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**Monday
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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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Ministers and others who make Statements or answer Questions are referred to only by name, not their ministerial or other title. The current list of ministerial and other responsibilities is as follows.

<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Lord True	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
Earl Howe	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Baroness Barran	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education
Lord Bellamy	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice
Lord Benyon	Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist	Spokesperson, Wales Office, Whip
Lord Caine	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office
Lord Callanan	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Earl of Courtown	Deputy Chief Whip
Lord Davies of Gower	Whip
Baroness Goldie	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Lord Harlech	Whip
Lord Johnson of Lainston	Minister of State, Department for International Trade
Lord Markham	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care
Lord Murray of Blidworth	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office
Baroness Neville-Rolfe	Minister of State, Cabinet Office
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
Baroness Penn	Parliamentary Secretary, HM Treasury
Baroness Scott of Bybrook	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
Lord Sharpe of Epsom	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office
Lord Stewart of Dirleton	Advocate-General for Scotland
Baroness Vere of Norbiton	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
Baroness Williams of Trafford	Chief Whip
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions

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Written Statements

Monday, 9 January 2023

A47 Wansford to Sutton

[HLWS470]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Transport (Huw Merriman), has made the following Ministerial Statement:

I have been asked by my Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State, to make this Written Ministerial Statement. This Statement concerns the application made under the Planning Act 2008 for the proposed development by National Highways of the A47 Wansford to Sutton.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make his decision within 3 months of receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) to extend the deadline and make a Statement to the House of Parliament announcing the new deadline. The Secretary of State received the Examining Authority's report on the A47 Wansford to Sutton Development Consent Order application on 11 October 2022 and the current deadline is 11 January 2023.

The deadline for the decision is to be extended to 17 February 2023 to allow for further consultation on a number of outstanding issues and to allow sufficient time for the analysis of responses to the consultation.

The decision to set a new deadline is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant development consent.

Appointment of the Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests

[HLWS474]

Lord True: My Rt Hon Friend the Prime Minister has made the following statement:

I would like to inform the House that, on 22 December 2022, I appointed Sir Laurie Magnus CBE to the role of Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests. The office of Independent Adviser has existed since 2006 and performs a critically important role, rooted in the Ministerial Code, as a source of trusted, impartial advice to the Prime Minister on the proper management of Ministers' private interests and on adherence to the Code itself.

Sir Laurie has been appointed for a non-renewable five-year term and will discharge the role under existing published Terms of Reference.

I am confident that Sir Laurie not only demonstrates the necessary qualities but will serve in the role with distinction, in the best traditions of public service.

A copy of my exchange of letters with Sir Laurie, together with the Terms of Reference, have been placed in the Library of the House.

I am also placing in the Library a copy of the Ministerial Code, which was re-issued on the same day. As before, the Ministerial Code sets out my expectations for the way in which Ministers should conduct themselves. As I set out in the foreword to that document, the Government will work day and night to deliver for the British people. And as we go about our tasks, we will uphold the Principles of Public Life, ensuring integrity, professionalism and accountability at every level.

BioNTech Strategic Partnership

[HLWS476]

Lord Markham: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Steve Barclay) has made the following written statement:

The UK's response to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the power of Government collaborating with industry to accelerate life sciences innovation. We want to take this innovative approach to tackling the other major healthcare challenges we face, such as cancer.

The Government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Germany-based company BioNTech. This MoU aims to build a strategic partnership which will bring innovative immunotherapy research to the UK, with the potential to transform cancer patient outcomes and develop new vaccines for infectious diseases. This agreement will pave the way for a multi-year partnership between the Government and BioNTech, accelerating trials into the company's ground-breaking pipeline of products targeted at major global diseases such as breast, lung and pancreatic cancer, malaria and tuberculosis.

BioNTech are a biopharmaceutical company developing a pipeline of cutting-edge immunotherapies (including mRNA-based vaccines and therapies). The company became a household name in 2020 after developing a COVID-19 vaccine in partnership with Pfizer, which went on to become the world's first licensed vaccine to use novel mRNA technology.

Through this partnership with BioNTech, Government aims to ensure trials into further promising vaccines and therapies are accelerated, to reach our patients faster. The agreement means cancer patients will get early access to trials exploring personalised mRNA therapies, like cancer vaccines. No two cancers are the same and mRNA vaccines will contain a genetic blueprint to stimulate the immune system to attack cancer cells. The collaboration will aim to deliver 10,000 personalised therapies to UK patients by 2030 through a new research and development hub, creating at least 70 jobs and strengthening the UK's positions as a leader in global life sciences.

BioNTech will also be the first industry partner in the new Cancer Vaccine Launch Pad which is being developed by NHS England and Genomics England. The launch pad will help to rapidly identify large numbers of cancer patients who could be eligible for trials and explore potential vaccine across multiple types of cancer.

The partnership will aim to help patients with early and late-stage cancers.

If successfully developed, cancer vaccines could become part of the standard of care.

Farming Payments Policy

[HLWS473]

Lord Benyon: My Right Honourable friend the Minister of State for Food, Farming and Fisheries (Mark Spencer) has made the following Statement:

We are undertaking the most significant reform of agricultural policy and spending in England in decades as we take England out of the Common Agricultural Policy. We are phasing out unfair and environmentally damaging farm subsidies, radically improving our services to farmers, providing one-off grants to support farm productivity, innovation, research and development, and developing and expanding our schemes to pay farmers to provide environmental goods and services alongside food production.

The reform is enabled by our manifesto commitment to guarantee an average of £2.4 billion to farmers and landowners in each year of this Parliament, with all funding released from Direct Payments reductions to be made available through our new grants and schemes.

The changes we are making are essential to help us grow and maintain a resilient, productive agriculture sector over the long term and at the same time achieve our ambitious targets for the environment and climate, playing our role in tackling these huge, global challenges. These reforms are about food and nature going hand in hand for all farmers, with environmental goods and services playing a key role in all farm businesses.

We have reviewed our plans for the Agricultural Transition, considered feedback from the sector, and lessons learned from the early stages of the agricultural transition. We are moving ahead with the transition, on the same timescale, and pressing ahead with our Environmental Land Management schemes, fine-tuning them to make sure they help to deliver our ambitious outcomes on the environment and support a thriving farming sector.

As I confirmed at Oxford Farming Conference last week, farmers will receive increased payments for protecting and enhancing nature and delivering sustainable food production.

Farmers could receive up to a further £1,000 per year for taking nature-friendly action through the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI). This new management payment will be made for the first 50 hectares of farm (£20/ha) in an SFI agreement, to cover the administrative costs of participation and to attract smaller businesses - many of whom are tenant farmers - who are currently under-represented in the scheme.

Farmers with a Countryside Stewardship (CS) agreement will see an average increase of 10% to their revenue payment rates – covering ongoing activity such

as habitat management. Defra is also updating capital payment rates, which cover one-off projects such as hedgerow creation, with an average increase of 48%. We expect there to be 32,000 Countryside Stewardship agreements live at the start of this year, a 94% increase from 2020.

Meanwhile, capital and annual maintenance payments for the England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO) will also see an increase this year.

We will evolve the existing Countryside Stewardship scheme instead of inventing a new ‘Local Nature Recovery’ scheme, to get to the same destination of supporting farmers to contribute towards net zero and biodiversity among other outcomes. This will include expanding the scope of the scheme to pay for a wider range of actions at a greater ambition, further improving the service so it’s easy for farmers to apply and get paid and targeting our funding through the scheme to where it’ll have the biggest impact.

Taken together, these changes will mean we will support farmers and landowners for making space for nature alongside sustainable food production, contributing towards meeting the UK’s legally binding environment targets such as halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030, agreed at COP15 in December last year.

Later this month we’ll be publishing detailed information about what we will pay for in our schemes, both this year and in future, and how farmers will be able to get involved.

Future of Channel 4

[HLWS468]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: I am repeating the following Written Ministerial Statement made today in the other place by my Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Michelle Donelan MP:

Channel 4 is a great British success story. It is an integral part of our public service broadcasting system - contributing to the UK’s creative economy, providing greater choice for audiences, and supporting the booming British production sector. In fact, independent production in the UK is a now mature £3 billion industry, up from £500 million in 1995.

However, as the government set out in its [Broadcasting White Paper](#) last year, all public service broadcasters (PSBs) face challenges from structural changes in the broadcasting landscape. Channel 4, along with all other PSBs, is facing unprecedented competition for viewers, programmes and talent from overseas as well as new, rapidly-growing streaming platforms. It is important for the UK’s thriving creative industries and the wider economy that we support our PSBs to grow, compete and to make high-quality, original content that people all over the UK love, trust and learn from.

Channel 4 is uniquely constrained in its ability to respond to these challenges. There are limits on Channel

4's ability to raise capital and its current operating model effectively stops it from making its own content. Under current legislation it operates as a publisher-broadcaster, meaning that all its shows are commissioned or acquired from third parties - such as independent producers or other broadcasters - who typically retain the rights to those programmes.

The challenges faced by Channel 4 are real. That is why the previous government decided to proceed with a sale of the business in order to free the broadcaster from the constraints holding it back under public ownership.

After careful examination of the business case for the sale of Channel 4 through the lens of this government's focus on economic stability and long-term sustainable growth and considered engagement, I have decided that pursuing a sale is not the best option to ease the challenges facing Channel 4, nor to support growth in the UK's creative economy - especially the independent production sector. However, doing nothing also carries risks, and the government believes change is necessary to ensure the Corporation can continue to thrive now and long into the future, in a rapidly changing media landscape.

After careful discussions with Channel 4, I am announcing a package of interventions that will ensure the broadcaster remains focused on sustainability and has new opportunities to grow while serving audiences in the decades to come with high-quality, innovative and distinctive content.

When parliamentary time allows, we will, through the Media Bill, introduce a statutory duty on Channel 4 to consider its sustainability as part of its decision making. We are also working with Channel 4 to agree updated governance structures that assure the government of Channel 4's long-term sustainability, including an updated Memorandum of Understanding between my Department and Channel 4 which will be made publicly available.

To assist in Channel 4 meeting its new obligation, we will provide them with new commercial flexibilities. Whilst ensuring that Channel 4 continues to play its key role in incubating and supporting the independent production sector, which often includes new and highly-innovative companies, I will look to relax the publisher-broadcaster restriction to enable Channel 4 to make some of its own content, and exploit Intellectual Property (IP) as other public service broadcasters are able to.

In determining how this relaxation should be designed and implemented, the government will work closely with the independent production sector and others to consider necessary steps to ensure that Channel 4's important role in driving investment into the sector is safeguarded. Any changes to Channel 4's commissioning model would need to be introduced gradually, with appropriate checks and balances, and following consultation with the sector. For example, this will include increasing the level of Channel 4's independent production quota, which is currently set at 25 per cent of programmes; and potentially introducing

specific protections for smaller, new and innovative independent producers.

As part of the package, Channel 4 has agreed to enhance its support for the independent TV production sector and regional roles and skills. It will increase its annual investment in 4Skills - its paid training and placement programme for young people - from £5 million to £10 million a year by 2025. It will double its number of roles outside London from its original target of 300 to reach 600 roles across the UK in 2025. This will include jobs in Channel 4's national HQ in Leeds, as well as in Glasgow, Manchester, Bristol and potentially elsewhere.

To enable Channel 4 to make investments that could put it on a more sustainable footing, we will also make it easier and simpler for Channel 4 to draw down on its private £75 million credit facility. In the event it pursues more ambitious investment opportunities to promote the Corporation's long-term sustainability, we will support Channel 4 to access more private capital under its current borrowing limit of £200 million set in law - while taking steps to minimise the risk to public finances. We will also consider future requests to raise the organisation's borrowing limit if appropriate.

This package does not impact Channel 4's current 'out of London' or 'out of England' quotas, which are set in its broadcasting licence by Ofcom, and to which we would still expect Channel 4 to adhere.

Channel 4 will also include a new section in their annual report assessing the due impartiality of its news service and how the channel's content aims to demonstrate the highest editorial standards. This is important work that will add to transparency and focus and I look forward to seeing Channel 4's findings

Alongside the changes to Channel 4, the Media Bill will introduce a wide range of measures to modernise decades-old broadcasting regulations, including prominence reforms to increase the growth potential of the UK's public service broadcasters and foster innovations in the way TV is produced and consumed. Further details on the Media Bill will be announced in due course.

Gender Recognition: Approved Overseas Countries and Territories

[HLWS472]

Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist: My Rt. Hon. Friend the Minister for Women and Equalities (Kemi Badenoch MP) has today made the following statement:

I would like to notify the House of the progress we are making in implementing our 2020 response to the Gender Recognition Act (2004) consultation. In particular, the House will wish to be aware that I will be updating the list of approved overseas countries and territories (provided for under Section 1(1)(b) of the Gender Recognition Act) to make sure it does not compromise the integrity of the Gender Recognition Act. This follows previous periodic updates.

The list of approved overseas countries and territories was last updated in 2011. A commitment was made to keeping the list under review.

There are now some countries and territories on the list who have made changes to their systems since then and would not now be considered to have equivalently rigorous systems. It should not be possible for a person who would not satisfy the criteria to obtain UK legal gender recognition in the UK to use the overseas recognition route to obtain a UK Gender Recognition Certificate in the UK. This would damage the integrity and credibility of the process of the Gender Recognition Act.

We are finalising details of overseas countries and territories to be removed from the list via an affirmative Statutory Instrument. These comprise countries and territories where there is a clear indication that the country now no longer has a system at least as rigorous as those in the Gender Recognition Act 2004. We are undertaking a thorough checking system to verify our understanding of each overseas system in question.

I will formally engage with other colleagues and Ministers from devolved governments in advance of laying the Statutory Instrument. The Government is committed to ensuring that this outcome of the Gender Recognition Act consultation is followed through and upheld, and the overseas list will be updated via Statutory Instrument more regularly in future.

India Trade Negotiations

[HLWS469]

Lord Johnson of Lainston: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade (Kemi Badenoch MP) has today made the following statement:

The sixth round of UK-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations began on 12 December and concluded on 16 December. As with previous rounds, this was conducted in a hybrid fashion - UK officials travelled to New Delhi for negotiations and others attended virtually.

Technical discussions were held across 11 policy areas over 28 separate sessions. They included detailed draft treaty text discussions in these chapters.

Coinciding with the start of the round, on 12-13 December I also visited New Delhi to meet my counterpart, Minister Piyush Goyal. We discussed the negotiations and the wider UK and India trade relationship. Discussions covered our respective ambitions for the deal, and we welcomed the progress made so far. I also made clear on our red lines in the negotiation. I was also clear that in this negotiation, as with all our FTA negotiations, the NHS and the services it provides is not on the table.

I also met a number of UK and Indian businesses. I heard first-hand about the significant opportunities that an ambitious FTA could bring as well as the challenges that some businesses currently face and how governments can help break down barriers to trade and investment.

Both sides are working toward a balanced deal which will strengthen our economic links and bring real benefits to UK businesses, families and consumers.

The seventh round of official-level negotiations is due to take place in early 2023.

The Government will continue to keep Parliament updated as these negotiations progress.

Late Night Levy Consultation

[HLWS467]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: My Rt hon Friend the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire (Chris Philp) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The late night levy (the 'levy') is a discretionary power enabling licensing authorities in England and Wales to collect a financial contribution from premises that profit from the sale of alcohol late at night (between 12am and 6am).

Section 142 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 introduced several changes to the late night levy, which are yet to be commenced. Once in force, these changes will give licensing authorities the power to charge late night refreshment (LNR) premises the levy to assist with the cost of policing the NTE, give PCCs the right to request that a licensing authority formally propose a levy and require licensing authorities to publish information about how the revenue raised from the levy is spent.

LNR premises will only be charged the late night levy in areas where licensing authorities decide that they place demands on police resources in the NTE. In each area, licensing authorities will have the option of charging only premises licensed to sell alcohol, or to premises licensed to sell alcohol and premises licensed to sell late night refreshment. The consultation asks whether LNR premises should be charged the same rate as other venues included in a levy, or whether they should receive a 30% discount.

The Government recognises that businesses operating in the night time economy have faced particularly challenging times over the course of the pandemic. However, we believe the time is right to finally commence the changes made to the levy in 2017 which have been considerably delayed. The requirements for a local authority to consult widely before taking a final decision on the introduction of the levy locally provides sufficient safeguards to protect businesses and use the power effectively.

The consultation is aimed at late night refreshment providers, local licensing authorities, the police, licensed premises, members of the public and other interested parties in England and Wales, where these proposals apply. The consultation being launched today will run for 12 weeks.

A copy of this consultation will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and published on GOV.UK.

Moderna Strategic Partnership

[HLWS475]

Lord Markham: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Steve Barclay) has made the following written statement:

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the importance of having the ability to develop and deploy vaccines rapidly to respond to a health emergency, as well as to mitigate the potential economic and health costs such an emergency can cause. It also demonstrated the need to establish resilience on UK shores to avoid supply chain disruptions which could have severe public health and economic consequences. While the future trajectory of the COVID-19 virus is uncertain, delivering a consistent and resilient supply of COVID-19 vaccines is critical in ensuring safe and effective vaccines are provided on at least an annual basis over the next decade, to protect those who are most vulnerable to COVID-19.

With these challenges in mind, in June 2022 Ministers signed non-binding Heads of Terms and a single tender case for a strategic partnership between HMG and Moderna. Since then, the Vaccine Taskforce and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), has worked to negotiate a definitive agreement with Moderna. The execution of our contractual agreement for a 10-year partnership with Moderna was announced on 22 December 2022. The partnership will bring vaccine development onto UK shores, boosting our messenger RNA (mRNA) capability, strengthen our ability to scale up production rapidly in the event of a health emergency, and better equip the UK to respond to COVID-19 and future health emergencies.

