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Thursday
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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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|---|---|
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| Lord Bellamy | Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice |
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| Lord Callanan | Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy |
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| Lord Greenhalgh | Minister of State, Home Office and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities |
| Lord Grimstone of Boscobel | Minister of State, Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Department for International Trade |
| Lord Harrington of Watford | Minister of State, Home Office and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities |
| Lord Kamall | Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care |
| Lord Offord of Garvel | Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scotland Office |
| Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay | Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Whip |
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| Baroness Scott of Bybrook | Whip |
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| Baroness Stedman-Scott | Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Department for Work and Pensions |
| Lord Stewart of Dirleton | Advocate-General for Scotland |
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| Baroness Williams of Trafford | Minister of State, Home Office |
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Written Statements

Thursday, 30 June 2022

Criminal Legal Aid

[HLWS165]

Lord Stewart of Dirleton: My honourable friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (James Cartledge) has made the following written statement:

In December the Independent Review of Criminal Legal Aid made clear the need for fee reform. Among a number of recommendations, the Review called for an immediate pay increase of £135m across the various criminal legal aid fee schemes. In response to these recommendations, in March, we consulted on proposals that would mark the most significant reform to criminal legal aid in more than a decade – and would include an additional investment of £135m.

Our reforms are two-fold. First, addressing the immediate fee increase as called for by the representative bodies, and second, focusing on longer-term systemic change. We took this approach precisely because we recognise the urgent need for fee reform, and so we can act swiftly and decisively in the interests of our criminal legal profession. We have been working hard to analyse the responses of all stakeholders, so all our decisions are rooted in evidence. We will be publishing our formal response in due course, but I can confirm that we will be implementing a fee increase of 15 percent across the majority of fee schemes.

As set out in the consultation, there are a small number of schemes we are not uplifting at this stage. This includes the uplift to payment related to pages of prosecution evidence which the Review found to encourage ‘perverse incentives’. We will be looking at how to address this as part of our longer-term reforms and have set aside £20m for those reforms initially. As well as reform to fee schemes we are considering wider issues, such as the potential roll-out of the successful “opt out” pilot for children, currently taking place at Brixton and Wembley police stations.

We want to make sure practitioners get paid properly for all the work they do. So, in addition to increasing fees, we are extending the scope of payment for pre-charge engagement work to cover work done ahead of an agreement, or where an agreement isn’t reached, in appropriate cases, in line with the Attorney General’s Disclosure Guidelines. We also intend to abolish fixed fees where individuals elect to have their case heard at the Crown Court, and go on to plead guilty. We will lay a statutory instrument by 21 July, which will bring these changes into effect on 30 September this year. Considering the parliamentary process and operational changes required to do this, this is the quickest we are able to deliver this uplift. Solicitors and barristers will start to receive increased fees this year and our modelling

suggests that over two thirds of the additional funding will have entered the system within the first year.

Our response to the longer-term proposals, including details on the longer-term funding and structural graduated fees schemes reform, will be published in the Autumn, driven by the evidence in our consultation. And, of course, we want to continue engaging with key stakeholders, including the Bar Council and Law Society as we develop our final policies. We are also considering the role of an advisory board as recommended by the review and plan to work closely with the Law Society and the Bar Council to design it with the intention of ensuring legal aid keeps pace with a modern justice system. Further details on the Board including a terms of reference will be published in the Autumn. If implemented, our longer-term changes are good news for the criminal legal profession, helping us to build a sustainable sector that is fit for the future. And, most importantly, they are good news for victims and everyone relying on the criminal justice system.'

Customs Undervaluation Case

[HLWS164]

Baroness Penn: My right honourable friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Simon Clarke) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

In March 2018, the European Commission launched infringement proceedings against the UK, alleging that between 2011 and 2017 the UK had failed to prevent undervaluation fraud involving importations of Chinese textiles and footwear, leading to approximately €2.7bn of customs duty going uncollected. Since leaving the EU, the UK has continued to engage with these infringement proceedings as per the legal obligations set out in the Withdrawal Agreement. Throughout the case, the UK argued that we took appropriate steps to tackle the fraud in question and that the size and severity of the alleged fraud had been overstated. The UK has since taken proportionate and increased steps to combat this fraud without impacting legitimate trade, liquidating suspect traders through enforcement action, and substantially eliminating the illegitimate trade with significant investments in new inland customs infrastructure that opened in October 2017.

On 8 March 2022, the CJEU published its judgment, finding against the UK on most liability points. Importantly however, the Court found that the European Commission overstated the size of its losses, by expanding its claim for losses prior to 2014 beyond those originally claimed and by ignoring action taken by the UK in raising assessments for the period from 2015 onwards. The judgment did not endorse the €2.7bn claim, instead limiting the Commission’s claim for imports from 2011 to 2014 to the amount of certain customs assessments issued and cancelled in error and, for imports in the period January 2015 to 11 October 2017, instructing the European Commission to recalculate the

figure. We understand this exercise to be underway and we have not yet received the Commission's revised estimate of the liability. These calculations are likely to be complex.

Following the judgment, the UK is liable for both outstanding customs duties and interest. This could potentially be 16% plus Bank of England base rate and accrues in the absence of any payment. With this in mind, and in order to protect UK taxpayers from significant continued interest accrual, the UK made a payment on 10 June 2022 to the European Commission of €678,372,885.63. This paid in full the amount due regarding cancelled customs assessments to the end of 2014 and, in respect of the subsequent period, represents the amount the UK considers due at this time, in light of the CJEU judgment, thereby stopping interest accruing on this amount. When the UK receives the Commission's recalculation for the period 2015 to October 2017, we will examine their methodology closely and will not hesitate to reject any claim should we believe it to not be accurate or in line with the CJEU's judgment, to ensure we protect UK taxpayers' interests.

Financial Directions to the NHS: Variation 2022-23

[HLWS160]

Lord Kamall: My Hon Friend the Minister of State (Minister for Health) (Edward Argar) has made the following Written Statement:

I am varying the 2022-23 Financial Directions to NHS England made on 31 March 2022.

These are primarily technical changes required as a result of the Health and Care Act 2022. The main purpose of the Act is to establish a [legislative framework](#) that supports collaboration and partnership-working to integrate services for patients. Among a wide range of other measures, the Act also includes targeted changes to public health, social care and the oversight of quality and safety.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have now been formally brought together into a single legal organisation. Therefore, NHS Improvement's resource and administration limits, as well as their capital budget, have now been incorporated into NHS England's budget.

