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**Thursday
22 April 2021**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN ANSWERS

Written Answers.....1

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Lord Greenhalgh	Minister of State, Home Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
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Written Answers

Thursday, 22 April 2021

Armed Forces: Legal Aid Scheme

Asked by **Lord Tunncliffe**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much legal aid has been provided through the Armed Forces Legal Aid Scheme to (1) current, and (2) former, armed forces personnel in each year between 2010 and 2021. [HL14852]

Asked by **Lord Tunncliffe**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many (1) successful, and (2) unsuccessful, requests for legal aid have been submitted to the Armed Forces Legal Aid Scheme in each year from 2010 to 2021. [HL14853]

Baroness Goldie: The Armed Forces Criminal Legal Aid Authority (AFCLAA) holds detailed information dating from 2012, presented in the table below:

Year	Serving Personnel (Legal Aid paid, £)	Former Service Personnel (Legal Aid paid, £)	Total Number – Legal Aid Granted	Total Number – Legal Aid Refused
2012	1,652,200	43,500	560	334
2013	1,336,900	63,200	435	260
2014	1,315,800	92,600	496	208
2015	1,582,300	188,600	434	201
2016	1,484,300	89,900	432	137
2017	1,462,300	36,600	390	149
2018	2,056,300	47,400	448	171
2019	1,243,300	132,600	498	155
2020	348,700	7,600	223	114

Notes:

Financial figures are rounded to the nearest £100. All other numbers are unrounded.

Some cases from 2019 are ongoing, meaning some bills are yet to be received/paid.

The low figures for 2020 reflect the fact that Covid-19 caused many court hearings to be delayed. Therefore, the numbers of personnel granted legal aid for 2020 cases is expected to rise as defendants decide whether to accept offers of legal aid. In addition, as 2020 cases come to a conclusion, financial figures for that year will increase significantly as bills are received/paid.

Very little information is available for 2021 at this time. Due to Covid-19, there are a number of cases awaiting a decision on prosecution by the Service Prosecuting Authority.

Figures for the number of unsuccessful applications (legal aid refused) include defendants who have refused an offer of legal aid and, therefore, do not wish AFCLAA assistance. This includes those who have refused legal aid whilst their case is awaiting a decision by the Service Prosecuting Authority, with a significant proportion of those cases discontinued before they reach court.

Figures also include a very small number who have been refused assistance by AFCLAA due to the individual exceeding the financial threshold which is currently set at an annual disposable income of £37,500.

Balkans: Military Exercises

Asked by **Lord Chidgey**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the implementation of the new regional training initiative in the Western Balkans; and whether it will include joint training for Serbia, North Macedonia, and Kosovo. [HL14959]

Baroness Goldie: The establishment of a Western Balkans regional training initiative is a further sign of the UK's continuing commitment to the Western Balkans. The initiative will develop our understanding of the training needs of the Armed Forces of the Western Balkans, and improve the way we coordinate and deliver training and capacity building. We aim to ensure the nations of the region can contribute to international security and to increase cooperation. The training cell will be established later this year and discussions are ongoing about what training will be provided.

Buildings: Fire Prevention

Asked by **Lord Henty**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the protection provided by safety guidance in relation to (1) fire, and (2) building, with respect to (a) flats, (b) care homes, (c) hospitals, (d) schools, and (e) hotels. [HL14745]

Lord Greenhalgh: In April 2020, the Government published the workplan for the technical review of the statutory guidance to the Building Regulations with regards to fire safety (Approved Document B).

We are commissioning the research for this fundamental review which will address a number of key fire safety issues. We have already started research for means of escape for disabled people, specialised house and care homes, trigger thresholds and other important topics.