Through this deal, Moderna will, at its own cost, establish a UK based manufacturing facility and Global Research and Development (R&D) Centre, as well as commit substantial investment into UK-based R&D activities over the 10-year period, bringing the UK a step closer to becoming the leading global hub for life sciences. The manufacturing facility will be capable of supplying up to 100m doses of respiratory vaccine per year in normal circumstances, increasing to up to 250m doses in the event of a health emergency. The UK will have priority access to these vaccines where they are demonstrated to be safe, effective, and authorised by the MHRA. These include both Moderna's proven and highly effective COVID-19 vaccine and others in its pipeline, including against flu and RSV, providing health resilience.

Moderna has demonstrated expertise in mRNA development which has the potential to be a transformative breakthrough technology in several disease areas, including cancer, respiratory illnesses and heart disease. mRNA vaccines also have the potential to treat multiple pathogens in a single shot and be delivered in rapid timeframes.

The new Innovation and Technology Research Centre will look to unlock this potential by developing revolutionary treatments in the UK, which will benefit

NHS patients and people worldwide. This will include running a significant number of clinical trials in the UK. Moderna has also pledged to fund grants for UK universities, including PhD places, research programmes and wider vaccine ecosystem engagement. The industry-leading, future-proof design of the plant will permit the addition of capability to manufacture a wide range of medicines and will be a massive boost to the UK's R&D capability, as well as creating more than 150 highly skilled jobs.

The partnership, secured by the Vaccine Taskforce, will be taken forward by the Covid Vaccines Unit in the UKHSA. This will see the UKHSA working with Moderna to ensure early vaccine development, supporting the G7 mission to get from variant to vaccine in 100 days. Construction is expected to commence in early 2023, with the first mRNA vaccine expected to be produced in the UK in 2025.

Travellers from China: Covid-19 Testing Requirements

[HLWS471]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: My Right Honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Transport (Jesse Norman), has made the following Ministerial Statement:

The Government has taken action, under powers within the Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act 1984, to limit the risk of COVID-19 infections from travellers originating from China. The Government has announced these precautionary and temporary measures to improve the UK's ability to detect potential new variants of COVID-19 from China, following an increase in cases there and the easing of their border measures from 8 January.

The decision has been taken due to a lack of comprehensive health information shared by China. The situation remains under review and if there are improvements in information sharing and greater transparency then the temporary measures will be amended. On 30 December 2022, the Government announced that it would require people flying directly or indirectly from mainland China to England to provide proof of a negative pre-departure test, taken within 2 days of departure. This came into effect as of 04:00 on Thursday 5 January 2023. This applies to transiting passengers, as well as those whose final destination is England.

In addition, we announced that the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) will launch surveillance which will see a sample of passengers from China, arriving at Heathrow airport only, undertaking PCR tests for COVID-19 on a voluntary basis. UKHSA activated this process on Sunday 8 January in readiness for the first flights arriving later this week. All positive samples will be sent for sequencing to enhance existing measures to monitor for new variants.

The UK joins a growing list of countries across the world including the US, France, Italy, Japan, Republic of

Korea, Spain, Malaysia and India in announcing measures designed to help to detect and assess any new COVID-19 variants. Whilst public health is a devolved matter and these measures currently apply only in England, the Government continues to work closely with the devolved administrations.

The Government recognises the impact that these temporary health measures may have on businesses and passengers. The situation remains under constant review and the UK is working with industry and closely monitoring the situation on the mainland while encouraging China to provide greater transparency on their COVID data.

Written Answers

Monday, 9 January 2023

Absent Voting: Fraud

Asked by *Baroness Pinnock*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the levels of fraud in the operation of postal voting; and what plans they have, if any, to introduce photo identification requirements for postal voting. [HL4494]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The Electoral Commission publishes a report annually on electoral fraud. I also refer the noble peer to the report by (then) Sir Eric Pickles on electoral fraud, which identified a series of weaknesses in the postal vote process (attached). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/securing-the-ballot-review-into-electoral-fraud>.

That report was commissioned following the 2015 Election Court ruling on electoral corruption in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

There are longstanding security measures which enhance the security of the postal voting process, including requiring postal voters to provide personal identifiers at the time of applying for a postal vote and which are checked at the time of a poll. The Elections Act 2022 introduces a package of sensible measures to enhance the security around absent voting including an identity check at the point of application for a postal vote, whereby an applicant will need to provide their National Insurance number to be checked against Government records. This process mirrors the current practice for Registering to Vote.

As is usual, the Government will keep this area of policy under review in the future.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Electoral fraud [HL4494 - eric_pickles_report_electoral_fraud.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-12-21/HL4494>

Absent Voting: Proof of Identity

Asked by *Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the requirement in the Voter Identification Regulations 2022 for electors to possess photo identification in order to vote, how electors participating using a postal vote will be required to prove their identity when completing their ballot paper. [HL4265]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: There are longstanding security measures focused on the security of the postal voting process, including requiring postal voters to provide personal identifiers at the time of applying for a postal vote and which are checked at the time of a poll. In

addition, other measures are available to electoral administrators can apply around the process to ensure security, such as monitoring numbers of postal voters and locations for unusual activity.

The Elections Act 2022 introduces additional safeguards against the potential abuse of postal voting including extending the secrecy provisions, which had previously only applied in polling stations, to postal votes and therefore making anyone coercing someone completing a postal vote liable to further criminal sanctions. The Act also requires those registered for a postal vote to re-apply for a postal vote every three years; imposes a ban on political campaigners handling postal votes (with some limited exceptions), supported by the creation of a new offence; and provides a power to limit the number of postal votes that a person may hand-in to a polling station or to the Returning Officer on behalf of others.

The Elections Act 2022 introduces an identity check at the point of application for a postal vote, whereby an applicant will need to provide their National Insurance number (or other documents or attestations where the applicant cannot provide a national insurance number) to be checked against HMG records. This process mirrors the current practice for Register to Vote.

Africa and Asia: Development Aid

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what was the total reduction in Official Development Assistance to the poorest countries in (1) Asia, and (2) Africa, last year; and how many projects saw a (a) reduction, or (b) elimination, of development funding. [HL3838]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Per the recently published Statistics for International Development (SID) for 2021 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-on-international-development>) states that bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Africa decreased by £883 million (33.8 per cent) from £2,610 million in 2020 to £1,727 million in 2021. The country that that experienced the largest country-specific decrease in spend within Africa was Ethiopia. Bilateral ODA to Asia was £1,334 million in 2021, a decrease of £639 million (32.4 per cent) compared to 2020, and the largest decrease in country-specific ODA was experienced by Bangladesh (reduction of £116m from 2020). The FCDO 2021-22 annual report and accounts (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fcdo-annual-report-and-accounts-2021-to-2022>) provides total Government ODA spend by country in pages 257-285 for the last five financial years.

We do not specifically record the number of projects that saw reductions/elimination of development funding, however the SID states that ODA for 2021 decreased by £3,054 million compared to 2020 which was driven by the Government's decision to reduce ODA from 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income to 0.5 per cent in 2021. The

SID reports the change in ODA spend between 2021 and 2020 by sector (page 38) and by region (pages 22/23).

Age Estimation Science Advisory Committee: Disclosure of Information

*Asked by **Baroness Lister of Burtersett***

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the reply by Lord Murray of Blidworth on 6 December (HL Deb cols 85 and 88), what factors they will consider in deciding whether to publish the report of the Independent Age Estimation Advisory Committee. [HL4257]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: In December 2021, the Home Office Chief Scientific Adviser set up the independent Age Estimation Science Advisory Committee to provide her with independent scientific and associated ethical advice, recommendations for best practice, and advice relating to issues raised by key stakeholders on the implementation of scientific methods of age assessment.

We are continuing to work with the committee regarding their report and considering their advice alongside other sources.

Aircraft: Air Conditioning

*Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle***

To ask His Majesty's Government, with regards to the reported contaminated air incidents on British Airways flight 286 on 25 October 2016 and British Airways flight 422 on 5 August 2019, what medical follow up checks have been conducted on passengers involved; and whether passengers were informed what chemicals they were exposed to during the flight. [HL4354]

*Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the recommendations made by the Air Accident Investigation Branch that all aircraft should have contaminated air warning systems fitted; and what steps they are taking to introduce this technology for UK-registered aircraft. [HL4357]

*Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle***

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to ensure UK airlines provide the training to flying staff that is outlined in Circular 344 of the International Civil Aviation Organisation, Guidelines on Education, Training and Reporting Practices related to Fume Events. [HL4358]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The UK is rightly proud of its excellent record of aviation safety, which is why concerns about cabin air have been investigated at length over a number of years. The Government takes any suggestions that people have suffered ill health as a result of flying very seriously.

It is not clear which AAIB recommendation is referred to. Where the AAIB makes safety recommendations, addressees are legally required to respond within 90 days giving their proposed actions and when they will be carried out, or if no action is to take place the reasons why. Responses are published on the AAIB's website, along with their assessment of the response.

*Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of exposure to engine oil and hydraulic fluid among airline crews; and what plans they have to fund research into the issue of exposure, which can lead to the condition Organophosphorus Ester-Induced Chronic Neurotoxicity. [HL4355]

Lord Markham: In 2013, The UK Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) reviewed four research projects on airborne concentrations and surface deposition of chemical pollutants in the cabins of commercial aircraft, which had been commissioned by the Department for Transport. The COT concluded that contamination of cabin air by components and/or combustion products of engine oils, including triaryl phosphates, does occur and peaks of higher exposure have been recorded during episodes that lasted for seconds. No further assessments have been commissioned.

The Department funds research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including research into environmental exposure. However, it is not usual practice to ring-fence funds for particular topics or conditions. Applications for funding are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality.

Antimicrobials: Drug Resistance

*Asked by **Baroness Finlay of Llandaff***

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to maintain the UK's international leadership on tackling antimicrobial resistance by building on the momentum generated by the UK's G7 presidency in 2021. [HL4222]

Lord Markham: We continue to work with G7 partners to implement commitments made on antimicrobial resistance (AMR), including those secured during the United Kingdom's 2021 presidency. The UK Special Envoy on AMR, Professor Dame Sally Davies, also recently attended the Third High-level Ministerial Conference on AMR in Oman. In November 2022, the Government issued a call for evidence to seek expert contributions to the next five-year AMR national action plan, which has been shared with international counterparts.

Armed Conflict: Offences against Children

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to ensure that children who have experienced sexual violence in conflict are prioritised in the implementation of their new Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Strategy; and what steps they are taking to strengthen the effectiveness of the investigation and prosecution of sexual violence against children in conflict. [HL4244]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) Strategy prioritises justice for survivors, including children, as one of four key objectives. As part of strategy implementation, the UK is delivering a new £8.6 million initiative - A.C.T (Accountability Commission & Taskforce) for Survivors - that will support national authorities deliver justice. The initiative aims to bring together expertise and best practice, build capacity, improve national implementation, and increase support to survivors.

We continue to use our permanent United Nations Security Council (UNSC) membership to ensure conflict-related child protection issues remain a key part of UNSC discussions and that UN operations address child protection issues, including conflict-related sexual violence.

Asylum

Asked by Lord Kamall

To ask His Majesty's Government how they determine whether asylum seekers who arrive in the UK without documentation are genuinely from a country not on their list of safe countries. [HL4226]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The Home Office employs various processes to establish the identities of asylum claimants, in circumstances where it is not sufficiently evidenced in reliable documentation. These processes include checks of all relevant Home Office databases (such as biographic and biometric checks of previous visa applications), biometric checks with partners in the United States and other countries, and – where there are concerns about a person's claimed origin - robust nationality testing may be carried out during a substantive asylum interview. The checks and the testing employed during interview may be applied to any person claiming asylum, including those from the 'safe country' list.

If any documents are presented by claimants in support of either their identity or their claim, the reliance to place on them is assessed in the round, alongside these checks and wider evidence in the case, in line with our published guidance: 'Assessing credibility and refugee status'.

Asylum: Applications

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that those newly appointed as Asylum Decision Makers are adequately trained in order to achieve fair outcomes. [HL4264]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: Asylum Operations remain committed to the training and upskilling of our staff. We have a comprehensive training programme and mentoring framework in place to support this delivered by a dedicated team of senior grade trainers and higher-grade technical experts. This programme maintains case-working expertise and improves decision-maker capability.

Recently a comprehensive Training Plan on the provisions introduced by the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 was developed.

Asylum: Deportation

Asked by Lord Rosser

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the UK–France joint statement: enhancing co-operation against illegal migration, published on 14 November, how many unsuccessful asylum seekers are expected to be removed from the UK. [HL4341]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The UK-France Joint Statement published on 14 November set out the new Joint Strategic Objectives and Joint Operational plan for both countries to tackle illegal migration. This includes measures to prevent and deter illegal crossing attempts with investment in removal centres in France to support voluntary returns to countries of origin.

We do not provide pre-emptive figures for the number of unsuccessful asylum seekers who are expected to be removed from the UK.

Asylum: Domestic Abuse

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the statement by the Prime Minister on Illegal Immigration on 13 December (HC Deb cols 885–8), what assessment they have made of the gender impacts of the aspiration that claims for asylum will be processed "in days or weeks, not months or years", given the difficulties many victims of sexual violence may have in immediately disclosing the full extent of their experiences. [HL4405]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: We are committed to ensuring that all asylum claimants, including those who have suffered sexual violence, feel able to disclose their

experiences early in the asylum process, so that decision-makers can consider that evidence and grant protection status where it is needed without undue delay.

We appreciate that it may be difficult for claimants to disclose sensitive information and we have gender sensitive processes in place, for example providing gender specific interviewers and interpreters where appropriate. If there is a discrepancy between the information someone provides at different stages in the asylum process, we will clarify this during the asylum interview. We will take account of the explanation the claimant provides alongside any other underlying factors such as gender, feelings of shame and social standing when assessing credibility and deciding whether the claimant qualifies for protection status.

Asylum: Finance

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Sharpe of Epsom on 24 October (HL2407), what estimate they have made of the number of people with British children who have applied for a change to their asylum status from a status with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) over the last five years. [HL4280]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The requested information is not held as the NRPF policy for Group 2 refugees is not currently operational. From 28 June 2022, individuals with refugee permission to stay (Group 1 refugees) or temporary permission to stay (Group 2 refugees) currently have full access to the labour market as well as recourse to public funds. However, the conditions attached to permission to stay on a protection route may change at a later point.

Asylum: Hong Kong

Asked by Lord Leong

To ask His Majesty's Government what assistance they are providing to those who have fled Hong Kong and are claiming asylum status in the UK; and of those applicants, how many are women. [HL4201]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The UK has a proud record of providing protection for people who need it.

Asylum: Staff

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the statement by the Prime Minister on Illegal Immigration on 13 December (HC Deb cols 885–8), whether the commitment to double the number of asylum caseworkers will be delivered by (1) an increase in the number of civil servants, or (2) a redeployment of existing civil servants from other areas of work. [HL4406]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: We have doubled the number of Asylum Decision Makers from 614 in 2021/22 to around 1,250 today through a range of recruitment exercises. We continue to recruit using standard Civil Service processes.

Asylum: Temporary Accommodation

Asked by Baroness Humphreys

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to reimburse the Welsh government and local authorities for the costs associated with temporarily housing asylum seekers. [HL3934]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The Home Office has a statutory obligation to provide accommodation and other support to asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute while their application for asylum is being considered.

The Home Office accommodates and provides support to supported asylum seekers in contingency accommodation whilst we consider their asylum claim and we do not provide funding to either the Welsh government or local authorities with regard to this cohort of asylum seekers. Our accommodation providers have a robust delivery model in place to ensure hotel accommodation is managed well to minimise impact on the local community.

The Full Dispersal model, announced on 13 April 2022 is supported by £21million of un-ringfenced grant funding to make sure eligible local authorities can provide wraparound support locally. Local authorities will also receive £3,500 for each new dispersal accommodation bed space in the 22/23 financial year.

Aviation

Asked by Lord Hay of Ballyore

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the current support available for the aviation sector and its supply chain. [HL4449]

Lord Callanan: Through the Aerospace Technology Institute Programme, industry and Government are co-investing in the development of cutting-edge aircraft technology to grow UK's share of the global aerospace market.

The 2021 Spending Review increased government's commitment to aerospace R&D by 50% to £685 million across the Spending Review Period, extending the programme to 2031. By 2025, government and industry will invest almost £4 billion in developing new ultra-efficient and zero emission aircraft technologies.

We have supported industry investment in supply chain competitiveness through our 'Sharing in Growth', SC21 Competitiveness & Growth, and NATEP programmes, which have benefited from over £140m public funding, leveraging additional private investment.

Aviation: Pregnancy

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether exposure to synthetic jet engine oil and hydraulic fluids or their decomposition products poses any risk to unborn children. [HL4356]

Lord Markham: The Department for Transport has asked the UK Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) to update its 2007 and 2013 reviews and statements on the potential human health effects due to fume and contamination events. This review is continuing and a statement will be published in due course. However, effects on an unborn child are not being specifically assessed.

BBC Mid-Term Review

Asked by *Lord Pearson of Rannoch*

To ask His Majesty's Government who is the chair of the Mid-Term Review of the BBC, announced by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on 26 May; and what are the names of the departmental officials who comprise the review body. [HL4388]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: As set out in the [Terms of Reference](#) published on 26 May, the BBC Mid-Term Review is being conducted by officials from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The officials are based in the Media and Creative Industries Directorate, led by Robert Specterman-Green as Director, which is part of the Digital & Media Group led by Susannah Storey as Director-General. Officials working on the Mid-Term Review report to the Secretary of State.

