a responsibility that MOD takes extremely seriously, and we keep our policies under review to ensure that they are appropriate and tailored.

Since the early days of Iraq and Afghanistan, the Armed Forces have learned lessons on better resourcing and professionalising support to those involved in inquiries or investigations arising from operations, and the mechanisms for providing this support have been transformed in recent years. The way in which this is delivered and by whom will depend on the specific circumstances of the case, the point which has been reached in the proceedings and, most importantly, the needs of the individual concerned.

Any individual who is investigated by the Service Police is entitled to legal representation as well as the support of an Assisting Officer who can offer advice on the process and procedure and signpost welfare resources. The individual's Commanding Officer and Chain of Command have overall responsibility for the person's welfare and for ensuring access to the requisite support.

Individuals who are interviewed as suspects under caution will be entitled to free and independent legal advice for this stage of the investigation. Subsequently, legal funding for service personnel and veterans facing criminal allegations can either be provided through the Armed Forces Legal Aid Scheme (AFLAS) or through the Chain of Command.

Where the Chain of Command accepts funding responsibility this is means-test exempt and therefore no personal contribution will be required. The Armed Forces Criminal Legal Aid Authority (AFCLAA) will act as a conduit for the provision of publicly funded legal representation on behalf of the chain of command, including all aspects of financial and case management. However, if available evidence suggests the individual was doing something clearly outside the scope of their duty, then it would not be appropriate for that person to receive this Chain of Command funding.

All other serving personnel and veterans facing criminal proceedings prosecuted through the service justice

system, and who are not covered by the Chain of Command funding, may apply for legal aid through AFCLAA and may be required to make a personal contribution, determined by means testing, if funded through the Armed Forces Legal Aid Scheme. This is in line with the civilian legal aid scheme.

There is an important exemption from the means testing requirement, which has been waived in criminal cases arising from Iraq or Afghanistan operations heard in the Service Court. Separately, legal advice and support is also available whenever people are required to give evidence at inquests and inquiries and in litigation and this is coordinated by MOD.

We also recognise that for service personnel and veterans who are involved in these processes, legal guidance by itself is not enough. This is why we have developed a comprehensive package of welfare support to ensure we deliver on our commitment to offer ongoing support to veterans.

As part of delivering on this commitment, the Army Operational Legacy Branch (AOLB) was established in 2020 in order to coordinate the Army's support to those involved in legacy cases. Fundamental to this is ensuring that welfare and legal support is provided to all service personnel and veterans involved in operational legacy processes. The AOLB provides a central point of contact and optimises the welfare network already in place through the Arms and Service Directorates and the network of Regimental Headquarters and Regimental Associations. Veterans UK are also closely engaged in providing support to veterans and, where required, the Veterans Welfare Service will allocate a welfare manager to support individual veterans. Although the AOLB has been established to provide an Army focus to legacy issues, the support it provides is extended to the other services.

This is provided in addition to the range of welfare and mental health support that is routinely offered to all our people. The potential impact of operations on a service person's mental health is well recognised and there are policy and procedures in place to help manage and mitigate these impacts as far as possible. The MOD recognises that any operational deployment can result in the development of a medical or psychiatric condition and that service personnel may require help before, during and after deployment. All Armed Forces personnel are supported by dedicated and comprehensive mental health resources. Defence Mental Health Services are configured to provide community-based mental health care in line with national best practice.

In terms of support for those who have left the forces, veterans are able to access all NHS provided mental health services wherever they live in the country. As health is devolved and services have been developed according to local populations needs, service specification varies. This can mean bespoke veteran pathways or ensuring an awareness of veterans' needs. All veterans will be seen on clinical need. What is important is that

best practice is shared between the home nations and there are several forums in place to provide this.

The Office for Veterans' Affairs works closely with the MOD and departments across government, the devolved

administrations, charities and academia to ensure the needs of veterans are met.

Written Answers

Tuesday, 13 April 2021

Investment and Tourism: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Browne of Belmont

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to promote (1) tourism, and (2) investment, in Northern Ireland. [[HL14562](#)]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The UK Government is committed to promoting Northern Ireland as a great place to live, work, visit and do business. The Government will do everything we can, working collaboratively with the Department for the Economy and Tourism NI, to promote Northern Ireland's economic recovery and growth in the Northern Ireland tourism sector when it is safe for people to travel again.

This year marks the Centenary of Northern Ireland and presents a wonderful opportunity to showcase the brilliance of Northern Ireland to the world, including as a world-class travel destination. This includes as part of the Dubai Expo, which begins in October 2021, and will be a fantastic opportunity to highlight the trading opportunities across the UK, including in Northern Ireland.

As part of the Centenary programme, we are hosting a NI Business Showcase event in London to boost exports and investment into Northern Ireland. Furthermore, as part of the New Deal for Northern Ireland a total of £8m was allocated to Invest NI to expand their presence overseas and help increase exports and attract investment. We will continue to work with partners in Northern Ireland and beyond to champion all that it, and the rest of the United Kingdom, has to offer.

UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Empey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on the volume of trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland since the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland entered into force on 1 January. [[HL14627](#)]

Lord Frost: Goods are moving effectively between Great Britain and Northern Ireland and there are no significant queues at Northern Ireland's ports. Overall freight flow between Great Britain and Northern Ireland appears to have returned to normal levels. We are continuing to monitor and assess the situation, including any potential change in trade patterns.

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