Details of the technical review (attached) are set out at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/877365/Technical_review_of_Approved_Document_B_workplan.pdf.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Technical review [210422
 Technical_review_of_Approved_Document_B_workplan -
 HL14745.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2021-04-12/HL14745>

Asked by Lord Hendy

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to their response of 28 March 2013 to the Coroner's report on the Lakanal House fire, what progress has been made on their review of Approved Document B to the Building Regulations 2010. [HL14746]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Department considered and acted on the recommendations of the Coroner's report into the Lakanal House fire in 2009. A note setting out the action the Government took in response to the recommendations was placed in the Library of the House in September 2017 in response to Question UIN HL1281 on 5 September 2017.

Since the publication of this note we have published a clarified version of Approved Document B available (attached) at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-approved-document-b>.

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The Answer includes the following attached material:

Fire safety approved document B [210422
 ADB_Vol1_Dwellings_2019_edition_inc_2020_amendments -
 HL14746.pdf]

Technical review [210422
 Technical_review_of_Approved_Document_B_workplan -
 HL14746.pdf]

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<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2021-04-12/HL14746>

Community Land Trusts: Leasehold

Asked by Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to legislate to exempt Community Land Trusts from leasehold enfranchisement. [HL14681]

Lord Greenhalgh: The Government is committed to promoting fairness and transparency for homeowners and ensuring that consumers are protected from abuse and poor service. We are taking forward a comprehensive programme of reform to end unfair practices in the leasehold market. In January we announced reforms to the valuation process and length of lease extensions, in response to Law Commission recommendations.

The Law Commission's report on enfranchisement includes recommendations relating to the qualifying criteria for enfranchisement and lease extensions, including the applicability of these to community led housing. We will bring forward a response to these and the other remaining Law Commission recommendations in due course.

Coronavirus: Corby

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the reasons for the above-average incidence of Covid-19 infections in Corby in February and March; and what assessment they have made of the efficacy of restrictions in place to reduce transmission of Covid-19. [HL14698]

Lord Bethell: Variation in the number of Covid-19 cases is caused by a number of factors including demography, behaviour and rate of testing. Corby has higher levels of people living in areas of deprivation. Living and working conditions for these groups contribute to increased transmission rates. A large proportion of working age people in Corby have jobs which require them to attend their workplaces, increasing the risk of transmission. It is an area with multi-generational families who live in proximity with potential for household mixing.

There was an increased level of local enforcement of Covid-19 restrictions during February and March. Case numbers have fallen in this period which from 294 cases per 100,000 population at the start of March to 183 on 24 March.

Financial Services: Secondary Education

Asked by Lord Blunkett

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the financial capability of UK citizens; whether it is affected by (1) age group, (2) gender, or (3) region; and what plans they have to review the provision of financial education in secondary schools. [HL14699]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The government is committed to ensuring that people are able to use, and maximise their use of, products and services made available by the financial services industry. Government policy on financial capability and education focuses on ensuring that people can access the guidance they need and have the confidence and skills to successfully engage with their

finances. That is why the government established the Money and Pension Service (MaPS) in January 2019, merging the three former organisations providing free-to-use financial guidance (the Money Advice Service, The Pensions Advisory Service, and Pension Wise) to simplify the existing public financial guidance landscape and offer more holistic support to consumers.

MaPS's 2018 Adult Financial Capability Survey identified and measured the key components of financial capability through a large, nationally representative sample. This data can be broken down across a range of sociodemographic factors including age, gender and region. The full dataset is publicly available and will be updated later this year.

In 2020, MaPS published the UK Strategy for Financial Wellbeing, which sets out five national goals to improve the UK's financial wellbeing by 2030. These include 2 million more children and young people getting a meaningful financial education, and 5 million more people understanding enough to plan for, and in, later life. The Strategy also includes three cross-cutting lenses focusing on gender, mental health, and wellbeing in the workplace. MaPS are working closely with a range of stakeholders from different sectors to deliver the Strategy, including to develop delivery plans for each of the four UK nations.

The government has no plans to review the provision of financial education. In 2014, for the first time, financial literacy was made statutory within the National Curriculum in England, as part of the curriculum for citizenship education for 11 to 16 year olds. At the same time, the government also introduced a rigorous mathematics curriculum, which provides pupils with the knowledge and skills to make important financial decisions. The Department for Education trusts schools to use their professional judgement and understanding of their pupils to develop the right teaching approach for their school.