Further information on the officials working on the Mid-Term Review is not disclosable. Disclosing personal information such as employee names would, amongst other things, contravene one of the data protection principles in schedule 1 of the Data Protection Act and also the principles outlined in our Department's [privacy notice](#).

The Answer includes the following attached material:

BBC Mid-Term Review: Terms of Reference [BBC Mid-Term Review_ Terms of Reference - GOV.UK.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-12-16/HL4388>

BBC World Service

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what account they take of the requirement, under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to assist in the dissemination of news and information to citizens denied access to free media in their homelands when

determining BBC and FCDO priorities for the World Service and other related spending. [HL4213]

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether it is their policy to support mechanisms to deliver news and other information to people living in North Korea. [HL4214]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The FCDO strongly values the BBC World Service's role in bringing high-quality and impartial broadcasting to audiences in need, particularly where free speech is limited.

The BBC has provided assurance that it will continue to serve audiences in countries lacking media freedom and a free press, such as North Korea. Through the World 2020 programme, the FCDO provides support to the BBC Korean service which is aimed at audiences across the Korean Peninsula, including inside North Korea where access to international media sources is extremely limited.

The UK is committed to media freedom, and to championing democracy and human rights around the world.

Biometric Residence Permits

Asked by *Lord Rosser*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many individuals are currently waiting more than 48 hours for delivery of their Biometric Residence Permit. [HL4343]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The waiting times for biometric residence permits (BRP) are dictated by the BRP production and delivery processes.

We aim to deliver a BRP within 7 working days of the immigration decision. BRPs are produced at the secure delivery facility (Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency (DVLA)) within 48 hours of the production request being made and are collected by our secure delivery partner the same day. Our secure delivery partner (FedEx) aims to attempt to deliver the BRPs within 48 hours of receipt of the BRPs. This equates to a minimum of 5 working days from date of production request being made to delivery of the BRP. We have added an additional 2 working days to the timeline advised to applicants to allow us to resolve any production issues.

In October, November & December, DVLA produced all BRPs within 48 hours of the production request, with 100% of all cards being produced within 24 hours.

In October, November & December FedEx attempted to deliver 99.83% of BRPs within 48 hours.

Birds: Conservation

Asked by *Lord Robathan*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to either (1) encourage, or (2) mandate, the installation of "swift bricks" in new build or refurbished buildings, to assist conservation by providing nesting cavities for swifts and other birds. [HL4498]

Lord Benyon: All local authorities have a duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of their policy or decision making. As well as this duty, national planning policy states that the planning system should minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible. Planning Practice Guidance published to help implement planning policy makes clear that relatively small features can often achieve important benefits for wildlife, such as incorporating ‘swift bricks’ and bat boxes in developments and providing safe routes for hedgehogs between different areas of habitat. Specific biodiversity features, such as swift bricks, would normally be required of developments through either the relevant local plan or the local authority’s development control team.

Through the Environment Act 2021 we have introduced a mandatory duty for developers to deliver a ‘biodiversity net gain’, which will mean that habitats for wildlife must be left in a measurably better state than they were before any development.

Bob Chan

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty’s Government why they did not expel the diplomats who allegedly assaulted pro-democracy protestor Bob Chan in the Chinese Consulate in Manchester. [HL4274]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Consul General and five other officials have left the UK, and are no longer accredited consular staff in the UK. We have been clear that the Consul General would not be welcome to do a further posting in the UK. He is responsible for the behaviour of his staff. Throughout this process, we have been clear that in the UK, we abide by the rule of law, follow due process and respect the operational independence of our police. Our firm diplomacy and actions have shown the seriousness with which we take these incidents, and have ultimately had an impact.

Brain Cancer: Health Services

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask His Majesty’s Government what steps they are taking to improve after care for patients who have received surgery for the treatment of brain tumours. [HL4295]

Lord Markham: Where appropriate, every person diagnosed with cancer will have access to personalised care, including needs assessment, a care plan and health and wellbeing information and support. This is being delivered through the National Health Service comprehensive model of personalised care, empowering patients to manage their care and maximise the potential of digital and community-based support. All patients will have access to the appropriate expertise and support, including a Clinical Nurse Specialist or other support worker. After treatment, patients move to a follow-up

pathway to suit their needs, which ensures rapid access to clinical support is available should they have concerns regarding their health.

NHS England is reviewing and updating all service specifications, which describe the relevant specialists involved in clinical multidisciplinary teams to optimise patient care.

Brazil: Politics and Government

Asked by The Earl of Dundee

To ask His Majesty’s Government what plans they have to encourage the government of Brazil to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law. [HL4488]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The UK regularly engages with the Brazilian government, civil society and other partners to talk about and monitor human rights developments and respect for the rule of law in Brazil. This engagement is at official and ministerial levels, including recently by the Foreign Secretary. Ahead of Brazil’s Universal Periodic Review in November, the UK asked how Brazil intends to strengthen protections of human rights including of environmental and human rights defenders, as well as women at risk of trafficking and the LGBT+ community. We will continue to raise these issues with the incoming government of President-elect Lula da Silva.

British National (Overseas): Visas

Asked by Lord Leong

To ask His Majesty’s Government how many British National (Overseas) visas have been issued since the visa scheme was launched; and how many of those have settled in the UK. [HL4200]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The Home Office releases data on the BN(O) route as part of the quarterly migration statistics. There were a total of 121,193 BN(O) route applications made out of country granted between 31 January 2021 and 30 September 2022, and a total of 23,383 BN(O) route applications made in country granted between 31 January 2021 and 30 September 2022.

14 people on the BN(O) visa route have been granted settlement in the UK up to the end of September 2022.

The Home Office publishes data on visas, grants of settlement and the British National Overseas (BN(O)) route in the ‘Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release’ on GOV.UK.

Data on the number of entry clearance visa grants to main applicants under the BN(O) route are published in table Vis_D02 of the entry clearance visas applications and outcomes detailed dataset. Data on the number of grants of settlement are published in table Se_D02 of the settlement detailed dataset

Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the ‘Notes’ page of the workbook. The latest data relates up to, and including, September 2022. Information on

future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the 'Research and statistics calendar'.

British Nationality: Assessments

Asked by Baroness Foster of Aghadrumsee

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the Life in the UK test. [HL4283]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: There is currently no limit on how many times the Life in the UK test may be re-taken. The pass rate for applicants from Hong Kong is not available in a publishable format.

The Life in the UK test is important for anyone applying to settle permanently in the UK to ensure they have an understanding of the democratic principles underlying British society and aspects of our culture and traditions. We intend to set out our plans to review the Life in the UK handbook as part of wider nationality reforms in the first half of next year.

Asked by Baroness Foster of Aghadrumsee

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the pass rate for the Life in the UK test for (1) all applicants, and (2) applicants from Hong Kong. [HL4284]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: There is currently no limit on how many times the Life in the UK test may be re-taken.

The pass rate for the Life in the UK test for financial quarter 2022-23 is 68.5%. All pass rates for the Life in the UK test are published in [Visas and Citizenship data: Q3 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk). The pass rate for applicants from Hong Kong is not available in a publishable format.

The Life in the UK test is important for anyone applying to settle permanently in the UK to ensure they have an understanding of the democratic principles underlying British society and aspects of our culture and traditions. We intend to set out our plans to review the Life in the UK handbook as part of wider nationality reforms in the first half of next year.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Visas and Citizenship data: Q3 2022
[Table_with_details_of_fees_and_unit_costs_-_9_November_2022.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-12-14/HL4284>

British Nationality: Fees and Charges

Asked by Lord Rosser

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the fee for citizenship applications; and what is the administrative cost of processing such applications. [HL4305]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The fee for an application to naturalise as a British citizen is £1,250 and the unit cost of processing the application is estimated to be £416.

The fee for Nationality registration as a British citizen for an adult is £1,126 and the unit cost of processing the application is estimated to be £416.

The fee for Nationality registration as a British citizen for a child is £1,012 and the unit cost of processing the application is estimated to be £416.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Visa fees transparency data Nov 2022
[Table_with_details_of_fees_and_unit_costs_-_9_November_2022.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-12-14/HL4305>

Asked by Lord Rosser

To ask His Majesty's Government what was the annual surplus received from citizenship applications in (1) 2019, (2) 2020, and (3) 2021, after deducting administration costs. [HL4306]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The Home Office does not publish the information sought to the level of granularity required. Information on revenue or costs relating to citizenship applications is not published, nor is any surplus derived from citizenship applications routinely calculated or published.

The Home Office does report information on overall visa and immigration income in the Annual Report and Accounts.

Buildings: Energy

Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made using building regulations to improve the energy resilience of properties. [HL4297]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: In December 2021, the Government amended Building Regulations to require new buildings, as of June 2022, to meet higher energy efficiency standards. This means that new homes will produce 30% less Carbon Dioxide emissions compared to previous 2013 standards with new non-domestic properties producing 27% less Carbon Dioxide emissions. The amendment also included improvements in the energy efficiency standards required of new and replacement thermal elements, replacement building services, and controlled fittings when undertaking a renovation or extension of an existing building.

Buildings: Safety

Asked by Baroness Pincock

To ask His Majesty's Government how they expect the provisions of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and

Reform) Bill, if passed, will interact with the Building Safety Act 2022; and what steps they will take to ensure provisions in the Act concerning building safety standards are not undermined by the revocation of retained EU law. [HL4492]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: I refer the noble Baroness to the answer given (attached) to [PQ 105305](#) on 12 December 2022.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

[PQ 105305 \[HL4492 - Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament.pdf\]](#)

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-12-21/HL4492>

Business Rates: Reform

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent assessment they have made of business rates and the case for reform. [HL4369]

Baroness Penn: The Government recently undertook a full review of the business rates system. The Final Report of the Business Rates Review was published at Autumn Budget 2021. The report reaffirmed the importance of business rates as part of the UK tax system, particularly as they raise around £20 billion a year to fund vital local services. As part of this Review the Government committed to more frequent revaluations from 2023, a major reform to the system ensuring that business rates liabilities are more responsive to changing market conditions. This addresses a key ask of stakeholders for more frequent revaluations and to reduce the burden of business rates to make the system fairer.

At Autumn Statement 2022, the Government announced a package of changes and tax cuts worth £13.6 billion over the next five years. The package contains new measures to reduce the burden of business rates on firms, including a freeze in the multiplier, extended relief for high street businesses, and a new Exchequer funded Transitional Relief scheme to help ratepayers adapt to their new bills.

The Government keeps all taxes under review.

Business: Inflation and Interest Rates

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support companies facing financial pressures due to the impact of inflation and interest rate increases. [HL4426]

Lord Callanan: The Government recognises the impact rising prices are having on businesses.

Businesses will have benefitted from the Government's reversal of the National Insurance rise, saving businesses on average £4,200, cut fuel duty for 12 months and the

Energy Bill Relief Scheme, to protect businesses from high energy costs over the winter. The Employment Allowance was increased to £5,000 from April and we have continued to provide business rate relief worth over £7bn, freezing the business rates multiplier for a further year.

In addition, at the Autumn Statement, my Rt Hon Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £13.6 billion of support for businesses over the next five years, reducing the burden of business rates.

Cameroon: Armed Conflict

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park on 21 November (HL3575), whether they will publish (1) the conflict analysis for Cameroon, conducted in 2019, and (2) the names of the independent experts they spoke to during the course of their research. [HL4044]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The FCDO's conflict analysis for Cameroon is an internal document and will not be published.

Cancer: Health Services

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase cancer treatment capacity in line with current demand. [HL4302]

Lord Markham: The National Health Service will recover and expand elective services over the next three years, including cancer services. This includes reducing the number of people waiting more than 62 days to commence treatment following suspected cancer to pre-pandemic levels by March 2023. We have allocated more than £8 billion from 2022/23 to 2024/25, in addition to the £2 billion Elective Recovery Fund and £700 million Targeted Investment Fund already made available in 2021/2022 to increase elective activity, including cancer services.

Cancer: Radiotherapy

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to improve access to radiotherapy treatments for cancer patients. [HL4303]

Lord Markham: Since 2016, over £160 million has been invested in radiotherapy equipment, which has replaced or upgraded approximately 100 radiotherapy treatment machines. In 2019/20, 11 radiotherapy networks were established in England to increase access to specialist skills and improve patient outcomes.

In 2022/23, NHS England will complete a capacity and demand review of external beam radiotherapy capacity. This will support local systems to plan radiotherapy

provision and allocate system capital allocations appropriately, based on an assessment of equipment age, capacity and demand, opportunities to improve access and service risk.

Childcare

Asked by Baroness Chapman of Darlington

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure childcare is (1) accessible, and (2) affordable. [HL4438]

Baroness Barran: The department is committed to improving the availability and affordability of childcare which is why we have spent over £3.5 billion in each of the past three years on our early education entitlements to support families with the cost of childcare. This means that thousands of parents are benefitting from government childcare support.

In the 2021 Spending Review, we announced additional funding of £160 million in 2022/23, £180 million in 2023/24 and £170 million in 2024/25, compared to the 2021/22 financial year. This is for local authorities to increase hourly rates paid to childcare providers, reflecting cost pressures and changes in the number of eligible children anticipated at the time of the Spending Review.

For 2023/24, we will invest an additional £20 million into early years funding, on top of the additional £180 million for 2023/24. Taken together, this will help support providers at a national level with the additional National Living Wage costs associated with delivering the free childcare entitlements next year.

In July, we announced measures to reduce the costs and bureaucracy facing providers and ensure families can access government support to save them money on their childcare bills. This included the launch of a new £1.2 million communications campaign via the childcare choices website to ensure every parent knows about the government funded support they are eligible for: <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>.

The department continues to work across government, looking at ways to make childcare more affordable and accessible to ensure that families benefit from the government-funded support they are entitled to.

Childcare: Fees and Charges

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to provide financial support to (1) parents, and (2) charities, facing high childcare fees. [HL4463]

Baroness Barran: For families with younger children, childcare costs are often a significant part of their household expenditure, which is why improving the affordability and availability of childcare is important for this government. The department has spent £20 billion over the last five years supporting families with the cost

of childcare. This includes over £3.5 billion in each of the past three years on early education entitlements. That is thousands of parents benefitting from government childcare support.

In July, we announced measures to reduce the costs and bureaucracy facing providers and ensure families can access government support to save them money on their childcare bills. This included the launch of a £1.2 million communications campaign via the childcare choices website to ensure every parent knows about the government funded support they are eligible for: <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>.

We are also investing over £200 million a year in the Holiday Activities and Food programme, which provides enriching activities and healthy meals for disadvantaged children during school holidays.

The department continues to work across government, looking at ways to make childcare more affordable and accessible to ensure that families benefit from the government-funded support they are entitled to.

Childcare: Tax Allowances

Asked by Baroness Chapman of Darlington

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase (1) awareness, and (2) the take-up, of their childcare schemes. [HL4439]

Baroness Barran: Improving parents' awareness and take-up of childcare schemes is a government priority.

Delivered in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions and HM Revenue and Customs, the Childcare Choices campaign aims to increase awareness of government childcare support to ease the pressures for working parents, and signposts to the Childcare Choices website to make it easy for people to claim: <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>.

The campaign has been delivered in two bursts through radio, search, digital outdoor (e.g. bus stop advertising) and social media advertising, with the first burst running over the summer period from 30 June to 31 August. We also delivered a press partnership with the Metro (online and print), the Sun Online and the Independent Online in August. The second campaign burst went live on 31 October, with a short pause over Christmas, before it resumes again in the new year.

The campaign has driven extensive reach, with ads being viewed through digital and search over 59 million times. There has also been strong engagement in the campaign, with over 559,000 Childcare Choices website sessions. The first burst of the campaign has also demonstrated a solid conversion rate, with 77,995 referrals to GOV.UK pages from Childcare Choices for each element of childcare support:

- Universal Credit – 6,598 referrals, a 156% increase.
- Tax-Free Childcare – 25,840 referrals, a 116% increase.
- 30 hours – 16,731 referrals, a 27% increase.

We will be able to report on final GOV.UK referral numbers when the second burst of the campaign is complete. We continue to work across government to increase awareness and encourage families to use the government-funded support they are entitled to.

China: Diplomatic Service

Asked by Lord Rogan

To ask His Majesty's Government how many diplomats from China are based in the UK; and in which locations. [HL3519]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office publishes details of foreign embassies, high commissions and consular posts in the UK on gov.uk, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/foreign-embassies-in-the-uk>. This page includes the London Diplomatic List which contains the addresses and contact details of all embassies and high commissions, as well as the names of heads of mission and other diplomatic agents appointed in accordance with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations 1961. The entry for the People's Republic of China, as of December 2022, lists 127 diplomatic agents in the locations set out below. In addition, consular officials are appointed to the Consulates General of the People's Republic of China in Edinburgh, Manchester and Belfast.

Embassy of the People's Republic of China

49-51 Portland Place W1B 1JL

Consular Section

31 Portland Place W1B 1QD

Defence Section

25 Lyndhurst Road NW3 5PA

Economic and Commercial Office

16 Lancaster Gate W2 3LH

Cultural Section

11 West Heath Road NW3 7UX

Education Section

50 Portland Place W1B 1NQ

Science & Technology Section

10 Greville Place NW6 5JN

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the recent protests at the Chinese Consulate in Manchester, what representations they have made to overseas governments on sharing information about the six Chinese diplomats recently withdrawn from the UK by the government of China, in the event that those individuals are redeployed to a third country. [HL4352]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We engage closely with our international partners on a wide range of issues, including those related to China.