HM Treasury's Consolidated Budgeting Guidance will now apply to the whole of NHS spend including providers, requiring the addition of funding for Annually Managed Expenditure and ringfenced funding for impairments for NHS trusts and NHS foundation trusts.

Finally, funding is being provided from NHS England to Health Education England (HEE) for investment in workforce initiatives.

The Act now decouples the Financial Directions from the NHS Mandate and requires the Directions to be laid in Parliament. They will be published on gov.uk. The existing NHS Mandate remains unchanged.

GB Warm Home Discount (Scotland) Scheme

[HLWS161]

Lord Callanan: The Government has today laid draft affirmative Regulations for a GB Warm Home Discount scheme in Scotland to run from 2022/23 until 2025/26.

The scheme, with increased funding of around £13 million and totalling £49 million in 2022/2023, will provide energy bill rebates worth £150 to over 280,000 low income and vulnerable households during winter, when they need it most.

WHD provides direct energy bill support, in the form of a rebate on energy bills, for fuel poor, low income and vulnerable households. It is a key policy in the Government's programme to tackle fuel poverty and reduce energy costs for low-income households. Since its launch in April 2011, WHD has provided over £3.3 billion in direct support to households in Great Britain. Now more than ever, this rebate is needed to help low income and vulnerable households with their energy costs. The scheme complements the Government's £37bn worth of measures this year to support households with rising energy bills and the cost of living.

The WHD is set in legislation and requires energy suppliers above a certain size to participate. Whilst the costs of the scheme are borne by energy suppliers and, ultimately, their customers, Government sets the overall spending target. In the 2020 Energy White Paper, the Government committed to extending the Warm Home Discount (WHD) to 2025/26 and increasing its value to £475m (in 2020 prices) across Great Britain. Since then, we consulted on proposals for England and Wales, the details of which are set out in the Government response to consultation, published on 1 April and for which the regulations have been approved by both Houses. Similar proposals could not be replicated in Scotland, because the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) whose data we will use to identify homes which are high cost to heat, does not collect that data in Scotland. The Scottish Assessors (the Scottish equivalent of the Valuation Office Agency) do not collect the same data in Scotland.

Under the Scotland Act 2016, the Scottish Government has devolved powers to design and implement a WHD although the exercise of these powers requires the agreement of the Secretary of State, and some powers remain reserved, including determining the overall size of the obligation and the obligated parties. The Scottish Government requested that the UK Government make provision for a continuation of the WHD.

The WHD in Scotland will increase proportionately in line with the GB-wide increase to the scheme: from £350m to £475m in 2020 prices. Based on the apportionment methodology consulted on by the UK Government, the scheme in Scotland will be 9.4% or £44.65m (in 2020 prices) of the overall scheme value. The proportion of funding going to Scotland will exceed its share of the GB population and its share of means-tested benefits recipients. The uplift means rebates are provided to an additional 50,000 families in Scotland each

year on top of the 230,000 that already receive payments, and the rebate will also increase from £140 to £150.

We have also reduced the threshold for energy suppliers' participation in the scheme, so more energy suppliers will participate. Suppliers with a small market share in Scotland who cannot meet their obligation through the provision of rebates to their customers will be able to provide other packages of help, including financial assistance, to other low income and vulnerable households.

Under the WHD in Scotland, around 90,000 low-income pensioners will continue to receive their rebates automatically through the Core Group element of the scheme. In addition, around 190,000 low income and vulnerable households, mainly working age, will receive the rebate by application to their energy supplier. Scottish households in or at risk of fuel poverty will also continue to benefit from support under Industry Initiatives funded under the WHD, which include benefit entitlement checks, energy debt and financial assistance, energy advice, and energy efficiency measures provided to low income and vulnerable households.

This expansion of the WHD scheme forms part of the wider support to help households with rising energy bills. In May, the Government announced over £15bn of additional support, targeted particularly on those with the greatest need. This package builds on the £22bn announced previously, with Government support for the cost of living now totalling over £37bn this year. This includes: help to all domestic electricity customers in Great Britain to cope with the impact of higher energy bills, with £400 off their bills from October through the expansion of the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS); a one-off Cost of Living Payment of £650 to over 8 million households across the UK in receipt of means tested benefits; additional UK-wide support to help 6 million people who receive non-means tested disability benefits receiving a one-off disability Cost of Living Payment of £150; over eight million pensioner households will receive an extra one-off £300 this year to help them cover the rising cost of energy this winter. For households that are not eligible for Cost of Living Payments or for families that still need additional support; the Government is providing an extra £500 million of local support, via the Household Support Fund. The Fund will be extended from this October to March 2023, bringing total funding for the scheme to £1.5 billion. Millions of the most vulnerable households will receive at least £1,200 of one-off support in total this year to help with the cost of living.

Subject to Parliamentary processes, the UK Government will implement the scheme in Scotland as quickly as possible and support will be provided to Scottish households during the winter.

More information on the Warm Home Discount scheme will be made available over the summer on [gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme](https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme).

Gender Recognition: Disclosure of Information

[HLWS166]

Lord Kamall: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Sajid Javid) has made the following written statement:

Today, I have laid the Gender Recognition (Disclosure of Information) (England) Order 2022 in Parliament. This statutory instrument will make a minor change under the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) 2004 in order to facilitate the invaluable research being undertaken as part of Dr Hilary Cass' Independent review of gender identity services for children and young people ([the Cass Review](#)).

Under the Gender Recognition Act 2004, it is an offence for a person acting in an official capacity to disclose information about the gender history of a person with a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC). The Act calls this "protected information", with some existing exemptions, such as where disclosure is to prevent or investigate crime, or the subject of the information agrees to the disclosure.

The Order I have laid today will add a further exemption to the GRA so that a closely defined class of people who facilitate, assist and carry out the research for the Cass Review will be able to disclose protected information to each other during the course of their work. Without access to information currently protected under the Act, a significant portion of the available data on health outcomes would have to be removed from the study. This would subsequently prevent Dr Cass' review from being able to provide robust recommendations rooted in the best available clinical evidence about how this care can best be provided.