Homelessness: Data Protection

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they collect data regarding individuals who are homeless; and whether any personal data of homeless individuals is collected without their consent. [HL14822]

Lord Greenhalgh: Local authorities have responsibilities to offer homelessness assistance under statutory homelessness legislation and send case level data to MHCLG, for households that apply for statutory homelessness support. This data includes information on the circumstances and needs of households and the support they receive through the system. This includes some personal data.

The personal data will only be shared with MHCLG where local authorities are satisfied they have the lawful basis to do so and householders have been informed and/or appropriate consent has been obtained.

Immigration: Poland

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the prevalence of xenophobic acts against Polish citizens resident in England. [HL14808]

Lord Greenhalgh: We are clear that all forms of hatred, including that based on race, are unacceptable and will be tackled. We have a strong legal framework in place to deal with the perpetrators of hate crime, and we have asked the Law Commission to undertake a full review of the coverage and approach of current hate crime legislative provisions, which will further strengthen this.

The Government is now considering a range of options to tackle hate crime beyond the current hate crime action plan. We will work with other departments and civil society partners to explore possible approaches, and to ensure a range of views from communities, including Polish, are taken into consideration.

The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities was also launched to conduct a detailed, data-led examination of inequality across the entire population, and to set out a positive agenda for change. The Government will now consider the recommendations in detail and will respond before the summer.

Marines

Asked by Lord Chidgey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reducing the strength of the Royal Marines Corps from 6,500 to 6,100 personnel; and whether this will affect the Royal Marine Corps capacity to operate across different operational domains. [HL14958]

Baroness Goldie: As the Royal Marines transition into the Future Commando Force and turn to new upgraded and autonomous capabilities, there is the potential for the workforce structure to change in the future. Any reduction in personnel will not affect the capability of the Royal Marines to operate across different operational arenas.

Ranger Regiment

Asked by Lord Chidgey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to draw the personnel for the new Ranger Regiment from all Infantry units of the British Army; what assessment they have made of the additional training resources required for that regiment to be able to operate in complex and high risk environments; and what assessment they have made of the impact on the establishment of such a regiment on (1) extended overseas deployments, and (2) any additional training and advisory agreements made with other nations consequent upon these deployments. [HL14961]

Baroness Goldie: The new Ranger Regiment is part of an Army Special Operations Brigade and will receive a share of a £120 million investment over the next four years. It will initially be seeded from the four Specialised Infantry Battalions and in time will become all-arms units capable of supporting and conducting special operations in high-risk environments.

Under the transformation announced by the Secretary of State for Defence, the Army will be more actively and persistently engaged overseas. This does not mean that all deployments will be lengthy and the impact on individuals and their families will be carefully managed under policy designed to ensure that they are not overstretched. To complement the Army Special Operations Brigade, a Security Force Assistance (SFA) Brigade will also be established and this will form the foundation of the Army's contribution to persistent engagement overseas.

The Army will use spring and early summer 2021 to refine and test the designs, capabilities and structure of its units before making more detailed announcements later this year.

Social Security Benefits: Bermuda and Gibraltar

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Stedman-Scott on 6 April

(HL14577), why there has been a departure from the policy to agree reciprocal social security arrangements, despite the agreements with (1) Bermuda in 1969, and (2) Gibraltar in 1974. [HL14994]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The policy on entering into new reciprocal social security agreements has been in place since 1996.

State Retirement Pensions: Canada

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Stedman-Scott on 6 April (HL14579), why they have not responded yet to the request on 16 December 2020 by members of the Canadian Parliament for a reciprocal agreement on the uprating of pensions for UK state pension holders residing in Canada; and what assessment they have made of the impact the delay in responding could have on the negotiations for new trade agreements. [HL14995]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: As indicated in my answer on 6 April 2021 (HL14579), an official request was received from the Government of Canada, to which the Government has now responded.

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