China: Foreign Relations

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by the Prime Minister on 28 November concerning "robust pragmatism" in foreign policy towards our competitors, how "robust pragmatism" will operate in practice in the UK's foreign policy towards China; what steps they will take to implement this approach to the UK's relationship with China; and how they will measure the effectiveness of this policy towards China. [HL4192]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We will continue to implement a comprehensive and coordinated approach to China in support of UK national interests. Alongside allies like the US, Japan, Australia and Canada we will manage sharpening competition and respond in ways that protect our interests and economic security. We will engage in dialogue with China when that can help solve pressing global challenges including economic stability or climate change. It remains the case that we do not publish National Security strategies on China or other issues. The upcoming Integrated Review Refresh will set out our approach to China.

Climate Change

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Callanan on 16 December (HL3971), what assessment they have made of the cost to the UK of following the advice of (1) the IPCC, and (2) the World Climate Declaration; and over what period of time they will take advice from both organisations. [HL4458]

Lord Callanan: The IPCC assesses the latest and most policy-relevant climate science, but does not make specific policy recommendations or directly advise governments. The IPCC's assessments are used on an ongoing basis to inform government decision making, including the UK Net Zero Strategy. The Government has not made an assessment of the World Climate Declaration.

Commodity Markets

Asked by Baroness Worthington

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the value of commodity derivatives or economically equivalent contracts which were traded (1) over the counter, and (2) in trading venues in the UK, by FCA-regulated firms in respect of (a) oil, (b) gas, (c) coal, (d) electricity, and (e) soft commodities, in the past 12 months. [HL4519]

Asked by Baroness Worthington

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of how many consumers have directly

invested in commodity derivatives for (1) oil, (2) gas, (3) coal, (4) electricity, and (5) soft commodities, in the past 12 months. [[HL4520](#)]

*Asked by **Baroness Worthington***

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of how many consumers have invested in commodity derivatives for (1) oil, (2) gas, (3) coal, (4) electricity, and (5) soft commodities, via automatic enrolment in workplace pensions over the past 12 months. [[HL4521](#)]

*Asked by **Baroness Worthington***

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the revenue and earnings attributable to UK listed firms from (1) trading commodity derivatives, and (2) economically equivalent over the counter contracts. [[HL4523](#)]

Baroness Penn: HM Treasury does not hold this data. However, such data may be provided publicly by certain financial markets data companies.

*Asked by **Baroness Worthington***

To ask His Majesty's Government what consumer protections are in place for consumers directly or indirectly investing in commodity derivatives. [[HL4522](#)]

Baroness Penn: Most commodity derivatives are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), who have an operational objective to secure appropriate protection for consumers of regulated financial services.

The protections the FCA have in place to protect consumers include requiring firms to provide clients with a general description of the nature and risks of financial instruments, and a warning that people usually lose money when trading speculative instruments with commodities as an underlying asset. These protections apply when consumers participate in the market directly and indirectly and enables them to make investment decisions on an informed basis. Depending on the circumstances, consumers may also be able to qualify for Financial Services Compensation Scheme protection when dealing indirectly with commodity markets.

Community Development and New Businesses: Urban Areas

*Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick***

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to develop community enterprises and entrepreneurship that are based around (1) local, and (2) circular, economies within town centres. [[HL4347](#)]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: His Majesty's Government recognises the positive contribution of social and community enterprises to society and the economy, including their vital role supporting local areas.

DCMS has launched the £4.1 million Social Enterprise Boost Fund to provide targeted support for early-stage social enterprises in disadvantaged places. This new fund will provide capacity-building such as business support, training, networking, one-to-one support and peer learning, and includes £1.5 million of grants for entrepreneurs to kick-start their social enterprises.

In addition to the Social Enterprise Boost Fund, DCMS supports the sector through the £900,000 Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Contract Readiness Fund, developed to increase social and community enterprise participation in public service delivery.

BEIS provides support through The Start Up Loans Company, a subsidiary of the British Business Bank, providing loans between £500 and £25,000 and pre- and post-application support to new entrepreneurs across the UK, including a year of free business mentoring for successful applicants.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

*Asked by **Lord Monks***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the furlough scheme on (1) relationships between employers and employees, and (2) the number of older people leaving the workforce; and in any such assessment, what links they have found between these factors. [[HL4424](#)]

Baroness Penn: The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme protected millions of UK jobs at a time of unprecedented economic uncertainty.

His Majesty's Treasury (HMT) and His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) jointly published an interim evaluation in September 2022, looking at the scheme between March and October 2020. A final evaluation, covering the full duration of the scheme and a Value for Money assessment, will be published in 2023.

Council Tax

*Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick***

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the system under which council tax bandings are designated. [[HL4464](#)]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: I refer the noble Lord to my answer to Question [HL4368](#) on 22 December 2022.

Council Tax: Tax Rates and Bands

*Asked by **Lord Kennedy of Southwark***

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent assessment they have made of the adequacy of the bands used for calculating council tax. [[HL4368](#)]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: As the Secretary of State set out recently, we keep all such policies under review.

Cryptocurrencies: Advertising

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of cryptocurrency advertisements being targeted at (1) young people, and (2) people from minority communities, including with the involvement of celebrities, sports stars and sports teams; and what plans they have, if any, to place restrictions on such advertising. [HL4473]

Baroness Penn: The government's ambition is to make the UK a global hub for cryptoasset technology and investment. In April, previous Ministers set out a number of reforms which will see the regulation and aspects of tax treatment of cryptoassets evolve. The government will also consult on its approach to regulating wider cryptoasset activities in the coming weeks.

Recent events in cryptoasset markets have highlighted the importance of establishing regulation which supports safe innovation and protects consumers and stability. As the cryptoasset market has developed rapidly, HMT and the FCA have been working at pace to adapt existing regulation to the challenges – and opportunities – posed by unique cryptoassets.

For instance, to protect consumers, the FCA has banned the sale of cryptoasset derivatives to retail consumers and in January 2022 the government published a response to a consultation on a proposal to bring certain cryptoassets into the scope of financial promotions regulation. The forthcoming legislation on cryptoasset promotions, and supporting FCA rules, will regulate in-scope cryptoasset financial promotions, requiring them to be fair, clear and not misleading. This is aimed at improving consumers' understanding of the risks and benefits associated with cryptoasset purchases and ensuring that cryptoasset promotions are held to the same standards as similar risk financial services products.

The government also draws attention to and restates the FCA's warnings to consumers that buyers of most cryptoassets should be prepared to lose all of the money they invest.

The government and the Cryptoassets Taskforce continue to closely monitor the wider cryptoasset market and will stand ready to take further regulatory action if required.

Democratic Republic of Congo: Mining

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of testimony by Hervé Diakiese Kyungu to a US Congressional hearing on 14 July that 40,000 children, some as young as six years old, are working in mines in the Democratic Republic of the

Congo; and what steps they are taking (1) through engagement with technology companies, and (2) via Overseas Development Assistance, to end the practice of child labour. [HL4243]

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the reply by Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park on 8 December (HL Deb, col 252), what plans they have to hold discussions with major technology companies regarding the use of child labour in cobalt mines in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and in particular its role in the extraction of lithium for use in batteries. [HL4246]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: Illicit mining in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the use of child labour remains a problem. We regularly raise the issue of child labour in DRC's mining sector both with the DRC government and through multilateral fora such as the Human Rights Council. With the DRC providing 70% of the global supply of cobalt, the UK remains committed to the urgency of addressing child forced and bonded labour in cobalt supply chains. The UK supports the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) which aims to improve transparency and governance in the mining sector. We are actively working with international partners and the Government of DRC to encourage responsible private sector activity and to address the governance and human rights issues linked to illicit mining. The UK provided funding to the "Effective Approaches to Ending the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Fragile Contexts", a multi-stakeholder consortium which develops innovative approaches to ending child labour in DRC.

Demonstrations: China

Asked by Lord Leong

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the protests outside the Chinese Consulate in Manchester, what steps they are taking to protect (1) British citizens protesting peacefully in the UK against the government of China, and (2) Chinese protestors living in the UK. [HL4371]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: Articles 10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights set out that everyone has the right to freedom of expression, assembly and association. This government will support these rights, including the right of individuals to engage in peaceful protest.

It is a long-standing tradition in this country that people are free to gather together and to demonstrate their views, provided that they do so within the law.

The management of demonstrations is an operational matter for the police. In certain circumstances, the police have a duty to take reasonable steps to protect those who want to exercise their rights peacefully.

Deposit Return Schemes

Asked by *Baroness Hayman of Ullock*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they expect to publish a response to their 2021 deposit return scheme consultation; and why that response was not published in early 2022 as planned. [HL4413]

Lord Benyon: We want to ensure we have an ambitious yet realistic timeframe for delivery of the scheme and sought views on what a feasible implementation timeline looked like in the 2021 consultation. Further details on when a DRS will be introduced will be in the government response to that consultation, which will be published early in the New Year. DRS presents a number of complex policy, delivery and design decisions which required additional time in 2022 to work through before we could finalise our response. Waste is a devolved policy area, and we are working closely with the devolved administrations and industry to support the successful delivery of the scheme across the UK, including mitigating the impacts that arise from differences in scheme implementation.

Asked by *Baroness Hayman of Ullock*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether it remains their intention for a deposit return scheme to be operational in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland from 2024; and what assessment they have made of the potential impact on (1) producers, (2) retailers, and (3) consumers, of a different implementation date in Scotland. [HL4414]

Lord Benyon: We want to ensure we have an ambitious yet realistic timeframe for delivery of the scheme and sought views on what a feasible implementation timeline looked like in the 2021 consultation. Further details on when a DRS will be introduced will be in the government response to that consultation, which will be published early in the New Year. DRS presents a number of complex policy, delivery and design decisions which required additional time in 2022 to work through before we could finalise our response. Waste is a devolved policy area, and we are working closely with the devolved administrations and industry to support the successful delivery of the scheme across the UK, including mitigating the impacts that arise from differences in scheme implementation.

Asked by *Baroness Hayman of Ullock*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure the deposit return scheme for England, Wales and Northern Ireland operates in a manner that avoids contamination with other forms of packaging. [HL4415]

Lord Benyon: One of the objectives of the DRS is to offer a greater opportunity to collect higher quality, uncontaminated materials in greater quantities. By creating a separate waste stream for the materials in scope

of the DRS (as opposed to them being collected at kerbside co-mingled with other recycled waste), we will be able to collect them to a high quality for reprocessing.

Domestic Abuse: Refuges

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Gloucester*

To ask His Majesty's Government how they intend to support refuges for victims of domestic violence to afford necessities such as utility bills, given the increased cost of living. [HL4289]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: Refuges provide vital services for victims of domestic abuse who need to flee their home. DLUHC is committed to the delivery of safe accommodation with support for all victims of domestic abuse, as part of the Government's overall Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.

The Government has put in place a number of energy assistance measures to provide support during the current cost of living crisis. We are working to ensure that domestic abuse sector providers are aware of, and able to take up, all energy assistance and advice available to them. We will monitor this carefully and work with partners on mitigating the impact of the cost of living crisis.

On 12 December the Minister for Housing & Homelessness announced two years of government funding - £127.3 million and £129.7 million for delivery of safe accommodation services in 2023/24 and 2024/25. This funding will enable local authorities to make longer term commissioning decisions and give certainty to local providers such as specialist domestic abuse refuges.

Ebola: Vaccination

Asked by *Baroness Suttie*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the World Health Organization (WHO) about approving the use of vaccines (1) to prevent, and (2) to mitigate, outbreaks of Ebola in endemic countries. [HL4081]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The UK regularly engages with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other international partners, including the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness (CEPI), to support research and use of vaccines to prevent and mitigate the spread of ebolavirus disease. For example, the UK supported research to develop an effective vaccine against the Zaire ebolavirus, which is approved by WHO and national regulatory authorities, and is used to control outbreaks in west and central Africa. The UK is also currently in regular dialogue with WHO, CEPI and other partners as part of our wider support to the Government of Uganda to take trials forward for candidate vaccines against the Sudan ebolavirus.

Educational Institutions: Energy

Asked by *Baroness Chapman of Darlington*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effect of rising energy costs on college budgets. [HL4410]

Baroness Barran: The department knows that alongside pay and inflationary pressures, one of the biggest challenges facing some colleges is the rising cost of energy. We are keeping under review the potential impacts of the rising cost of energy on providers across the department's remit.

Colleges are autonomous institutions responsible for their own financial sustainability and are taking actions to respond to inflationary pressures, for example through reducing energy consumption.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has outlined the range of support on energy cost increases that will be available for businesses, the public sector and households. As part of that, the Energy Bill Relief Scheme will provide a price reduction to ensure that all businesses and other non-domestic customers, including colleges, are protected from excessively high energy bills over this winter. Discounts will be applied to energy usage initially between 1 October 2022 and 31 March 2023.

Schools and colleges in England will also be allocated a share of £500 million in capital funding in the 2022/23 financial year (this comprises £447 million for schools and sixth form colleges and £53 million for further education colleges) to spend on energy efficiency upgrades.

This will not only help schools and colleges save money, but it will also make them more energy efficient during the cold period and increase winter resilience for future years. A further education college group will receive £290,000 on average from that additional funding. Allocations were published on 6 December 2022 to help colleges plan and payments are expected to be made in January 2023.

The department is investing £3.8 billion more in further education and skills over the Parliament as a whole to ensure people can access high-quality training and education that leads to good jobs, addresses skills gaps, boosts productivity and supports levelling up. This will support the sector to reform and deliver the technical, skilled education that employers want and our economy needs.

As set out in the department publication, 'College oversight: support and intervention', we assess and review colleges' financial health on a regular basis and use this information to determine where support and intervention from the department, Education and Skills Funding Agency and Further Education Commissioner can help colleges to improve their position. The publication is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/college-oversight-support-and-intervention>.

Ekrem İmamoğlu

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Turkey regarding the sentencing of Ekrem İmamoğlu, the mayor of Istanbul, to two years and seven months in prison for the crime of "insulting public officials". [HL4400]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK believes that freedom of expression is a fundamental human right. We have noted the sentence handed down to Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu and will continue to follow the legal proceedings in this case closely. We look to Turkey, as a modern democracy and a fellow member of the Council of Europe, to undertake any legal processes against political figures fairly, transparently and with full respect for the rule of law. We regularly raise human rights concerns with Turkish officials at senior levels and will continue to do so.

Elections: Proof of Identity

Asked by *Lord Wallace of Saltaire*

To ask His Majesty's Government when the website for people to apply for a free voter ID will be available to use. [HL4510]

Asked by *Lord Wallace of Saltaire*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Electoral Commission about when the publicity campaign for the Voter ID website will commence. [HL4511]

Asked by *Lord Wallace of Saltaire*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to provide extra funding to the Electoral Commission to enable a bigger publicity campaign to be run over a shorter timescale to highlight the requirement to present photo voter ID. [HL4512]

Asked by *Lord Wallace of Saltaire*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether there will be publicly available statistics showing how many people have applied for an ID on the Voter ID website. [HL4513]

Asked by *Lord Wallace of Saltaire*

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to delaying the implementation of Voter ID, given the concerns expressed by the Association of Election Administrators, the Local Government Association, and Electoral Commission. [HL4514]

Asked by *Lord Wallace of Saltaire*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to ensure that the number of voters turned

away from polling stations at the elections in May 2023 is recorded and published. [HL4515]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The Government is working closely with the Electoral Commission and local authorities to introduce voter identification at elections from May 2023.

The Electoral Commission is a body independent of the Government and is accountable to the UK Parliament. Funding of its duties including public awareness raising campaigns is a matter for the Speaker's Committee of the House of Commons.

The Voter Authority Certificate Application Service will go live on 16 January 2023 and updates on applications will be provided in due course.

Data will be collected by Returning Officers, including on incidences of electors not providing acceptable voter identification in polling stations, to inform the Electoral Commission and DLUHC evaluations of polls in May and the two future UK Parliamentary General Elections.

The department has an extensive change network including local authorities, Valuation Joint Boards, and electoral organisations which is supporting the implementation of voter identification in May 2023 and beyond.

Electoral Register: British Nationals Abroad

Asked by Baroness Pinnock

To ask His Majesty's Government what identifying information is required for residents not living in the UK to register to vote in UK elections. [HL4493]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: Currently an overseas elector must be a British citizen who was previously registered within the UK within the last 15 years. Overseas electors are subject to identity checks when registering to vote in the same way as domestic electors.

They are required to provide their full name, date of birth and National Insurance number to be checked against DWP data. If an overseas applicant's identity cannot be verified via the National Insurance number check, they can be required to provide an attestation of identity from a registered overseas elector who is not a close family member. Overseas electors are also subject to checks to demonstrate their connection to the address at which they are registering.

Embassies: China

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking against any Chinese diplomats involved in alleged violence against protestors at the Chinese Consulate grounds on 16 October. [HL4137]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As part of an independent investigation, the Police requested that the FCDO approach the Chinese Government to waive the immunity of the Chinese Consul General and five of his

staff to allow for interviews. Following our request, the Chinese Embassy notified us that they had removed the Consul General from the UK. The other five officials have also left the UK. It is right that those responsible for the disgraceful scenes in Manchester are no longer accredited to the UK.

Emergency Services: Industrial Disputes

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to introduce new anti-strike laws to prevent walkouts by emergency service workers. [HL4240]

Lord Callanan: While the Government recognises the importance of the right to strike, we need to balance this against the need to protect the public and keep them safe. The Government is therefore reviewing our industrial relations legal framework to ensure that it gets this balance right. More details will be given in due course.