This data will allow us to plan the provision of these services from a world-leading clinical evidence base, to promote better health outcomes for those who use these important services. I firmly believe that this will help enable further debate on these issues to be informed by the best available clinical evidence which will better serve everyone, not least children.

I remain committed to upholding the rights and privacy of transgender people, so this data will be carefully controlled. Only those working for a small number of organisations listed in the Order and who are involved in the research will be able to access protected information and share it with each other. Furthermore, those within this closed circle will only be able to access and share the data if doing so is genuinely necessary in order to facilitate, assist or carry out research as part of the Cass Review.

As an additional safeguard, the Order will expire after a period of 5 years which is the maximum amount of time that we believe the project will take. The Order does not allow patient identifiable information to be made public through the course of this research, and any research outputs subsequently published will be fully anonymised.

Post Office: Compensation for Horizon Scandal

[HLWS158]

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:

As the House is aware, the Post Office Horizon scandal, which began over 20 years ago, has had a devastating impact on the lives of many postmasters. Starting in the late 1990s, the Post Office began installing Horizon accounting software, but faults in the software led to shortfalls in branches' accounts. The Post Office demanded sub-postmasters cover the shortfalls, and in many cases wrongfully prosecuted them between 1999 and 2015 for false accounting or theft.

The High Court Group Litigation Order (GLO) case against the Post Office brought by 555 postmasters exposed the Horizon IT scandal which had seen many postmasters forced to "repay" to Post Office sums which they had never received. In March 2022, the Chancellor announced that further funding would be made available to ensure members of the GLO will receive similar levels of compensation to that which is available to their non-GLO peers.

Today, I am announcing that the Government intends to make an interim payment of compensation to eligible members of the GLO, who are not already covered by another scheme, totalling £19.5m. Together with the share of the December 2019 settlement that we understand was distributed to the GLO postmasters, this brings the total of compensation to approximately £30m. I hope this will go some way in helping many postmasters who have, and still are, facing hardships.

In parallel, we are working towards delivering the final compensation scheme for the GLO and will be appointing Freeths to access the data and methodology they developed in relation to the distribution of the 2019 settlement. Freeths represented the GLO claimants and have vital knowledge and expertise based on their involvement in the case. This will allow us to work at pace on the design of a scheme.

Furthermore, I can confirm that members of the GLO group will be able to claim reasonable legal fees as part of participating in the final compensation scheme. I hope that this will allay any concerns that they might have about meeting the costs of seeking legal advice and support when applying to the scheme.

Overtaken Historical Convictions

I am pleased to report that interim payments for overturned historical convictions are progressing well. As of 29 June, there have been 75 overturned convictions, with the most recent convictions being overturned in recent weeks. The Post Office has received 74 applications for interim payments including several new applications in recent weeks. 67 offers have been

accepted by and paid out to claimants, totalling nearly £7m paid out in compensation so far.

For those postmasters who have already submitted quantified claims, we are working with Post Office to agree part payments of agreed elements of claims, such as loss of earnings, wherever possible, and will continue to do so with additional claims which are submitted. Taking this step should enable us to avoid undue delays in awarding partial compensation while outstanding matters are resolved.

I acknowledge that one area where it has been challenging to agree compensation is non-pecuniary damages, some of which reflect the wider impact on postmasters' lives that these wrongful convictions have had. These include compensation for the loss of their liberty or impacts on their mental health. A number of the postmasters have agreed to refer this issue to the process of Early Neutral Evaluation, to be conducted by former Supreme Court Judge, Lord Dyson. It is hoped that this evaluation will facilitate the resolution of these issues. Government stands ready to support the delivery of the Early Neutral Evaluation process and is keen to ensure that the outcomes of this process enable swift compensation.

Historical Shortfall Scheme

As of 23 June, 65% of eligible claimants have now received an offer, meaning £29m has now been offered and that 444 further postmasters have been offered compensation since my last update to the House. I have set the Post Office the ambition to make 100% of HSS offers by the end of the calendar year and the Government is working closely with Post Office to achieve this.

Report of the Independent Reviewer for National Security Arrangements 2021

[HLWS163]

Lord Caine: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis) has today made the following statement:

The role of the Independent Reviewer of National Security Arrangements (IRNSA) in Northern Ireland is to monitor compliance with Annex E of the St Andrews Agreement, reviewing the relationship between MI5 and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) in handling national security matters.

His Honour Brian Barker CBE QC, the Independent Reviewer of National Security Arrangements in Northern Ireland, has sent me his report for 2021. Due to the classification of the report, I am unable to lay a copy in the libraries of both Houses, but I am able to provide the House with a summary of its content.

The year commemorated the centenary of the creation of Northern Ireland, the twentieth anniversary of the PSNI, and the appointment of the first Lady Chief Justice. More widely, this has been another entirely unpredictable twelve months. The coronavirus pandemic has continued to dominate life in Northern Ireland and across the rest of

the United Kingdom, and developments and reactions had a significant impact on health and wellbeing, as well as on the economy and the administration of government in Northern Ireland.

Unionist parties' continuing opposition to the Northern Ireland Protocol has been a defining political theme throughout 2021. The Protocol has also constituted a significant part of the context for some paramilitary activity. The DUP contended that these unique arrangements would divide Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK, and would also threaten the constitutional integrity of the UK. These post-Brexit trade arrangements appeared to magnify the sense of unionist disenfranchisement, partly by raising fears that Northern Ireland would be drawn closer to the orbit of the Republic, and would accelerate a move to eventual unification.

Unrest in unionist areas was apparent, and objection to the Protocol was said to be the predominant cause of sporadic violence and rioting, mainly in loyalist areas of Belfast and Londonderry in late March and early April - the worst for some years. Included were attacks on police officers and a bus, and in the result over 100 officers received injuries.

Violence resurfaced in November with the hijacking and torching of a Translink bus in Newtownards by masked men, and less than a week later another bus was boarded and burnt out in Newtownabbey. It was believed the arson was carried out by loyalists from a local faction of the Ulster Volunteer Force in an apparent protest against the Protocol, although the real effect was to harm local people and make life more difficult for local communities.

The pandemic and the strictures towards working from home continued to have a profound effect. By mid-summer the Chief Medical Officer was concerned that the health service was having to operate under severe pressure and the Northern Ireland Minister for Health called in military medical staff to assist. In early September Stormont was recalled to discuss the high level of COVID-related school absence. Many of the communities hardest hit by the pandemic were those where social-economic problems were at their greatest and often where paramilitary presence was at its strongest.

The dissident activity picture remained much as it was in 2020 and it is assessed that COVID restrictions limited operational activity. The threat level in Northern Ireland from Northern Ireland-related Terrorism (NIRT) remained at SEVERE, meaning an attack is highly likely.

The first attack ascribed to NIRA since the arrest of the alleged leadership during Operation Arbacia, in August 2020, took place in April. An improvised firebomb was left next to a police officer's car outside her home in County Londonderry with the apparent intention of killing both the officer and her young daughter. Deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill described the attack as 'shocking and deplorable'. Arrests were made later in the year, and a number of Continuity IRA members were

arrested and charged in June. Arrests were made in September in relation to the shooting of Lyra McKee.

The success of Operation Arbacia in 2020, coordinated jointly by PSNI and MI5, was widely welcomed and the resulting arrests had restricted the ability of NIRA to operate and attack at a sustained level. The reduced activity compared with previous years was apparent, although constant vigilance and pressure was still necessary. The smaller groups of identifiable dissident republicans had been involved in some activity, not touching national security, attempting to retain their public profile.

The more visible activity was in the name of loyalism, the flash point being the objection to the perceived effects of the Protocol. Overall, the dial had been turned up and other issues of contention including the handling of legacy cases and the Irish language, remained just below the surface. On the positive side, the general threat picture was better, being confined to a small sector who were adept at preying on and deploying vulnerable youngsters.

The landscape continues to be complex, with participants ranging from those who use paramilitarism as a cloak for unadorned criminality to those who remain involved for political and identity reasons which reach back to the Troubles. The damage caused by paramilitary activities on communities and society as a whole is undiminished. The cross-Executive Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme supports people and communities across Northern Ireland who are vulnerable to paramilitary influence and uses a public health approach to violence reduction. The Tackling Paramilitarism, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme Board, chaired by the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service and the Political Advisory Group chaired by the Justice Minister, welcomed the increasing emphasis on a 'whole of Government' approach in tackling paramilitarism, the development of multi-agency hubs, and the impact of more joined-up, inter-agency approach.

The same observational difficulties that applied in 2020 continued in that it was not possible to conform to any sort of structured plan of visits or avenues of inquiry. It was evident that the various offices and organisations of interest were all under enormous pressure, coping not just with unforeseen unpredictable events but also with illness, self-isolation and working from home, resulting in most offices being pared down to critical staff.

In the event the approach to meetings and research that I adopted in 2020 of some virtual contact where possible, was continued for much of the year. Regular communication continued nevertheless, and I was fully informed of any significant developments. It was not until November, as infection rates subsided, that a suitable opportunity arose for a visit to Belfast, and some more useful face to face personal contact was re-established.

My major update with MI5 was conducted through the secure link from Whitehall in July. Again, although any briefing and discussion on particular investigations was not practical, I was given a clear insight of both the

current direction, the prevailing budgetary conditions and the interaction with PSNI. I was able to have a better understanding of the additional problems created by working in a COVID-19 restricted environment and a better picture of how MI5 had adapted to the current conditions. Necessary absences and revised practices had been challenging, but not undermining, and the policy of wider collaboration and further community initiatives continued.

Of note was the continuing development of high-level regular meetings of agency representatives with obvious advantages in mutual understanding and identifying best practice and effective integrated planning and strategic approach to tackling NIRT. Work was also continuing with broader communication and improving protocols with partners in order to be more cooperative with releasing information while maintaining essential security.

I am confident, however, that MI5 continues to maintain the strategic approach to tackling NIRT and the sharing of intelligence at as high a level as is possible. I have been kept apprised of significant events personally, and the Northern Ireland Committee on Protection at its meetings receives an instructive update at each meeting.

I was able to visit PSNI HQ in November, where I was briefed by the Chief Constable Simon Byrne, and other senior officers as to the effective cooperation achieved. They underlined the difficulty of managing and deploying a public service in an environment that was unstable and unpredictable from both the health and political standpoints. A worrying development was the spread of public disorder in a number of areas in late March and early April leading to the need for strategic and tactical command structures in order to protect communities from harm and to keep people safe. There was considerable assistance and support from community leaders and youth workers in seeking to restore calm, but the widespread and unnecessary level of violence directed towards the police was a serious concern.

Maintaining public confidence within some sections of the community remained a problem, and accusations and perceptions of ‘two-tier’ policing remained prominent. Directing a virus-struck, depleted service that had to interact with the public in changing conditions – with regulations that were difficult to explain and liable to change – resulted in situations which attracted criticism from many sides while pleasing few. There was also the necessity of maintaining vigilance and effectiveness in the drive against organised crime and terrorism, where resilience among the dissident republican groups remained, and about a third of the organised crime groups were loyalist paramilitary organisations or had paramilitary links.

With PSNI as the public face, the response to the worrying period of disorder witnessed in parts of the Protestant, unionist, loyalist community during April was led by the Executive.

Recorded crime level in the spring was below average although antisocial activity was consistent. The absence

of disorder and relative stability over the summer was encouraging. The agreement with MI5 and the management of CHIS operatives continues to be carefully monitored particularly in the light of the new power under the Covert Human Intelligence Source (Criminal Conduct) Act 2021. This power has been robustly reviewed and in no circumstances would serious crime against another person be allowed. The regular inter-agency meetings at a very senior level continued and provided a positive contribution in providing a best practice and a complimentary approach to the threat and changing landscape of operating national security during a difficult year.

The key security situation statistics during the year show there were 2 security-related deaths, the same number as in 2020. There were fewer bombings, shootings and paramilitary-style attacks than in 2020. There were 5 bombing incidents, compared to 18 in 2020 and 25 shootings, compared to 41. There were 36 casualties of paramilitary style assaults, compared to 26 previously. All casualties were aged over 18. There were 14 casualties of paramilitary style shootings, compared to 15 previously, all of whom were over 18. There were 134 persons arrested under section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000, compared with 76 of which 23 were subsequently charged, compared to 14 previously.

Overall, the continued development of regular meetings and exchanges at high level between the police and the security services is noticeable and commendable.