Energy

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to strengthen Britain's reputation as an international partner in the energy industry. [HL4313]

Lord Callanan: The United Kingdom became the first major economy in the world to pass laws to end its contribution to global warming by 2050. Its Net Zero Strategy will secure 480,000 well-paid jobs and unlock £100 billion in investment in 2030. The North Sea Transition Deal sets out how the Government will partner with industry to transition the UK Continental Shelf to a net zero basin by 2050.

The UK works closely with international energy partners through the G7, G20 and International Energy Agency. The Government led the way to reduce dependence on Russian fossil fuels in order to starve Putin's war machine, including through energy sanctions, and maintain stable energy markets and prices. The Government will also continue to support Ukraine and has committed a total of £22 million and additional guarantees to support Ukraine's energy sector.

Energy Bills Rebate: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown

To ask His Majesty's Government when the energy support payments they pledged would be made available to all regions of the UK will be paid to people living in Northern Ireland; and what is the reason for the delay in making these payments. [HL4159]

Lord Callanan: On 19 December the Government announced that all households in Northern Ireland will receive support with their energy bills this winter through a single payment of £600. This is made up of £400 under the Energy Bills Support Scheme and £200 under the

Alternative Fuel Payment. This will be delivered through electricity suppliers, with payments starting in January.

For Northern Ireland we have developed and will deliver a separate and bespoke scheme, working with the separate Northern Ireland electricity suppliers, and respecting the very different nature of the energy market in that part of the United Kingdom.

Asked by Lord Hay of Ballyore

To ask His Majesty's Government what date those entitled to support under the Northern Ireland Energy Support Scheme will receive payment. [HL4450]

Lord Callanan: On 19 December 2022 the Government announced that all households in Northern Ireland will receive support with their energy bills this winter through a single payment of £600. This is made up of £400 of the Energy Bills Support Scheme and £200 of the Alternative Fuel Payment. This will be delivered through electricity suppliers, with payments starting in January.

Asked by Lord Rogan

To ask His Majesty's Government when they expect to complete the process of delivering £600 in energy support payments to all households in Northern Ireland. [HL4499]

Lord Callanan: On 19th December, the Government announced that all households in Northern Ireland will receive support with their energy bills this winter through a single payment of £600. This is made up of £400 of the Energy Bills Support Scheme and £200 of the Alternative Fuel Payment. This will be delivered through electricity suppliers, with payments starting in January and concluding as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Energy Supply

Asked by Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown

To ask His Majesty's Government what further steps they will take to boost the (1) security, (2) efficiency, and (3) affordability, of energy supplies during the winter months. [HL4162]

Lord Callanan: The UK has a secure and diverse energy system. The Government is confident in its plans to protect households and businesses in the full range of scenarios this winter.

The Government has put plans in place to secure supply and National Grid, working alongside energy suppliers and Ofgem, has launched a voluntary service to reward users who reduce their electricity demand at peak times. A similar scheme to reward voluntary demand reduction by the heaviest gas users to support energy security is also available, if required.

Making homes and businesses more energy efficient is part of the Government's wider long-term commitment,

announced as part of the Autumn Statement, to reduce the UK's final energy consumption from buildings and industry by 15% by 2030 against 2021 levels. The Government is investing £6.6 billion over this parliament on decarbonising heat and energy efficiency measures. The Government has also rolled out a number of energy support schemes across GB and NI to support consumers over the winter with rising energy costs such as the Energy Price Guarantee, Alternative Fuel Payment, Energy Bills Support Scheme. For business the Government has set up Energy Bill Relief Scheme.

Asked by Lord Empey

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent assessment they have made of the current operation of the UK energy market; and what plans they have, if any, to propose alternatives to the current operation. [HL4247]

Lord Callanan: The Government has launched the Review of Electricity Market Arrangements (REMA), following a commitment in the British Energy Security Strategy. The consultation closed on 10th October. REMA is a major review into Britain's electricity market design, and is considering a broad range of reforms, from changes to existing arrangements that can be delivered from the mid-2020s, to enduring transformational reforms.

Energy: Meters

Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the severe cold weather on (1) vulnerable households, and (2) the ability of those residents on pre-payment meters to access Government help with household bills; and what steps they will take to facilitate access to support for the most vulnerable households. [HL4260]

Lord Callanan: The Government is delivering the Energy Bills Support Scheme, a £400 non-repayable grant to support all families with their energy bills. Additionally, the Energy Price Guarantee (EPG) will save a typical household in Great Britain £900 this Winter.

The Government is currently reviewing the EPG. This consultation will ensure that vulnerable high energy users, such as those with medical requirements, are not put at risk of having to pay more.

Customers with smart prepayment meters have the credit applied to their meter automatically, and those with traditional prepayment meters should have received discount vouchers sent via SMS text, email, post or a Special Action Message. Electricity suppliers have reported that, as of 1 December, they had issued 4,044,554 vouchers to customers with traditional prepayment meters.

Environmental Land Management Schemes

Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the ability of tenant farmers to benefit from Environmental Land Management Schemes. [HL4012]

Lord Benyon: We are designing the schemes to be simple, flexible, fair and accessible to as many types of farmers and land managers as possible, including tenant farmers. We are aiming to remove barriers to tenants entering schemes where possible, such as in the Sustainable Farming Incentive where tenants can enter without their landlord's explicit consent and tenants with annually renewing tenancy agreements can enter if they expect to have management control for the duration of their 3-year agreement. The independent Rock Review on the tenanted sector, led by Baroness Rock, noted that SFI's agreement length and no penalty exits when management control of the land is lost unexpectedly have made the scheme more open to tenant farmers. The first round of Landscape Recovery was open to any land manager or groups of land managers, including tenant farmers, that could pull together a 500 to 5,000 hectare project of broadly contiguous land in England - around half of the 22 projects selected for round one involve tenant farmers. We are monitoring how these schemes are working for tenants and any impacts on tenants as part of the schemes' Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs announced on 1st December that rather than delivering the new Local Nature Recovery scheme as previously planned, we would build on the success of the existing Countryside Stewardship scheme to achieve the ambitious outcomes we had intended to deliver through Local Nature Recovery. This evolution was recommended by the Tenancy Working Group in the early conversations with Defra, with the group stating that many tenants were comfortable and familiar with CS. We are continuing to develop the Countryside Stewardship scheme, the Sustainable Farming Incentive and Landscape Recovery schemes through co-design with stakeholders, farmers, foresters, and other experts while considering the recommendations of the Rock Review to inform our decisions on tenanted land in these schemes.

Ethiopia: Tigray

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to support the peace accord between Tigray leaders and the Ethiopian federal government signed in South Africa on 2 November. [HL4378]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The peace agreement signed between the Ethiopian Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front in South Africa on 2 November is bringing to an end two years of conflict and immense suffering for the people of Ethiopia. Successful

implementation of the deal is critical for addressing the urgent humanitarian needs, but also longer-term aims for peace and prosperity. In the last nineteen months the UK has provided nearly £90 million of life-saving aid to communities across Ethiopia affected by crises. The Foreign Secretary, during his visit to Ethiopia on 8 December told Prime Minister Abiy that Ethiopia could rely on the UK's full support on its path to recovery and reconciliation. We have offered the parties to the agreement and the African Union (AU) assistance with implementation.

EU Countries: Refugees

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking, if any, to support (1) the EU, and (2) countries on the Mediterranean coast, with refugees in that region; and what plans they have, if any, to contribute to the EU's proposed Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism. [HL4252]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The EU's Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism is a temporary measure, open to the EU and Associated States, to which the UK is not a party.

We remain open to discussing greater UK-EU cooperation on migration issues. Meanwhile, the UK supports asylum-seekers through other means: between 2016 and September 2022, we resettled more than 26,000 individuals via refugee resettlement schemes – the third highest number in the world after the United States and Canada, and more than any other European country. Our focus will remain on helping people directly from regions of conflict and instability.

F-35 Aircraft: Early Warning Systems

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Goldie on 12 December (HL3834), what is the definition of Full Operational Capability of Carrier Strike. [HL4271]

Baroness Goldie: The Full Operating Capability (FOC) of the Carrier Strike is defined as a Queen Elizabeth Class carrier able to operate with 24 F35B Lightning and supporting ships and helicopters. This increases to 36 F35B and four Crowsnest Airborne Early Warning helicopters when the Queen Elizabeth Class carriers are operating within a Maritime Task Group configuration. These will continue to be the defining features of any future FOC declaration.

Family Courts

Asked by Baroness Pitkeathley

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of children who have been moved from one parental residence to another, as a

result of emotional harm or parental alienation findings in Family Court Proceedings. [HL4495]

Lord Bellamy: Incidences of children who have been moved from one parental residence to another, as a result of findings of emotional harm, parental alienation or alienating behaviours in family court proceedings are not recorded centrally. Such information can only be obtained from individual case files at disproportionate cost.

Asked by Baroness Pitkeathley

To ask His Majesty's Government what training magistrates and judges sitting in Family Courts receive on domestic abuse. [HL4496]

Lord Bellamy: To preserve the independence of the judiciary, the Lord Chief Justice (LCJ), the Senior President of Tribunals, and the Chief Coroner have statutory responsibility for judicial training, under the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007, and Coroners and Justice Act 2009 respectively. These responsibilities are exercised through the Judicial College.

Family judges and magistrates receive training on Domestic Abuse as part of induction training, which they must complete before they hear any cases, and in ongoing continuation training. Most recently, updated digital training was launched in Autumn 2021, and updated face-to-face training rolled out from April 2022. The content covers all areas recognised as abuse, ranging from serious sexual and other assaults and covering emotional abuse, coercive and controlling behaviour, including financial coercion and control, as well as the impact not just on survivors, but their children and wider family.

Fentanyl

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the illicit use of fentanyl and fentanyl analogues has increased since 2019; how many deaths there have been since 2019 where illicit fentanyl is known to have contributed to the cause of death; and what steps they are taking to prevent the advertising and sale of these substances. [HL4377]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish annual statistics on 'Deaths related to Drug Poisoning' for England and Wales. The most recent update, published in August 2022, provides data up to 2021 on the number of drug-related poisonings. Data indicates a decline in fentanyl and fentanyl analogue related deaths from a peak in 2017 of 75 fentanyl-related deaths and 31 fentanyl analogue related deaths, to 58 fentanyl-related deaths and 3 fentanyl analogue related deaths in 2021. The statistics include all deaths related to fentanyl and/or fentanyl analogues, including fentanyl that has been lawfully prescribed.

The ONS provide data on Drug Misuse in England and Wales, with the most recent update published in

December 2022. Specific data on the use of fentanyl and fentanyl analogues is not available.

Fentanyl and fentanyl analogues are controlled as Class A drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. The penalties for supply are life imprisonment an unlimited fine, or both; and for possession these are seven years' imprisonment, an unlimited fine, or both.

A number of fentanyl-based medicines have been approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and are therefore able to be sold and advertised legitimately by pharmaceutical manufacturers and distributors who hold a Home Office controlled drugs licence.

As part of our Drug Strategy, the Home Office is investing £300m over three years to mobilise a robust and innovative end-to-end plan which attacks the illicit supply of drugs at every stage, undermining the business of criminal drugs supply from source to street.

Finland and Sweden: NATO Enlargement

Asked by Lord Marlesford

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with other NATO members concerning the reasons why (1) Finland, and (2) Sweden, have not yet been granted full membership of NATO; and when they expect full membership for those countries to be achieved. [HL4334]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government has engaged regularly with NATO Allies to advance the NATO accession process for Sweden and Finland. Once the Accession Protocols were signed, we expedited our ratification, recognising the importance of bringing both countries quickly into NATO. We continue to encourage all Allies to also ratify swiftly. Rapid integration into NATO will make both countries safer, the Alliance stronger, and the Euro-Atlantic area more secure.

Food: Prices

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of food inflation in supermarkets, given the increased cost of living. [HL4182]

Lord Benyon: Defra officials have regular discussions with food retailers about a range of issues, including the impact of food price inflation. This rose to 16.4% in October according to ONS data covering all household purchases of food inside and outside of supermarkets. Given sustained pressures, we anticipate food prices continuing to trend upwards in the short term. We are closely monitoring the situation.

Foreign Investment in UK

Asked by Lord Monks

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the approximate value of Foreign Direct Investment in the

UK in (1) the six years preceding the EU referendum in 2016, and (2) the six years since. [HL4423]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority.

A response to the Hon. Member's Parliamentary Question: HL4423 is attached.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Response to Lord Monks [UKSA_Response_to_PQHL4423.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-12-19/HL4423>

Foreign Relations

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to form long-lasting partnerships with (1) Latin American, (2) Asian, and (3) African, countries. [HL4241]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is committed to working with partners in Latin America, Asia and Africa, including to foster long-term stability and trade, address drivers of conflict, call out human rights abuses and violations, promote democracy and tackle climate change. In his foreign policy speech on 12 December, the Foreign Secretary reaffirmed the UK's commitment to working with developing countries in continents around the world, and to making a sustained effort to revive old friendships and build new ones, reaching beyond long-established alliances. In the last year, the UK has offered guarantees to allow almost £5 billion of extra multilateral finance for the developing world, as well as a reliable source of infrastructure investment through the British Investment Partnerships, through UK Export Finance, and through the G7 Partnership for Global Infrastructure. We are negotiating and signing free trade deals and Mutual Recognition Agreements, and demonstrating our long-term commitment to the Indo Pacific, including by joining the Trans-Pacific free trade agreement as soon as possible.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Written Questions

Asked by Lord Rogan

To ask the Leader of the House when they expect to answer the Written Question tabled by Lord Rogan on 17 November (HL3519) and due for answer on 1 December. [HL4501]

Lord True: The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has confirmed a response to your written question was initially issued on time, but a technical error prevented it from being published by the 1 December deadline.

The FCDO has assured my office that a new response will be issued in the week commencing 9 January 2023 and the Department will write to you directly with an explanation for the delayed response.

My office will continue to work closely with all departments, including the FCDO, to ensure they conduct regular reviews of their systems and processes to prevent future incidents.

I regret the error and I will be reminding all colleagues at Front Bench of their duty to provide prompt responses to written questions in the House within the 10 day target, as stipulated in the Companion.

Free School Meals

Asked by Baroness Berridge

To ask His Majesty's Government how many of the schools in England that had days of closure due to weather conditions in the last 12 months provided vouchers to replace Free School Meals to their pupils. [HL4481]

Asked by Baroness Berridge

To ask His Majesty's Government how many children entitled to free school meals were not provided with a meal or its equivalent when their school was closed due to adverse weather conditions in the last 12 months. [HL4482]

Asked by Baroness Berridge

To ask His Majesty's Government how many schools in England have a voucher system in operation that can be used to replace free school meals in the event of unexpected school closure. [HL4483]

Baroness Barran: Schools have a duty to provide Free School Meals (FSM) for registered pupils, either on school premises or at any other place where education is being provided. If the school is closed due to extreme weather and/or extenuating circumstances, and education is not being provided for pupils elsewhere, then the school would not be expected to provide free school meals.

Where meals are provided, our guidance advises schools to work with their school catering team or food provider to provide good quality lunch parcels. Where this is not practicable, schools may make local arrangements to supply vouchers.

The Department does not keep records of which schools make meal or voucher provision during periods of closure, nor the number of pupils supported under such arrangements.

Around 1.9 million pupils are claiming FSM. Together with a further 1.25 million infants supported through UIFSM policy, over one third of school children are now provided with a free meal, at a cost of over £1 billion a year. The department currently has generous protections in place, ensuring that eligible pupils keep their FSM entitlement even if their household circumstances improve.

FTX: Insolvency

Asked by *Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the risks to investors following the collapse of the cryptocurrency exchange FTX. [HL4363]

Baroness Penn: Recent events in cryptoasset markets – including the collapse of FTX – have highlighted the importance of establishing regulation which supports safe innovation and protects consumers and stability. The FCA and Bank of England have warned that cryptoassets are high risk, and that investors should be prepared to lose all of their money.

In January 2022 the government published a response to a consultation on a proposal to bring certain cryptoassets into the scope of financial promotions regulation. The forthcoming legislation on cryptoasset financial promotions, resulting from the consultation, and supporting FCA rules, will regulate in-scope cryptoasset financial promotions, requiring them to be fair, clear and not misleading. This is aimed at improving consumers' understanding of the risks and benefits associated with cryptoasset purchases and ensuring that cryptoasset promotions are held to the same standards as similar risk financial services products. The government will also consult on its approach to regulating wider cryptoasset activities in the coming weeks.

The government will continue to closely monitor the wider cryptoasset market and will stand ready to take further regulatory action if required.

Gambling: Education

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the statutory guidance Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education to provide further clarification on what pupils should know about online gambling. [HL4502]

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of the statutory guidance Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education in preventing harmful gambling by school pupils. [HL4503]

Baroness Barran: The statutory curriculum for relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) covers the risks relating to gambling, including the accumulation of debt. This can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>.

Teaching about gambling and financial risks is also reinforced by other curriculum areas, including teaching

financial literacy in citizenship and relevant topics in mathematics.

To support teachers to deliver these topics safely and with confidence, we have produced RSHE teacher training modules that are free to download from GOV.UK and include the dangers associated with gambling. These can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-about-relationships-sex-and-health>.

The department is monitoring the implementation of RSHE, including measuring teacher confidence in teaching the statutory requirements. The department has contracted with IFF Research to undertake a national survey of headteachers, RSHE leads and RSHE teachers, supported by qualitative research with school staff and pupils.

The research will assess whether schools are teaching the subjects effectively and how good teaching of different topics can affect wider outcomes. It will also seek evidence on how to deliver high-quality teaching which the department will use to inform any further support. The research will provide emerging findings to inform decisions about our review of the RSHE statutory guidance. The department anticipates the final report of this research will be published in early 2024.