Although dissident republicans continue to pose the most significant threat to national security in Northern Ireland, successful investigations against them in 2020 lowered their operational capacity and activity into 2021. Concerted pressure directed towards them remained effective with positive results, and several plots were thwarted. Efforts by PSNI, MI5, An Garda Síochána, and the Ammunition Technical Officers meant that the overwhelming majority of the population were able to go about their daily lives untroubled by terrorism.

Despite fewer incidents, danger to serving police and prison officers doing a difficult job persists and regrettably the necessity for constant vigilance remains.

My conclusions, again restricted by difficult operational conditions, in relation to Annex E of the St Andrews are as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| a: All Security Service intelligence relating to terrorism in Northern Ireland will be visible to the PSNI | Clear evidence of continued successful collaboration. |
| | There is compliance. |
| b: PSNI will be informed of all Security Service counter terrorist activities relating to Northern Ireland | Regular and effective high-level meetings. |
| | There is compliance. |
| c: Security Service intelligence will be disseminated within PSNI according to the current PSNI dissemination policy, and using | There is compliance. |

police procedures

d: The great majority of national security CHIS in Northern Ireland will continue to be run by PSNI officers under existing handling protocols

There is compliance.

e: There will be no diminution of the PSNI's responsibility to comply with the Human Rights Act or the Policing Board's ability to monitor said compliance.

The Policing Board is under strong leadership and has an effective Human Rights advisor. PSNI continues to comply with the Human Rights Act.

School Improvement

[HLWS159]

Baroness Barran: The 2019 manifesto committed the Government to intervening in schools with entrenched underperformance. We believe that every child has the right to go to a school that is Good or Outstanding. Whilst we have rightly focused our attention on Inadequate schools in recent years, we now need to look at the minority of schools that are not making necessary improvements. We are especially concerned about schools that have received 2 or more consecutive Ofsted judgements of below Good. There are currently around 900 state schools in England (around 4.3% of schools), with around 420,000 pupils, that meet this threshold.

The above numbers will obviously depend on the outcome of upcoming inspections as schools will fall into and out of scope. Following the pause in Ofsted inspections due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Ofsted recommenced inspections in May 2021 and, as the Government announced in the recent White Paper, will inspect all schools against the current inspection framework by the end of the summer term 2025, to provide a quicker assessment of recovery from the pandemic.

By amending the definition of a school which is 'coasting', this statutory instrument will grant the Secretary of State for Education the discretionary power to intervene in schools that are currently judged as Requires Improvement by Ofsted and that have met the threshold of 2 or more consecutive Ofsted judgements below Good. This power to intervene will apply equally to maintained schools and academies. It will also apply to maintained special schools, alternative provision academies and pupil referral units which have previously been excluded under the existing power to intervene in coasting schools.

We want to support pupils in schools that are in areas of the greatest entrenched underperformance. Therefore,

initially the Department will prioritise interventions in schools that are in one of the 55 Education Investment Areas (EIAs). The Department will also prioritise schools that are not currently part of a strong family of schools, especially where the Department does not believe the current leadership has the capacity to drive school improvement quickly enough.

Regional Directors will assess each case on an individual basis, taking into account any representations made by the school's governing body and other interested parties, inspection history (including whether inspection reports demonstrate an upward trajectory), evidence regarding the capacity of leadership and management to secure sustained improvement, performance and other quantitative data and evidence relating to the local context of the school.

The update to the Schools Causing Concern guidance published alongside the response to the consultation on Supporting Schools Not Making Necessary improvements sets out the process for intervention in schools that meet the new definition of 'coasting'.

Support and Assistance to Partner Nations in Europe

[HLWS162]

Baroness Goldie: My hon. Friend the Minister for the Armed Forces (James Heappey MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

A new order has been made under section 56(1B) of the Reserve Forces Act 1996 to enable Reservists to be called into permanent service to prepare for, conduct, or contribute to operations by Her Majesty's Forces relating to the provision of military support and assistance to partner nations in Europe.

Her Majesty's Government provides a range of military assistance and support measures to partner nations in Europe, including training, advice and equipment.

The Ministry of Defence is regularly tasked to support broader HMG objectives. As part of this support, Reserve Forces will be on standby, routinely as part of a Whole Force approach with Regular Services, to deliver a range of Defence outputs, including support to Partners Across Government. Outputs will be enabled by Reserve Forces providing capabilities such as (but not limited to) formed sub-units, individual augmentees and specialist skills.

The order shall take effect from the day on which it is made and shall cease to have effect 12 months from the date on which it is made.

Written Answers

Thursday, 30 June 2022

Abdulrahman Al-Sadhan

Asked by **Lord Scriven**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, what representations have they made to the government of Saudi Arabia regarding Abdulrahman Al-Sadhan, who is serving a 20-year prison sentence in Saudi Arabia on charges relating to his social media activity; and what urgent representations they plan to make, if any, to the government of Saudi Arabia about concerns that he has been incommunicado since October 2021. [HL1051]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We continue to monitor the case of Mr Abdulrahman al-Sadhan. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Ministers and senior officials regularly raise human rights in our engagement with the Saudi authorities. Minister Milling raised concern regarding the death penalty with the Saudi Ambassador on 23 May, and enquired into a specific high-priority case. Lord Ahmad also raised UK concerns about the death penalty with the Saudi Justice Minister on 6 June. We have consistently raised concerns about the use of solitary confinement, lack of family contact and allegations of torture in Saudi Arabia, and stressed the importance of due process.

Afghanistan: Females

Asked by **Baroness Hodgson of Abinger**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they are currently funding women's groups inside Afghanistan. [HL1033]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK announced £286m of aid for Afghanistan this financial year. As the Foreign Secretary committed, at least 50% of those we reach with our aid should be women and girls.

We will support women's rights organisations as part of our Afghanistan Conflict Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) programme. We are exploring further ways to support women's organisations through our humanitarian programming, and strongly support the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund's work in identifying ways to support NGOs in Afghanistan at scale. We will also continue to work with partners to ensure women continue to play an active role within humanitarian organisations funded by the FCDO.

Agriculture: Accidents

Asked by **Baroness Kennedy of Cradley**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many (1) deaths, and (2) serious injuries, (a) on farms, and (b) in agriculture generally, have been reported to the Health and Safety Executive in each of the last 10 years. [HL1040]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) publishes official statistics on deaths and injuries at work. Data specifically for agriculture and farms is reproduced in the tables below.

Table 1: Number of fatal injuries to both workers (employees and the self-employed) and members of the public (a) on farms and (b) in the agricultural sector, 2011/12-2020/21.

Source: Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR)

| Year | Farms (a) | | Agriculture Sector (b) | |
|----------|-----------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| | Workers | Members of the public | Workers | Members of the public |
| 2011/12 | 27 | 6 | 35 | 6 |
| 2012/13 | 29 | 5 | 31 | 5 |
| 2013/14 | 26 | 4 | 27 | 4 |
| 2014/15 | 30 | 3 | 32 | 4 |
| 2015/16 | 26 | 2 | 27 | 2 |
| 2016/17 | 25 | 3 | 26 | 3 |
| 2017/18 | 27 | 3 | 29 | 4 |
| 2018/19 | 31 | 6 | 32 | 7 |
| 2019/20r | 18 | 1 | 21 | 2 |
| 2020/21p | 32 | 7 | 34 | 7 |

Table 2: Number of reported (f) non-fatal injuries to employees (a) on farms and (b) in the agricultural sector each year 2011/12-2020/21.

Source: Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR)

| Year | Farms (a) | Agriculture sector (b) |
|-------------|-----------|------------------------|
| 2011/12 (c) | 881 | 1,110 |
| 2012/13 (d) | 681 | 861 |
| 2013/14 (e) | 688 | 861 |
| 2014/15 | 785 | 936 |
| 2015/16 | 733 | 890 |
| 2016/17 | 697 | 869 |
| 2017/18 | 664 | 814 |
| 2018/19 | 714 | 849 |
| 2019/20r | 703 | 845 |
| 2020/21p | 626 | 738 |

Footnotes

(a) Farms defined as Division 01, Crop and animal production, hunting and related service activities, of the 2007 Standard Industrial Classification.

(b) Agriculture defined as Section A, Agriculture, forestry and fishing, of the 2007 Standard Industrial Classification.

(c) Due to a major change in the RIDDOR non-fatal injury reporting requirements in April 2012, injuries

reported prior to 2012/13 are not directly comparable with later years.

(d) RIDDOR reporting requirements for non-fatal injuries changed on 1 April 2012. From this date, non-fatal injuries resulting in more than 7 days absence from work (previously more than 3 days absence) or specified on a pre-defined list of major injuries were reportable.

(e) A further change in reporting requirements was introduced in October 2013 when the pre-defined list of reportable non-fatal injuries was updated.

(f) While RIDDOR requires employers to report certain workplace non-fatal injuries to workers, generally the more serious, it is known that employers substantially under-report these non-fatal injuries, particularly in relation to self-employed workers. Hence Table 2 presents number of reports for employees only.

r- revised; p- provisional

Bahrain: Torture

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations the Prime Minister made, if any, to Bahrain's Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad Al'Khalida at their meeting on 27 May concerning the Sheikh's reported implication in the torture of political dissidents in Bahrain. [HL1052]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government unreservedly condemns the use of torture. The UK does not participate in, solicit, encourage or condone the use of torture for any purpose. We take allegations or concerns of torture and mistreatment very seriously and will follow up with action, as appropriate.

We urge all allegations of torture or mistreatment to be reported to the appropriate national oversight body whose duty it is to carry out full and independent investigations. We continue to encourage the oversight bodies to carry out swift and thorough investigations into any such claims.

Coronavirus: Vaccination

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what meetings they have had with ambassadors at the World Trade Organisation with (1) the African group, and (2) the Least-developed countries group, about negotiations on the COVID-19 text produced by the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Council. [HL954]

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The UK has continuously engaged with the African Group and the Least Developed Countries Group, represented by Tanzania and Bangladesh respectively, throughout the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) debate. A consensus-based agreement on a TRIPS Decision was reached at the World Trade

Organisation's 12th Ministerial Conference, which both groups are eligible to use.

Football

Asked by Lord Pendry

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in light of the treatment of Liverpool supporters attending the Champions League Final, what steps they have taken, in partnership with the relevant footballing bodies, to ensure that British football supporters can safely attend the Qatar World Cup; and what steps they have taken to ensure justice for those fans who were mistreated at the Champions League Final. [HL1042]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We welcome the fact that UEFA have commissioned an independent investigation into the Champions League final, and issued an apology to fans who attended; and that the French Government has commissioned a review of the delivery of the event and will also be supporting the UEFA investigation. The UK and French Sports Ministers met earlier this month and we will continue to work closely with the relevant authorities and Liverpool FC.

Regarding the upcoming World Cup, we are working with Qatar to support their delivery of a safe and secure tournament for all British Nationals who will be attending. We continue to engage closely with Qatari authorities on their security preparations, and UK police will be offering support and advice on engaging with fans attending from the UK. We are also encouraging fans to read the FCDO's Qatar World Cup Travel Advice, and sign up for email alerts to stay up to date on the latest information.

Football: Safety

Asked by Lord Pendry

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the findings of the interim report by CFE research on behalf of the Sports Grounds Safety Authority, when they expect to publish the Safe Standing Trial. [HL1043]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: Following the conclusion of the Early Adopter Programme for Licensed Standing in Seated Areas, Her Majesty's Government has been provided with the Final Evaluation Report by CFE Research. We will continue to work closely with the Sports Grounds Safety Authority to review the findings of this report and expect to publish it in due course.

Gambling: Crime

Asked by Lord Foster of Bath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to (1) increase awareness, and (2) introduce training, for (a) police, (b) probation, and (c) prison, staff on the issues faced by individuals who commit crime due to gambling-related harms. [HL980]

Lord Bellamy: HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is committed to increasing awareness of the hidden harms of problem gambling and training our prison and probation officers. This equips them with the skills and confidence to help identify, support and signpost individuals into the most appropriate interventions both in custody and on release.

The activities and training services available to improve staff awareness regarding gambling related harms are detailed below.

Within the Probation Service, practitioners have access to an evidence based effective practice resource which was published in 2021. This provides a summary of key evidence, including the harms caused by gambling, signs that gambling is causing a problem, ideas on how to work with individuals who gamble and reflective questions to support practice discussions.