General Practitioners and Nurses

Asked by *Lord Browne of Belmont*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many (1) nurses, and (2) GPs, there are per head of population in England. [HL4433]

Lord Markham: This information is not held in the format requested. However, as of September 2022, there were 58.5 full time equivalent nurses per 10,000 head of population in England. This includes nurses in Hospital and Community Health Services and general practice settings. This excludes nurses working in social care, the voluntary sector or in the private sector. As of September 2022, there were 6.5 full time equivalent doctors working in general practice per 10,000 head of population in England.

Gibraltar: UK Relations with EU

Asked by *Baroness Northover*

To ask His Majesty's Government what (1) commitments, and (2) reassurances, they have made to the government of Gibraltar in the event that there is no negotiated outcome to the issues raised by the UK–EU Treaty in respect of Gibraltar. [HL4335]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government continues to work alongside the Government of Gibraltar to secure a treaty with the EU, in respect of Gibraltar's relationship with the EU. Following meetings on 14 and 15 December the Foreign Secretary, Chief Minister of Gibraltar, EU Vice President and Spanish Foreign Minister all reiterated their commitment to that outcome.

The UK Government is working alongside the Government of Gibraltar to prepare for the possibility of no negotiated outcome. This includes projects to increase infrastructure resilience at the land border and port, and sharing of expertise. The UK will stand fully behind Gibraltar in any scenario.

Great British Nuclear

Asked by Lord Haworth

To ask His Majesty's Government when Great British Nuclear will be (1) established, and (2) fully operational. [HL4249]

Lord Callanan: The Government will make an announcement on the set up of GBN early in the new year. The Government will provide funding for GBN to help projects get investment ready and support them through the construction phase.

Growing Places Fund

Asked by Lord Kamall

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness and impact of their Growing Place-based Giving Programme. [HL4451]

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The Growing Place-based Giving Programme supported the creation of six place-based giving schemes as a means of stimulating local philanthropy and increasing investment in local communities in England. Each giving scheme received £100,000 of seed funding and development support from a specialist organisation. The schemes began work in 2019 bringing together local residents, philanthropists, corporate donors, and public sector and civil society organisations, and raising money to address local priorities.

The programme report, published in 2020, found that all six place-based giving schemes were in a position to be sustainable at the end of the programme. Based on the schemes' initial work, the report also stresses that place-based giving can be a mechanism for fostering community cohesion and spirit, civic engagement, and meeting local needs.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the schemes' development in 2020, but the report found that place-based giving can be an effective means of responding to crises. All six schemes were able to pivot their work to support local communities. For instance, Barking and Dagenham Giving developed a £100,000 Rapid Response Fund, while Totally Stoked created a hub for the local authority which co-ordinated resources and supported people who were shielding. The report found that this was only possible because of the work done during the Growing Place-based Giving programme.

Haiti: Humanitarian Situation

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Haiti, including reports of hunger and acute food insecurity in the Cité Soleil neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince. [HL4353]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The UK is closely monitoring the worsening security and humanitarian situation in Haiti. We continue to support Haiti through our contributions to agencies such as the United Nations and the World Bank Group who have a strong presence on the ground, and we are engaged in UN Security Council discussions to consider Haiti's request for support. The UK remains committed to supporting a Haitian-led solution focused on the root causes of these issues in order to address the complex challenges in Haiti.

Health: Disadvantaged

Asked by Baroness Merron

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to track and reduce health inequalities in highly specialised NHS services. [HL4232]

Lord Markham: All annual clinical meetings for highly specialised services review health inequalities. NHS England provides advice on how the arrangement of highly specialised services should consider health inequalities, with a focus on access, experience and outcomes. NHS England is developing a framework and resources on how health inequalities can be identified and addressed in the commissioning of highly specialised services, which will be piloted in several services.

NHS England is also collating information on how procurements of healthcare services have addressed healthcare inequalities to provide lessons learned and best practice. An equalities health impact assessment is used when procuring highly specialised services and guidance is available to commissioners on how this assessment should be completed.

Help to Grow Schemes

Asked by Lord Leong

To ask His Majesty's Government how many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have participated in the 'Help to Grow' scheme since its launch; and how much has been spent on that scheme. [HL4372]

Lord Callanan: The Help to Grow schemes have supported over 5,000 businesses so far. We will release details on the uptake and costs of both the Help to Grow schemes in due course after Help to Grow Digital has fully closed.

High Speed 2 Line: Polymers

Asked by **Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Benyon on 10 November (HL2965), which stated that the polymere based product "is used in treatment of the solid wastes, which have a waste water component that receives further treatment prior to discharge", how the further treatment removes the acrylamide which is water soluble; and whether they can confirm that polymeres are not tested to check if this has been successful. [HL3605]

Lord Benyon: In the solid slurry stabilisation process, only the minimum amount of polymer product is used to achieve the required result. The polymer will be preferentially bound within the solid waste with negligible, if any, carry over into the waste water from the slurry treatment process. This water then undergoes further treatment in the water treatment plant, including settlement of fine solids, reverse osmosis, and activated carbon filtration, which further reduce the risk of any polymer or constituents reaching the discharge point and therefore the environment. Due to the low potential for the polymer to be present in the slurry treatment process, waste water, and the further treatment provided by the water treatment plant, no testing was required as part of the permit for the presence of polymer or constituents.

Home Office: Religion

Asked by **Lord Pearson of Rannoch**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they collect data on the religious affiliation of civil servants in the Home Office. [HL4384]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The Home Office collect, on a self-declaration basis, religion and belief data of members of Home Office staff. The latest published data can be found on Gov.UK.

Homelessness

Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the number of households at risk of being made homeless over the coming year by landlords who cannot meet their costs at current levels of rent given the increase in interest rates; and what steps they intend to take to protect such households. [HL4474]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: No such assessment has been made. The causes of homelessness are complex, and it is driven by a range of factors, both personal and structural.

Government is committed to preventing homelessness where possible. We have announced the allocation of

£654 million in funding through the Homelessness Prevention Grant that will be made available to local authorities in 2023/24 and 2024/25. This is in addition to the £50 million top-up to the Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2022/23 announced earlier in December.

This is on top of the action Government has taken to support households with the cost of living. At Autumn statement, the Chancellor announced further support for 2023/24. This included a 10.1% increase in benefits from April 2023, and extra support provided to all households with the Energy Price Guarantee which will save the average UK household £500 in 2023-24.

Homelessness: Grants

Asked by **The Marquess of Lothian**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many households have benefited from the Homelessness Prevention Grant since it was launched in December 2021. [HL4380]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The Homelessness Prevention Grant supports local authorities in England to deliver their statutory duties to prevent and relieve homelessness and provide temporary accommodation where required. The funding is paid to councils and can be used flexibly to deliver their homelessness and rough sleeping strategies, in line with local priorities. 278,110 households were assessed as either being threatened with homelessness or already homeless in 2021-22 and therefore owed a homelessness duty and supported by councils.

Hong Kong: Religious Freedom

Asked by **Lord Cormack**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of religious freedom in Hong Kong. [HL4445]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all, including Hong Kongers, and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. Promoting the right to FoRB is one of the UK's longstanding human rights priorities.

The Sino-British Joint Declaration is a legally binding treaty between the UK and China, and under this China committed to uphold Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and protect the rights and freedoms of its people. This explicitly includes freedom of expression and freedom of religious belief.

However, the Hong Kong authorities have repeatedly used the National Security Law (NSL) to curtail freedoms, punish dissent and shrink the space for political opposition. We remain concerned about the growing use of the NSL to suppress freedom of expression and what this may mean for FoRB.

Hospitality Industry: Small Businesses

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to provide a breakdown of grant support options for SME hospitality businesses seeking to fund expansion and growth projects. [HL4348]

Lord Callanan: On 20 July, the Business Secretary announced an extension for the Recovery Loan Scheme to help smaller businesses, including hospitality, access loans and other kinds of finance up to £2 million per business group so they can grow and invest.

The Start Up Loans Company, part of the Government-owned British Business Bank, provides loans and pre- and post-application support to new entrepreneurs, including a year of free business mentoring for successful applicants.

Since the Start Up Loans programme was launched in 2012, over 99,000 loans have been delivered with an aggregate value of more than £9342m (average loan size of £9,369), as of November 2022.

House of Lords: Select Committees

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker what are the criteria for the eligibility of members of the House of Lords to be appointed to a select committee on a hybrid Bill; whether comments they have expressed about the merits or otherwise of the Bill are taken into account when considering those appointments; and what plans he has to change the process for appointing members. [HL4479]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The Committee of Selection considers nominations for memberships of select committees, including hybrid bill committees, and makes recommendations to the House. Nominations are submitted by the usual channels and the choice of nominations is up to each party or group.

Hybrid bill committees are unlike other select committees in that they perform a quasi-judicial function. There is an expectation that the choice of nominations will consider the importance of ensuring that the committee is perceived as enabling parties to the proceedings to receive a fair adjudication. In addition, Private Business Standing Order 96 provides that a member with an interest in the outcome of a private bill may not serve on the committee on the bill. This is set out in the footnote on page 11 of the *Guide to the Code of Conduct* (Twelfth Edition: June 2022). Private Business Standing Orders apply to the private bill procedure element of hybrid bills. The usual channels and the Committee of Selection are cognisant of the requirement under Standing Order 96 when formulating nominations and recommending final nominations to the House respectively.

The decision on the membership of a select committee on a hybrid bill rests ultimately with the House, which is invited to agree to the proposed membership by way of an

appointment motion. There are no plans to change the way in which members of select committees on hybrid bills are appointed.

Housing: Construction

Asked by Lord Hampton

To ask His Majesty's Government what proportion of (1) public, and (2) private, homebuilding, over the next 10 years they expect will be designated for key workers; and what plans they have to ensure that they remain occupied by key workers. [HL4448]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: This Government is committed to providing the affordable housing the country needs and has introduced a range of measures intended to make it easier for people to enter the housing market.

The First Homes programme is designed to help local first-time buyers on to the property ladder, by offering homes at a discount of at least 30% of the market price. The discount is passed on to all future purchasers in perpetuity, meaning these homes will continue to benefit first-time buyers for generations to come.

Local authorities are able to prioritise certain groups in their local area, which can include key workers or those with a local connection.

Additionally, we are investing £11.5 billion to provide tens of thousands of new homes across the country, a significant number of which will be for Affordable and Social rent, to help those most in need.

Housing: Energy

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that building standards on construction of new housing developments maximise energy efficiency. [HL4314]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: In December 2021, the Government amended Building Regulations to require new buildings, as of June 2022, to meet higher energy efficiency standards. This means that new homes will produce 30% less Carbon Dioxide emissions compared to previous 2013 standards with new non-domestic properties producing 27% less Carbon Dioxide emissions. The amendment also included improvements in the energy efficiency standards required of new and replacement thermal elements, replacement building services, and controlled fittings when undertaking a renovation or extension of an existing building.

Hygiene: Waste Disposal

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the reasons for the delay in the publication of their assessment of the environmental impacts of disposable and reusable absorbent hygiene products; and whether

they will publish this within the next two months. [HL4461]

Lord Benyon: Work on the environmental assessment of disposable and reusable nappies is nearly complete and peer review of the work is being finalised. No date has been set for publication, but we are working to get things finished as soon as possible.

Hypothyroidism: Prescriptions

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to direct NHS England to ensure that when patients are (1) currently prescribed, and (2) previously prescribed, Armour Thyroid medicine for the treatment of hypothyroidism, their GP should be permitted to continue to prescribe the medicine. [HL4326]

Lord Markham: Prescribers must ensure that the medicines considered appropriate for their patients can be safely prescribed and take account of the appropriate national guidance on clinical effectiveness and the local commissioning decisions of their respective integrated care boards.

The National Institute for Health and Care and Excellence recommends that natural thyroid or armour thyroid extract should not be offered for the management of primary hypothyroidism due to insufficient evidence that it offers greater benefits than levothyroxine.

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask His Majesty's Government what alternative medicine will be made available to patients for the treatment of hypothyroidism in the event that (1) Liothyronine (T3), and (2) Levothyroxine (T4), medications prove to be ineffective. [HL4327]

Lord Markham: In the event of a medicine proving ineffective, a general practitioner or other responsible clinician should work with the patient to determine the most appropriate course of action or further treatment. Prescribers should ensure that the medicines considered appropriate for the patients can be safely prescribed and take account of appropriate national guidance on clinical effectiveness and the local commissioning decisions of the local integrated care board. Arrangements for monitoring the effects of the medicines should be agreed with the patient on prescribing.

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they intend to have with NHS England concerning the policy of the NHS Devon Integrated Care Board to withdraw funding from the prescribing of Armour Thyroid medicine for the treatment of hypothyroidism. [HL4328]

Lord Markham: There are no current plans to have discussions with NHS England. NHS Devon Integrated Care Board has policies in place to support patients with

hypothyroidism and follows national guidance which states that there is no convincing evidence to support routine use of thyroid extracts, armour thyroid, in managing hypothyroidism.

The National Institute for Care and Excellence (NICE) recommends that natural thyroid extract should not be offered for the management of primary hypothyroidism as there is not enough evidence that it offers benefits over levothyroxine. Natural thyroid extract does not have a United Kingdom marketing authorisation.

Immigration

Asked by Lord Rosser

To ask His Majesty's Government how many Home Office immigration decisions were made in (1) 2017/18, (2) 2018/19, (3) 2019/20, (4) 2020/21, and (5) 2021/22; and how many such decisions were overturned on appeal in each of those years. [HL4070]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The Home Office publishes a range of data related to immigration in the Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release. Attached is the most recent publication of data for asylum and resettlement.

Data on appeal outcomes is published by HM Courts and Tribunals Service.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Asylum summary - Sept 2022 [asylum-summary-sep-2022-tables.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-12-06/HL4070>

Immigration Controls: France

Asked by Lord Rosser

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the UK–France joint statement: enhancing co-operation against illegal migration, published on 14 November, how many border agents or other UK immigration officials will be based in France by the end of 2022; and what role will the National Crime Agency play under the terms of the Joint Statement. [HL4340]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The number of UK officials based in France will vary each day, but will include staff operating across a range of border management, law enforcement, and intelligence functions, as well as immigration functions at the juxtaposed controls.

The UK-France Joint Statement published on 14 November set out the new Joint Strategic Objectives and Joint Operational plan for both countries to tackle illegal migration. As part of this arrangement, reciprocal teams of embedded officers will be deployed for the first time in France. UK officers have already begun their operational training and further visits will take place in the next few weeks including UK officers observing French patrols.

Specific details of locations and numbers are, of course, operationally sensitive.

The NCA continues to play a key role in UK-France operational co-operation through the Joint Intelligence Cell which will be further expanded, as agreed within the Joint Statement on 14 November. The Joint Intelligence Cell has been central in the dismantling of 59 organised criminal groups and supporting over 500 arrests.

Immigration: Fees and Charges

Asked by Lord Rosser

To ask His Majesty's Government what was the annual surplus received from immigration application fees in (1) 2019, (2) 2020, and (3) 2021, after deducting administration costs. [HL4304]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The Home Office does not publish the information sought to the level of granularity required. Information on revenue or costs relating to citizenship applications is not published, nor is any surplus derived from citizenship applications routinely calculated or published.

The Home Office does report information on overall visa and immigration income in the Annual Report and Accounts.

Incontinence and Sanitary Protection: Medical Equipment

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they intend to make of the safety of menstrual and adult continence products, particularly with regard to skin sensitising and hormonal effects; and what plans they have to regulate tampons as medical devices. [HL4403]

Lord Callanan: The UK has a comprehensive regulatory framework that covers the safety of menstrual and adult continence products. This requires producers and distributors to ensure their products are safe before they are placed on the market.

The safety of these products is regulated by the General Product Safety Regulations 2005 in addition to other product specific laws. Manufacturers are required to ensure a product does not present any risk or only the minimum risks compatible with the product's use.

There are no current plans to regulate tampons as medical devices.

Industrial Energy Transformation Fund

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to confirm the budget allocated to the Energy Investment Fund in (1) 2021–22, and (2) 2022–23. [HL4507]

Lord Callanan: The Energy Investment Fund is a Scottish Government initiative. Its budget is not a matter for the UK Government.

Intelligence Services

Asked by Lord Tyrie

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to place the Fulford Principles relating to the detention and interviewing of detainees overseas on a statutory basis. [HL4350]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: The Government has no plans to place The Principles on a statutory basis.

Isabel Vaughan-Spruce

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the arrest of Isabel Vaughan-Spruce by police in Birmingham in December; and what steps they intend to take to ensure that the rights of (1) freedom of religion, and (2) freedom of thought, are upheld. [HL4491]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The Government supports Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights that provides everyone with a right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

The imposition of Public Space Prevention Orders is a matter for the local authorities who are required to consider European Convention rights, including Article 8 that provides a right to respect private and family life. Operational matters and charging are matters for the police.

Israel: Palestinians

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to support further dialogue between the peoples of Israel and Palestine; and in particular between (1) those active in civil society, and (2) others who influence public opinion; and what discussions they have held with other countries in support of such dialogue. [HL4250]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have a regular dialogue with both the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel in which we reiterate the need for both sides to prepare their populations for peaceful coexistence, including by promoting a more positive portrayal of one another to contribute to building the conditions needed for peace. We also continue to engage with civil society organisations in both Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We believe that negotiations will only succeed when they are conducted between Israelis and Palestinians, supported by the international community. We will continue to press the parties strongly on the need to refrain from taking actions that make peace more difficult.

Asked by **Lord Hylton**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Resolution of the UN General Assembly on 2 December calling for renewed peace talks between Israel and Palestine, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1850. [HL4251]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Every Israeli and Palestinian has the right to live in peace and security. We believe that negotiations will only succeed when they are conducted between Israelis and Palestinians, supported by the international community. We will continue to press the parties strongly on the need to refrain from taking actions that make peace more difficult.