To increase awareness, the launch of this guidance was supported by an online event in November 2021 to understand more about the prevalence and effects of gambling in criminal justice and look at how prison and probation services can respond. The recording of the event remains available for staff to access. The event involved speakers from the Prisoner Education Trust, the Howard League for Penal Reform, Epic Restart Foundation and Gam Care along with colleagues from within HMPPS.

Further work is currently underway to create a package of materials for probation staff to use with this specific cohort. This is expected to be available from October 2022. I refer the noble Lord to the answer given to HL1110 for further information.

HMPPS has an online learning platform which hosts a variety of training that all prison and probation staff can access. On this platform there is a package called 'Problem Gambling: Prevalence and Practice' where the aim is for the learner to gain an understanding about the occurrence and effects of gambling in the criminal justice system.

The police also offer a six-hour training course "on understanding and spotting early signs of gambling addictions", which was launched in September 2021 and is available to all police officers.

Housing: Older People

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made on the formation of the cross-departmental taskforce on older people's housing, as outlined in the Levelling Up the United Kingdom white paper, published on 2 February. [HL1022]

Lord Greenhalgh: This Government is committed to further improving the diversity of housing options available to older people and boosting the supply of specialist elderly accommodation.

The Older People's Housing taskforce will look at ways we can provide greater choice, quality and security of housing for older people, and support the growth of a thriving older people's housing sector in this country. This work will be taken forward in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Care. Further details about the taskforce including panel membership and scope will be confirmed in due course.

Libya: Politics and Government

Asked by Lord Empey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of recent developments in Libya; and what assessment they have made of the implications of these developments on the formation of a government in that country. [HL1029]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Recent developments in Libya demonstrate the need for successful, free, fair and inclusive elections, to meet the aspirations of the Libyan people to have a say in who governs them. The UK fully supports the UN-facilitated, Libyan led and owned political process and is working with Libyan and international partners - including the UN Secretary-General's Special Advisor on Libya, Stephanie Williams, and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya - to pursue this priority to support Libya's sovereignty and national unity and to put the country on a path towards sustained peace, security and prosperity.

Ministers: Peers

Asked by Lord Grocott

To ask Her Majesty's Government to list the peers who have been appointed to the House since 2010 to serve as ministers; and, in each case, how long the peer remained in ministerial office. [HL1031]

Lord True: Life peers are appointed by Her Majesty the Queen to serve in the House of Lords for life, or until they retire from the House. Such peers may continue to provide public service long after they have ceased to be a Minister of the Crown – as the Noble Lord will, I am sure, attest himself.

The Government does not hold this information centrally.

Notwithstanding, to assist the Noble Lord's scrutiny, the attached list of ministers who were appointed to the House of Lords within a month of appointment to Government has been compiled from information in the public domain. For completeness, we have provided information from 1997 to now.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Lords List [Lords List_.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-06-16/HL1031>

Offenders: Rehabilitation

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce (1) a Community Sentence Treatment Requirement for gambling addiction, or (2) a Gambling Treatment Requirement, similar to community sentence treatments for offences where alcohol, drugs or mental health issues were an underlying factor. [HL1110]

Lord Bellamy: Offenders with a gambling addiction may be suitable for a Mental Health Treatment Requirement (MHTR) as part of a community or suspended sentence order where mental health has been identified as an underlying factor.

The MHTR clinical practitioner assessment would identify an individual's vulnerability (for example gambling addiction) and this would determine the psychological interventions suitable for them. Due to the complexity of gambling addiction, different approaches are used to enhance therapeutic effectiveness.

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is committed to increasing awareness of the hidden harms of addiction to gambling and helping to support those with a problem, at all stages of the criminal justice system. To this end, a needs analysis is planned so that we can better understand the size of the issue. The results will inform the development of an HMPPS national gambling strategy, designed to raise awareness of problem gambling and ensure that our probation officers have the confidence to help identify and signpost individuals into the most appropriate care.

I refer the noble Lord to the answer given to HL980 for a more detailed account of the work in hand to raise awareness and knowledge of problem gambling with prison staff, probation and the police.

Prisoners: Females

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Gloucester*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many women aged (1) 18 to 25, and (2) 26 and above, went to prison in each of the last 10 years; what was the average length of sentence for each of those categories; and what were the 10 most common offences that led to the imprisonment of women during this period. [HL717]

Lord Bellamy: The information requested is in the attached table.

The Female Offender Strategy, published in June 2018, made it clear we want fewer women serving short sentences in custody and more managed in the community. Custody is intended as a last resort, for the protection of the public and the punishment and rehabilitation of the offender.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL717_table [2022-06-21 HL717 table.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-06-07/HL717>

Prisons: Arts and Education

Asked by *Lord Hylton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to restore (1) education programmes, and (2) access to (a) training, and (b) the arts, for prisoners, where those have been restricted by (i) COVID-19, and (ii) staff shortages. [HL1034]

Lord Bellamy: Staff recruitment was suspended from March 2020 until August 2020 whilst we implemented Covid-19 secure practices in response to Government guidelines on social distancing and non-essential travel. While this created a gap in our pipeline of new officers, once the process restarted, we used initiatives such as the accelerated launch of 60+ recruitment campaigns and the use of targeted overtime and mutual aid across prisons, to ensure establishments facing the greatest challenges received the most support.

Although face-to-face teaching was temporarily suspended due to safety concerns at the start of the pandemic, education continued via remote learning. With the pandemic National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services having been lifted on 9 May 2022, we are now getting increasing numbers of learners back in the classroom and participating in activities, like the arts, that support rehabilitation where it is safe to do so.

As set out in the Prisons Strategy White Paper, published on 7 December 2021, we are committed to improving education in prisons and we are delivering a Prisoner Education Service within this Parliament to raise prisoners' levels of numeracy, literacy, skills and qualifications with the aim of helping them secure jobs upon release and drive down reoffending. This work includes investment in digital infrastructure, more training that delivers the skills employers need, more education experts to support Governors and improved support for prisoners with additional learning needs.

Railways: Strikes

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to combat further railway strikes across England. [HL1121]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government regrets that the trade unions have chosen to go ahead with the strikes which are impacting local businesses and the ability of the general public to get to school, hospital and work. Ministers encourage the unions to keep negotiating with the railway companies as the employers, to resolve this dispute. The Secretary of State outlined this clearly in his letter dated 16 June 2022 to the RMT General Secretary.

The Government and rail industry, including Network Rail, have worked together and continue to work together to ensure plans are in place to minimise disruption allowing for freight and passenger services to remain operational where possible. We are working with the Civil Contingencies Secretariat, the Government's emergency planning team, to improve readiness across Government, including mitigations for impact on critical supply chains.

The Government is taking immediate steps to support train services. A Statutory Instrument was laid on 27 June 2022, under the terms of which employment businesses will be able supply workers to replace striking workers. This will also allow trained staff with transferrable skills to move around the industry to cover for striking staff to keep the railways running. We are also looking to speed up the introduction of minimum service level legislation to ensure that when strikes take place, they are mindful of the rights of others, affected by their strikes. This would mean a certain level of train service would need to be provided.

Social Security Benefits: Overpayments

Asked by Baroness Tyler of Enfield

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many households had deductions from legacy benefits to repay debt due to previous overpayment for the most recent month available; and what was the average amount that was deducted for those households. [HL1065]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: During May 2022, 170,000 individual claimants had deductions taken from their legacy benefits in order to repay overpaid benefits. The average deduction taken in that month was £61.

DWP has a duty to protect public funds and an obligation to ensure that overpaid benefit payments are recovered in accordance with the appropriate social security legislation. However, we seek to discharge that duty without causing undue financial hardship.

We therefore have an established route by which anyone experiencing difficulties with repayments is encouraged to contact DWP Debt Management in order to negotiate a possible reduction in their rate of repayment, or a temporary suspension of repayment, depending on financial circumstances.

In exceptional circumstances there is also discretion to waive recovery of an overpayment, but only where there are compelling grounds to show that recovery of the overpayment is detrimental to the health and/or welfare of the debtor or their family.

Ukraine: Armed Conflict

Asked by Lord Selkirk of Douglas

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they will take, working with international allies, to provide

Ukraine with security assurances against further attacks by Russia, after the conclusion of the war in Ukraine. [HL1059]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: In a statement on 8 May, the Prime Minister, along with other G7 leaders, confirmed our readiness to undertake further commitments to help Ukraine secure its free and democratic future, such that Ukraine can defend itself now and deter future acts of aggression. We will pursue our ongoing military and defence assistance to the Ukrainian Armed Forces, including through training and material, continue supporting Ukraine in defending its networks against cyber incidents, and expand our cooperation, including on information security. We will also continue to support Ukraine in improving its economic and energy security. We remain in close contact with President Zelenskyy and other Ukrainian leaders on these issues, including during the Prime Minister's recent visit to Kyiv.

Asked by Lord Selkirk of Douglas

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the confiscation by Russia of millions of tons of produce, including corn, grain, fertilizers, and sunflower oil, from Ukraine; and what steps they will take with international partners to assess whether this constitutes a crime of theft or robbery. [HL1061]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Ukraine's economy and ability to export its produce has been crippled by Russia's continued bombardment of cities and infrastructure across Ukraine, including through bombing agricultural lands, grain silos and Putin's reckless blockade of Ukraine's Black Sea ports. We are aware of reports of Russia stealing grain from Ukraine and have called for an immediate investigation. We are continuing to call out Russia's false narrative on grain in international fora including the G7 and the Food and Agriculture Organization, emphasising that Russia's actions are exacerbating the global food crisis, putting tens of millions of people at risk of famine.

Ukraine: Cereals

Asked by Lord Selkirk of Douglas

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effects of the Russian blockade of exports of grain from Ukraine; in particular, the impact on food supply and food security in developing countries; and what plans they have to use the Official Development Assistance budget, and the resources of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, to mitigate these effects. [HL1060]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The threat to global food security from Russia's blockade of Ukraine's Black Sea ports is huge. Putin's illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine is exacerbating price rises in commodity markets. 49 million people are already living a step away from

famine and almost 860,000 people are estimated to be in famine-like conditions.

Over the next 3 years, we will direct £3 billion to the most vulnerable countries and people to help them recover from crises. We welcome the World Bank's announcement of \$30 billion to address food insecurity globally over the next 15 months, which responds to the UK's calls for the Bank to mobilise funding to tackle the growing crisis. The UK has also committed another £10 million to the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) to build resilience in agriculture and food security in the poorest countries, bringing our total contribution to £186 million.

Ukraine: Military Aid

Asked by Lord Selkirk of Douglas

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to provide more weapons to the Ukrainian armed forces, including (1) any necessary missiles, and (2) sufficient munitions for self-defence. [HL1058]

Baroness Goldie: The UK has already committed £1.3 billion for military operations and lethal aid that has assisted Ukraine in defending itself and its sovereignty. We liaise on a daily basis with Ukraine to ensure we can continue to provide the defensive equipment it needs. We have recently announced that we will be providing multiple launch rocket systems which will provide Ukraine with a significant boost in capability.

Universal Credit

Asked by Baroness Tyler of Enfield

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many households had deductions to their Universal Credit award to repay debt due to previous overpayment, including advances, for the most recent month available; and what was the average amount that was deducted. [HL1063]

Asked by Baroness Tyler of Enfield

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many Universal Credit claimants in each parliamentary constituency had sums deducted from their claim to repay debt due to previous overpayment, including advances, in the most recent month for which data is available; and what were the (1) average, and (2) total, sums deducted in each constituency. [HL1064]

Baroness Stedman-Scott: The Government recognises the importance of supporting the welfare of claimants who have incurred debt. We seek to balance recovery of debt against not causing hardship for claimants and their families. Processes are in place to ensure deductions are manageable, and customers can contact DWP Debt Management if they are experiencing financial hardship, to discuss a reduction in their rate of repayment or a temporary suspension, depending on their financial circumstances.

Since April 2021, we have reduced the normal maximum rate of deductions in Universal Credit from 40% to 30% to 25% of a claimant's Standard Allowance. These positive measures were put in place to support claimants to manage financial difficulties.

Advances are a claimant's benefit entitlement paid early, allowing claimants to access 100% of their estimated Universal Credit payment upfront. They ensure nobody has to wait for a payment in Universal Credit and those who need it are able to receive financial support as soon as possible. Claimants can receive up to 100% of their estimated Universal Credit award if required, resulting in 25 payments over a 24-month period. This is not a debt.

The information requested is provided in the attached spreadsheet.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Table [HL1063 HL1064 Table.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-06-16/HL1063>

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