Jimmy Lai

Asked by **Lord Cormack**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to ensure that Jimmy Lai, a British citizen and devout Roman Catholic, is able to receive pastoral care whilst in prison. [HL4446]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We remain concerned about the targeting of pro-democracy figures in Hong Kong, and are following these cases carefully. For data protection reasons I cannot share information about an individual without their permission.

Accredited diplomats at our Consulate-General in Hong Kong will continue to attend Mr Lai's court proceedings.

We continue to make clear to mainland Chinese and Hong Kong authorities our strong opposition to the National Security Law, which is being used to curtail freedoms, punish dissent and shrink the space for opposition, free press and civil society.

Korea: BBC World Service

Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask His Majesty's Government what were their aims when they provided funding for the BBC World Service to start transmitting to the Korean Peninsula; whether these transmissions have proved successful in meeting those aims; and what has been the annual cost of the Service to both the BBC and the FCDO. [HL4215]

Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the annual cost of the BBC Korean Service (1) in real terms, and (2) as a percentage of (a) the BBC World Service budget, and (b) the total BBC annual budget. [HL4216]

Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they expect BBC World Service transmissions to the Korean Peninsula will continue; if so, whether they expect that there will be a reduction in output; what discussions

they or BBC management have had with the staff who run the BBC Korean Service about its future; and whether they will publish the feedback from any such discussions. [HL4217]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The FCDO strongly values the BBC's role in bringing high quality and impartial news to global audiences, particularly where free speech is limited.

As part of BBC plans announced on 29 September, the BBC Korean Service will be moving to Seoul - BBC have stated that changes are being implemented by April 2023, subject to consultation with staff and trade unions. The BBC is operationally and editorially independent from Government, and it is for them to comment on matters relating to staffing and service delivery.

The FCDO supports BBC Korean through the World 2020 programme, providing £94.4m annually to fund 12 language services. According to the BBC's Global Audience Measure, BBC Korean reaches an audience of 0.7m weekly - it is extremely difficult to measure audience reach inside North Korea, where access to international media is extremely limited.

Leicestershire Police and Crime Commissioner: Public Appointments

Asked by **Lord Lexden**

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Police and Crime Commissioner for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland about appointments made by him; whether any such discussions included (1) disqualifying factors for prospective employees, and (2) the need to seek employment references prior to appointment; and if so, what were the results of those discussions. [HL4373]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: As the directly elected, local representative for policing, it is for PCCs to make decisions about the appointment of their staff and the size, composition, and resourcing of their office.

PCCs are required by legislation to seek the views of their Police and Crime Panel (PCP) when appointing senior positions within their office. The PCP must hold a confirmation hearing in public with the proposed candidate, and subsequently produce and publish a report and recommendation for the PCC on whether the PCP supports the proposed senior appointment. The ultimate decision on appointment lies with the PCC, and they may accept or reject the recommendation made by the PCP.

Liverpool Strategic Futures Advisory Panel

Asked by **Lord Storey**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Liverpool Strategic Futures Panel has met informally; and whether members of that panel will be paid. [HL4238]

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Scott of Bybrook on 8 December (HL3777) when they expect the Strategic Futures Panel will meet. [HL4239]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: Further to my previous answer, the Panel has not yet met. Details of meetings and payment of panel members will be confirmed in due course and will follow established practice.

Local Government: Audit

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to improve audit procedures for local authorities. [HL4315]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: We remain committed to delivering on our response to the Redmond Review. More details can be found (attached) [here](#).

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Government responses to the Redmond review [HL4315 - Local authority financial reporting and external audit_ government response to the Redmond review - GOV.UK.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-12-14/HL4315>

Local Government: Fees and Charges

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the amount of money collected by local authorities through fees and charges that are not council tax, business rates and rents for social housing. [HL4370]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: Sales, fees and charges income is reported in local authorities' Revenue Outturn returns and totalled £13.973 billion in 2021-22, the latest year for which these data are available. This excludes council tax, business rates and housing revenue account income.

This information is publicly available (attached) in table 2x [here](#).

The Answer includes the following attached material:

local authorities' Revenue Outturn returns [HL4370 - Local authority revenue expenditure and financing England_ 2021 to 2022 final outturn - GOV.UK.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-12-16/HL4370>

Local Government: Flags

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Scott of Bybrook on 15 December (HL3951), whether this advice regarding the flying of flags of countries other than the UK or Ukraine also applies to (1) Northern Ireland, (2) Scotland, and (3) Wales. [HL4390]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) apply to England only. The flying of flags by local authorities in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales is a matter for the devolved administrations and for individual local authorities to determine in accordance with any applicable legislation.

Malnutrition: Screening

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government why screening of malnutrition is not standard practice in all health settings across England. [HL4393]

Lord Markham: The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recommends that all hospital inpatients on admission and all outpatients at their first clinic appointment should be screened for malnutrition. Screening should be repeated weekly for inpatients and when there is clinical concern for outpatients. Residents in care homes should be screened on admission and when there is clinical concern.

Manston Asylum Processing Centre: Legal Costs

Asked by Lord Rosser

To ask His Majesty's Government what has been the cost of legal advice received in relation to the management of Manston migrant centre. [HL4345]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The costs of advice cannot be accurately calculated as the majority of advice has been provided by Home Office departmental lawyers as part of their advisory role.

Mathematics: Postgraduate Education

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask His Majesty's Government how many PhDs in mathematics (1) were funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) from 2019-22, and (2) will be funded by UKRI in 2022-25. [HL4444]

Lord Callanan: The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), within UK Research and Innovation, funds Mathematical Sciences from its core budget, typically spending c£25-30 million/per annum for grants, fellowships, and studentships. In addition, they have committed a further £124 million which will spend out to 2028-29 as part of the Additional Funding Programme for Mathematic Sciences (AFPMS) commitment.

The main route through which EPSRC usually funds PhD students is through a doctoral training block grant, allocated to Universities who then allocate funds as appropriate. In addition, the discipline received funding for approximately an additional 400 PhD positions through the AFPMS.

Mathematics: Research

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask His Majesty's Government how much as a percentage of the overall UK Research and Innovation settlement is the current allocation to the mathematical sciences. [HL4441]

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask His Majesty's Government how much of UK Research and Innovation's funding was allocated to mathematics in (1) 2019–22, and (2) 2022–25. [HL4442]

Lord Callanan: The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, within UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), funds Mathematical Sciences from its core budget, typically spending c£25-30 million/per annum for grants, fellowships, and studentships. In addition, they have committed a further £124 million which will spend out to 2028-29 as part of the Additional Funding Programme for Mathematic Sciences (AFPMS) commitment.

This further investment will nearly double the funding going into the Mathematical Sciences this Spending Review (SR) period within the context of a 14% increase in UKRI's overall budget by the end of the current SR period.

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask His Majesty's Government how many mathematics fellowships UK Research and Innovation (1) funded in the UK from 2019–22, and (2) will fund from 2022–25. [HL4443]

Lord Callanan: The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), within UK Research and Innovation, funds Mathematical Sciences from its core budget, typically spending c£25-30 million/per annum for grants, fellowships, and studentships. In addition, they have committed a further £124 million which will spend out to 2028-29 as part of the Additional Funding Programme for Mathematic Sciences (AFPMS) commitment.

During the period FY 2019/20-2021/22, EPSRC funded 40 fellowship awards in mathematical sciences from core funding augmented by AFPMS. Awards in future years will be subject to the quality of applications received. A further 15 fellowships have been awarded to mathematical sciences through the UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships scheme.

Migrants: Domestic Abuse

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Gloucester

To ask His Majesty's Government what support is available for those on a student or visitor visa who become subject to domestic abuse whilst residing in England. [HL4287]

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Gloucester

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, (1) to extend the destitution domestic violence concession (DDVC) to six months, and (2) to widen the eligibility to all migrant survivors of domestic abuse. [HL4288]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: Tackling domestic abuse is a key priority for this Government. Information on support for victims can be found on the [Domestic abuse: how to get help](#) page on GOV.UK, or through Government's 'Enough' campaign.

Those on a student or visitor visa who become subject to domestic abuse whilst residing in England, can also seek support from the Support for Migrant Victims (SMV) scheme. The SMV scheme was launched as a 12-month pilot in March 2021, run by Southall Black Sisters and their delivery partners, and supported with £1.5 million of Government funding. It provides support and wraparound services to migrant victims of domestic abuse. This support includes: accommodation, subsistence, legal advice and counselling.

Local authorities may also provide basic safety net support to migrant victims if a genuine care need is established that does not arise solely from destitution. Examples can include, where there are community care needs, migrants with serious health problems or family cases where the wellbeing of a child is in question.

Evidence from the independent evaluation of the SMV pilot, to be produced in a final report in early 2023, will inform future policy decisions surrounding our support for migrant victims of domestic abuse. Whilst we consider the evaluation findings and the lessons learned for future policy decisions, we will provide £1.4 million in 2022-23 to continue to fund support for all migrant victims of domestic abuse.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Domestic abuse: how to get help [domestic-abuse-how-get-helpv6-easy-read.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-12-14/HL4287>

Migrants: Languages

Asked by *Lord Rosser*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of recognising regional languages in the immigration system, including of protected minority groups. [HL4344]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: Language skills are an important part of integration for those coming to work, study or settle in the UK. We keep the language requirements set out in the immigration rules under regular review.

Migrants: Muslims

Asked by *Lord Pearson of Rannoch*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether Muslims entering the UK for permanent settlement face the same (1) security, and (2) language, tests, as those of other faiths. [HL4386]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: Where an individual is subject to immigration control, the system for applying for permanent settlement to the UK does not discriminate on the basis of an individual's faith. All individuals applying for permanent settlement are required to undertake standard security checks and are subject to English Language requirements irrespective of their religion.

Migrants: Religion

Asked by *Lord Pearson of Rannoch*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they collect data on the religious affiliation of immigrants upon arrival to the UK. [HL4385]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The Home Office do not collect data on the religious affiliation of immigrants upon arrival to the UK.

Mike Veale

Asked by *Lord Lexden*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Independent Office for Police Conduct about the timing for the publication of the report on Mr Mike Veale, which was completed in February 2021; and whether they received any indication on when it will be published. [HL4375]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) is independent of government and publication of investigation reports is a matter for the IOPC in accordance with its policy on the subject.

Mikheil Saakashvili

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Coventry*

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Georgia, if any, for the release from prison on health grounds of Mikheil Saakashvili, the former president of that country. [HL4275]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are following former President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili's treatment during his imprisonment closely. Our Ambassador to Georgia has met members of Mr Saakashvili's family to discuss his detention on two occasions. The FCDO raised his treatment with the Georgian Ambassador to London on 2 November, and Embassy officials also met representatives of the United National Movement political party to discuss his health, most recently on 2 and 14 December. Mr Saakashvili's case was also discussed in a meeting between our Ambassador to Georgia and Prime Minister Garibashvili on 15 December. We have repeatedly emphasised that Mr Saakashvili should receive treatment in line with international human rights standards, and urged that any further court hearings are in line with due process and the rule of law.

Asked by *Lord Hannan of Kingsclere*

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Georgia regarding the continuing detention of Mikheil Saakashvili, whose health has reported to have "deteriorated sharply"; and what plans they have to encourage that government to release him on humanitarian grounds. [HL4359]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are following former President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili's treatment during his imprisonment closely. Our Ambassador to Georgia has met members of Mr Saakashvili's family to discuss his detention on two occasions, the FCDO raised his treatment with the Georgian Ambassador to London on 2 November, and Embassy officials also met representatives of the United National Movement political party to discuss his health, most recently on 2 and 14 December. Mr Saakashvili's case was also discussed in a meeting between our Ambassador to Georgia and Prime Minister Garibashvili on 15 December. We have repeatedly emphasised that Mr Saakashvili should receive treatment in line with international human rights standards, and urged that any further court hearings are in line with due process and the rule of law. We will continue to highlight the importance of Mr Saakashvili's treatment in line with international human rights standards, and that any further hearings are in line with the rule of law and due process in discussions with the Georgian Government.

Military Aid

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to involve the military in replacing the nurses, paramedics and border force during the strike action. [HL4508]

Baroness Goldie: The Ministry of Defence has no plans to provide military personnel to 'replace' nurses and paramedics during the upcoming strike action. Defence will, however, make 500 military personnel available for ambulance driving tasks to support NHS Trusts during January 2023. A further 600 military personnel were made available to support Border Force during the industrial action on the 23-26 and 28-31 December 2022.

Military Bases: Omagh

Asked by *Lord Empey*

To ask His Majesty's Government what expenditure was incurred between 2007 and 2021 on (1) security, and (2) maintenance, at St Lucia Barracks in Omagh, County Tyrone. [HL4197]

Baroness Goldie: The cost of security provision for St Lucia Barracks prior to 2015 is not held by the Ministry of Defence (MOD); security costs were managed by the Department for Education.

The cost of security provision incurred by the MOD for St Lucia Barracks for the period Financial Year (FY) 2015-16 to FY 2020-21 was £442,331. This is 60% of total costs; the remaining 40% is met by the Northern Ireland Department for Infrastructure.

Information on maintenance expenditure for St Lucia Barracks from FY 2006-07 to 2009-10 is not held.

Maintenance expenditure for St Lucia Barracks from FY 2010-11 to FY 2020-21 was £570,100.

Nagorno-Karabakh

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of warnings of (1) genocide, and (2) other atrocities, being committed against the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh. [HL4401]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government continues to monitor the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. The UK Government has repeatedly urged the Armenian and Azerbaijani Governments to thoroughly investigate all allegations of war crimes and other atrocities in recent years. It is essential all allegations of mistreatment, abuse and summary killings are urgently and fully investigated by the appropriate authorities.

Nappies

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made on (1) a plan for the reduction of the use of single-use nappies, (2) a financial support scheme to assist parents with the initial costs of purchasing reusable nappies, and (3) the improvement of the labelling of single-use nappies. [HL4431]

Lord Benyon: While there are currently no plans to ban the sale of disposable nappies, we recognise the issues associated with absorbent hygiene products such as nappies. A number of local authorities already provide support towards upfront purchases of reusable nappies, and we have no plans to duplicate that work.

Work on the environmental assessment of disposable and reusable nappies is nearly complete and peer review of the work is being finalised. No date has been set for publication, but we are working to get things finished as soon as possible. This work will help inform any future action by government and industry.

Nappies: Waste Disposal

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist on 15 September 2021 (HL Deb, col 1495), when they expect to publish the independent environmental assessment of nappy use. [HL4432]

Lord Benyon: While there are currently no plans to ban the sale of disposable nappies, we recognise the issues associated with absorbent hygiene products such as nappies. A number of local authorities already provide support towards upfront purchases of reusable nappies, and we have no plans to duplicate that work.

Work on the environmental assessment of disposable and reusable nappies is nearly complete and peer review of the work is being finalised. No date has been set for publication, but we are working to get things finished as soon as possible. This work will help inform any future action by government and industry.

National School Breakfast Programme

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to expand the National School Breakfast Programme. [HL4391]

Baroness Barran: The government is committed to continuing support for school breakfasts and has extended the National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP) for an additional year in November. We are investing up to £30 million in our national school breakfast programme until the end of the summer term in 2024. This funding will

support up to 2,500 schools in disadvantaged areas, meaning that thousands of children from low-income families will be offered free nutritious breakfasts to better support their attainment and wellbeing.

Nature Conservation

Asked by *Lord Randall of Uxbridge*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will retain the protections for species afforded by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. [HL4299]

Lord Benyon: My department is carefully considering the retained EU law (REUL) caught by the sunset clause in the REUL Bill, which will include the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the Habitats Regulations). In reviewing retained EU law, Defra's aim is to ensure that environmental law is fit for purpose and able to drive improved environmental outcomes, whilst also ensuring regulators can deliver efficiently. This will ensure the UK regulatory framework is appropriate and tailored to the UK. The Government has been clear that any changes to REUL will not have the effect of reducing the levels of environmental protection.

NHS: Drugs

Asked by *Baroness Merron*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the standards set by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Professional Standards for Homecare Services in England, published in September 2013, which are embedded into all framework agreement service specifications for providers of homecare medicines services; and in particular, what assessment they have made whether those standards are sufficient regarding (1) delayed deliveries, (2) delayed treatment initiation, and (3) missed doses. [HL4261]

Lord Markham: No recent assessment has been made. However, in 2014 the Royal Pharmaceutical Society published the *Handbook for Homecare Services in England* to aid implementation of the 2013 standards. This identified examples of good practice which may be used by homecare teams to develop robust arrangements for compliance with those standards. A copy of *Handbook for Homecare Services in England* is attached.

The National Homecare Medicines Committee holds regular meetings with all homecare providers focused on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for standards based on those contained in *Appendix 10 National KPI definitions* of the *Handbook for Homecare Services in England*. These definitions include the monitoring of delayed deliveries, treatment initiation and missed doses. A copy of *Appendix 10 National KPI definitions* is attached.

In addition, NHS England's Commercial Medicines Unit hold regular review meetings with contracted homecare providers every three months. Homecare

providers are assessed on a monthly basis against the same KPIs. Where these KPIs not met, suppliers are held to account through stakeholder meetings, reporting metrics and face to face meetings to ensure that levels of service are aligned with the relevant professional standards.

The National Homecare Medicines Committee also enacts an escalation process where the relevant homecare provider is required to communicate a summary of the issues, mitigations and expected timescales for recovery to the National Health Service organisations involved. If necessary, the Care Quality Commission and the General Pharmaceutical Council are also informed.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Appendix 10 National KPI definitions [2014 - RPS Homecare Medicines Hanbook - Appendix 10 KPIs - 20-12-22.xlsx]

Handbook for Homecare Services in England [2014 RPS Handbook for Homecare Services in England - 20-12-22.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-12-13/HL4261>

Asked by *Baroness Merron*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to meet the British Society for Rheumatology to discuss its concerns about the safety and performance of homecare medicines services. [HL4262]

Asked by *Baroness Merron*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will publish the minutes of meetings between NHS England and the National Homecare Medicines Committee at which actions to address safety and performance of homecare medicines services were discussed and agreed. [HL4263]

Lord Markham: The National Clinical Homecare Association is arranging a meeting with the British Society for Rheumatology and the National Homecare Medicines Committee (NHMC), which includes representation from NHS England, to discuss the safety and performance of the Homecare Medicine Delivery Service.

The NHMC's Supplier Engagement sub-group, which is facilitated, managed by and includes representation from NHS England, holds face-to-face meetings with individual providers to discuss ongoing performance.

Where Key Performance Indicators or reports from National Health Service hospitals indicate that service levels do not meet the required standard expected, the NHMC undertakes an escalation process. Where this escalation process is in place, the affected homecare provider will provide a summary of the issues, mitigations and expected timescales for recovery to the relevant NHS organisation. If necessary, the Care Quality Commission and the General Pharmaceutical Council are also informed.

Whilst NHS England holds records of the NHMC's face-to-face meetings and those held through the escalation process, we are unable to provide this information as it is commercially sensitive.

NHS: Finance

Asked by Lord Warner

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to identify the range of costs among NHS acute hospital providers for (1) routine (a) hip, (b) knee, and (c) cataract, operations, (2) routine (a) CT, (b) MRI scans, and (c) x-rays, and (3) routine pathology tests; and whether they will publish such information as an aid to holding NHS providers to account for public expenditure. [HL3736]

Lord Markham: NHS England collects and publishes 'National Cost Collection for the NHS' annually in an online only format. This data is collected by Healthcare Resource Groups (HRGs), which are standard groupings of clinically similar treatments using similar levels of healthcare resources.

This data will show HRGs for hip, knee, cataract procedures and outpatient computerised tomography (CT) or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) when the relevant clinical coding has been documented in the patient's record. A cost for the activity will then be assigned by the relevant National Health Service trust. However, where a CT or MRI has been undertaken during an inpatient episode or attendance in accident and emergency, this will be included in the composite cost of the HRG and will not be separately identifiable.

While information on x-rays and pathology testing is collected, this is for direct access for general practitioners (GPs). The report of an x-ray or result of a pathology test is returned to the GP rather than a hospital clinician or consultant. Where this procedure is undertaken at the request of a hospital clinician or consultant, it is not reported separately.

Additionally, data on costs is also made available to NHS providers through Patient Level Information Costing System (PLICS) dashboards, the Model Hospital and Getting It Right First Time programmes, which support health providers to improve patient treatment and productivity. The PLICS dashboards allow trusts to examine data to understand the difference between costs incurred in comparison to other similar organisations. NHS England uses this information and other performance data to hold NHS organisations to account.

NHS: Private Sector

Asked by Lord Warner

To ask His Majesty's Government what, if any, central contracts have been let by NHS England with independent care providers to increase NHS (1) diagnostic, and (2) elective surgery, capacity; and what guidance has been given by NHS England to local

commissioners to use independent service providers in order to reduce the backlog of NHS patients awaiting (a) diagnosis, and (b) treatment. [HL3134]

Lord Markham: The majority of commissioning between independent sector providers and the National Health Service takes place locally. While central contracts were regularly used by NHS England during the pandemic, in 2022/23 there have been no central contracts between NHS England and independent care providers to increase diagnostic or elective surgery capacity.

In February 2022, NHS England published the *Delivery plan for tackling the COVID-19 backlog of elective care*, which sets out how the National Health Service will recover and expand elective services over the next three years. It advises that effective use of the independent sector should be encouraged to increase capacity and reduce waiting times. A copy of the plan is attached.

In January 2022, NHS England published the *2022/23 priorities and operational planning guidance*, which states that independent sector should be considered to manage winter pressures and increase capacity, including through virtual wards. A copy of the guidance is attached.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

2022-23 Operational Planning Guidance [B1160-2022-23-priorities-and-operational-planning-guidance-v2.pdf]

Elective Care Backlog Delivery Plan [C1466-delivery-plan-for-tackling-the-covid-19-backlog-of-elective-care.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-11-01/HL3134>

NHS: Training

Asked by Baroness Masham of Ilton

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Non-Sterile Disposable Glove Use Fundamentals online courses; and what plans they have made that course a component of NHS staff training. [HL4422]

Lord Markham: No specific assessment has been made. Individual employers are responsible for determining the appropriate mandatory training for staff to meet the required standards for patient care set by regulatory bodies.

Northern Ireland Protocol

Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the current monthly cost of the operation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland in respect of (1) the Trader Support Service, (2) any costs to businesses, and (3) any related areas. [HL4428]

Baroness Penn: The estimated monthly cost of running the Trader Support Service in 2023 is £9.4 million. The Government recognises that the Protocol is causing

practical problems for traders. The Government is engaging in constructive dialogue with the European Union, and also brought forward the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill aimed at fixing those problems.

Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the total annual cost of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland if it is fully implemented in its current form on (1) the Trader Support Service, (2) businesses, and (3) any related areas. [HL4429]

Baroness Penn: The estimated annual cost of running the Trader Support Service in 2023 is £113 million.

The Government recognises that the Protocol is causing practical problems for traders. The Government is engaging in constructive dialogue with the European Union, and also brought forward the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill aimed at fixing those problems.

Nurseries: Closures

Asked by Baroness Chapman of Darlington

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of nursery closures this year on childcare (1) fees, (2) quality, and (3) availability. [HL4440]

Baroness Barran: The childcare and early years provider survey contains information on average fees charged by childcare providers. This showed that between 2021/2022, average fees for children under 2 years of age increased by 2.7%; average fees for children aged 2 increased by 3.4%; and average fees for pre-school children aged 3 and 4 increased by 3.8%. All of these increases were below the rate of inflation, which in May 2022 was 9.1%. Fees charged by providers will reflect a variety of factors.

The quality of childcare remains high which is testament to the great work of childcare providers. As of 31 August 2022, 96% of childcare providers have been judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection. More detail is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childcare-providers-and-inspections-as-at-31-august-2022/main-findings-childcare-providers-and-inspections-as-at-31-august-2022>.

The key measure of sufficiency is whether the supply of available places is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents and children. Ofsted data shows that the number of places offered by providers on the Early Years Register has remained broadly stable at 1.3 million places since August 2015.

Under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities are responsible for ensuring that the provision of childcare is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area. The Department has regular contact with each local authority in England, and if a local authority raises concerns about sufficiency issues we will support it with any specific requirements.

Overseas Students: Ukraine

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask His Majesty's Government what guidance they have issued to (1) universities, and (2) colleges, on what help they provide to Ukrainian students in their studies. [HL4337]

Baroness Barran: The department is grateful to the higher and further education sectors for their extremely positive response in offering significant support to Ukrainian students and universities.

The Office for Students, the higher education regulator in England, has published information for providers on the crisis in Ukraine, which can be found here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/information-for-providers-on-the-crisis-in-ukraine>. The department has also published guidance for colleges, which is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/helping-ukrainian-students-in-schools>.

The department continues to work closely with the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science, and universities and colleges in England to ensure that students who are affected by the war in Ukraine are supported, and have a range of options available to them during this difficult time.

Palestinians: Textbooks

Asked by Lord Pickles

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether reports of antisemitic and extremist content in Palestinian school textbooks adhere to (1) the Palestinian Authority–Department for International Development Memorandum of Understanding, and (2) the Palestinian Authority's commitment to take action against incitement to violence. [HL4460]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Our partnership with the Palestinian Authority (PA) includes a commitment from the Palestinian leadership to adhere to the principle of non-violence and to tackle language and actions that could incite violence or hatred. We have been clear that incitement to hatred or violence is unacceptable and has no place in education. We continue to assess the PA's commitment to peace in line with our Partnership Principles.

Palestinians: UN Convention against Torture

Asked by Lord Pickles

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent assessment they have made of the Palestinian Authority's compliance with the Optional Protocol of the Convention Against Torture. [HL4459]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Human Rights is a crucial element underpinning the UK's foreign policy. We

continue to urge the Palestinian Authority (PA) to respect human rights, to ensure complaints of mistreatment or arbitrary detention are properly investigated and to further improve the performance of the security sector. An essential aspect of our efforts to prepare the ground for a two state-solution is to support a stable PA that can deliver services to its people and act as an effective partner for peace with Israel. The UK will continue to monitor these areas closely and raise with the highest levels of the PA.

Passports: Fees and Charges

Asked by **Lord Rosser**

To ask His Majesty's Government how much passport fee income has been received each month since January 2021; and how this income has been spent. [[HL4307](#)]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: Passport fees are set in line with HM Treasury guidance Managing Public Money to only recover the costs associated with British passport services as provided by for the Immigration Act 2016. This includes costs relating to the processing of passport applications, overseas consular protection, and for processing British nationals at UK borders.

The table below provides a monthly breakdown of the income received from January 2021.

<i>Month</i>	<i>Income</i>
Jan-21	£29,780,000
Feb-21	£21,580,000
Mar-21	£33,980,000
Apr-21	£28,510,000
May-21	£29,580,000
Jun-21	£36,930,000
Jul-21	£25,350,000
Aug-21	£28,810,000
Sep-21	£37,480,000
Oct-21	£38,320,000
Nov-21	£44,580,000
Dec-21	£36,670,000
Jan-22	£33,280,000
Feb-22	£56,480,000

<i>Month</i>	<i>Income</i>
Mar-22	£74,320,000
Apr-22	£76,130,000
May-22	£74,740,000
Jun-22	£69,690,000
Jul-22	£53,660,000
Aug-22	£52,140,000
Sep-22	£46,600,000
Oct-22	£43,140,000
Nov-22	£40,100,000

Pedestrian Areas and Roads: Snow and Ice

Asked by **Lord Mawson**

To ask His Majesty's Government what financial support they provide to local authorities to ensure that they have the resources to grit roads and pavements adequately during icy weather; and whether there has been any change in the level of the resources provided in the last three years. [[HL4383](#)]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: Section 41(1A) of the Highways Act 1980 places a duty on local authorities to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway, including pavements, is not endangered by snow or ice. The provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2023/24 makes available an additional £5 billion to councils in England, an increase of 9% in cash terms compared to 2022/23. Taking 2022/23 and 2023/24 together, we have increased the funding available to local government in England in real terms. The majority of this funding is un-ringfenced in recognition of local authorities being best placed to understand local priorities, including the gritting of roads and pavements.

Physics: Teachers

Asked by **Baroness Chapman of Darlington**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of Initial teacher training: trainee number census 2022 to 2023; and in particular, the finding that the recruitment target for physics has been missed by more than 80 per cent. [[HL4437](#)]

Baroness Barran: 23,224 postgraduate trainees have been recruited for 2022/23, which is a 20% decrease from 30,093 in 2021/22. This is 71% of the Postgraduate Initial

Teacher Training (PGITT) target, down from 97% in 2021/22.

Teacher recruitment has been challenging for several years, driven by increasing demand for teachers in particular phases and subjects, and a competitive graduate labour market.

As expected, the unprecedented increase in new entrants to ITT because of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020/21 has declined over the past 2 years. The graduate and general labour markets became more competitive and pay has risen in competing sectors, especially in priority Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects.

Some STEM subjects face more recruitment challenges than others and this is reflected in their performance against the PGITT targets. For example, physics achieved 17% of the PGITT target in 2022/23. Mathematics and biology achieved 85% and 111% respectively in 2022/23.

The department launched a pilot initial teacher training course in spring 2022 called 'Engineers Teach Physics'. Following the first year pilot for 'Engineers Teach Physics', it has been expanded to a second year with a national rollout. The department is continuing to work closely with sector experts, representative bodies and academic institutions to ensure that the course reflects best practice and includes the most up-to-date industry knowledge. This expansion will ensure that this programme will be available to more trainees across the country, further ameliorating the shortfall in physics teachers.

The department has also announced funding for physics for those training in 2023/24. A £27,000 tax-free bursary or £29,000 tax-free scholarship in chemistry, computing, mathematics, and physics reflects the priority the department places on training teachers to teach STEM subjects.

Additionally, the department is offering a Levelling Up Premium worth up to £3,000 tax-free for mathematics, physics, chemistry, and computing teachers in the first five years of their careers who work in disadvantaged schools, including in Education Investment Areas. This will support the recruitment and retention of specialist teachers in these subjects and in the schools and areas that need them most. The department is also extending eligibility of the physics bursary to all non-UK trainees.

The manifesto commitment to raise the starting salary for teachers to £30,000 remains as important as ever.

Planning: Inspections

Asked by Lord Randall of Uxbridge

To ask His Majesty's Government what requirements are in place for declarations of interest concerning planning inspectors; and whether there is a code of practice. [HL4338]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: Planning Inspectors and other Planning Inspectorate officials are bound by the

organisation's Code of Conduct, which covers declarations of interest among other issues.

Police: Misconduct

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask His Majesty's Government whether individuals awaiting the outcome of gross misconduct hearings conducted by the Independent Office for Police Conduct are eligible for appointment to roles (1) in the police service, or (2) in the offices of Police and Crime Commissioners. [HL4374]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: Existing officers who apply to change roles or transfer to another force will be subject to relevant vetting checks. Police forces carry out their vetting in line with the statutory code of practice on vetting and vetting authorised professional practice (APP) guidance which are issued by the College of Policing.

The guidance states that professional standards checks, which includes complaint and misconduct history, should be carried out on applicants and transferees. It also states that where an individual is subject to a complaint or conduct investigation that is not yet complete, they should not be allowed to transfer without the permission of the appropriate authority of the parent force and Head of PSD of the receiving force. Decisions on appointment in the police service are made by chief officers.

Decisions on appointment in the offices of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) are made by PCCs as the directly elected, local representatives for policing."

Police: Training

Asked by Lord Dear

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Sharpe of Epsom on 2 November (HL Deb, col 232) concerning policing and the possible reestablishment of Staff College, when they will respond to that question. [HL4321]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The College of Policing was set up in 2012 to set and improve standards for excellence in policing, including recruitment, leadership, professional development and assessment.

The College's role is clear: setting high professional standards sharing what works best; acting as the national voice of policing; and ensuring professional development and police leadership are of the highest quality and that they uphold the highest ethics.

There are no plans to re-establish the old Police Staff College.

Population: Birmingham

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the recent publication of the 2021 Census, whether they have made any forecast of when they estimate that the

local authority population of Birmingham will be majority Muslim. [HL4387]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: His Majesty's Government does not produce religion-based population projections / forecasts.

Postal Services

Asked by Lord Black of Brentwood

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on the magazine industry of amending the Postal Services Act 2011 to move to a five-day letter delivery. [HL4319]

Asked by Lord Black of Brentwood

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to ask Ofcom to conduct a review in accordance with section 34(1) or section 44(1) of the Postal Services Act 2011, before moving to amend the statutory minimum requirements of the universal postal service. [HL4320]

Lord Callanan: The Government has no current plans to change the statutory minimum requirements of the universal postal service, set out in the Postal Services Act 2011, which requires letter deliveries to every UK address, six days a week at standard price.

Pre-school Education: Migrants

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask His Majesty's Government how many children subject to no recourse to public funds (NRPF) conditions in receipt of 15 hours a week of free early education are British citizens. [HL4279]

Baroness Barran: Following a consultation in May 2022, the department extended eligibility for the 15-hour early education entitlement for disadvantaged two-year-olds to children in no recourse to public fund (NRPF) households in September 2022.

The department does not hold data on the number of children that are British children with NRPF that are currently in receipt of the two-year old early education entitlement.

Prescription Drugs

Asked by Lord Mawson

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to address the reported increase in community pharmacies having to dispense NHS prescriptions at a loss. [HL4454]

Asked by Lord Mawson

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the current medicines price concession system. [HL4455]

Lord Markham: When market prices rise and pharmacies cannot purchase products at or below the

Drug Tariff NHS reimbursement price, the Pharmaceutical Service Negotiating Committee (PSNC) can request the Department to reconsider this price. If a new reimbursement price is issued this is known as a concessionary price, which is established using real time data from suppliers to generate prices that are reflective of the overall market.

Furthermore, the Department assesses the overall medicine margin, the difference between the reimbursement price and the price the pharmacy was charged by the supplier, through an annual 'medicine margin survey'. This data is used to calculate the average amount of medicines margin retained during the year. All products that receive a concessionary price are looked at in detail in the margin survey. If underpayment has occurred, it will be made good to pharmacy contractors through margin adjustment.

As part of the 'Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework 5-year deal: year 4 (2022 to 2023) and year 5 (2023 to 2024)', which is available in an online-only format, the PSNC and the Department are reviewing the current concessionary price arrangement.

Prescription Drugs: Shortages

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to resolve current supply issues limiting the availability of many prescription medicines, including antibiotics for the treatment of Group A Streptococcus; and how many prescription medicines in England currently have longer than average fulfilment times. [HL4376]

Lord Markham: We are continuing to work with manufacturers and wholesalers to accelerate deliveries to address temporary issues with the supply of antibiotics used to treat Group A Streptococcus and meet current demand.

We have introduced eight Serious Shortage Protocols in the United Kingdom for penicillin medicines to mitigate and support fulfilment times and local supply issues. This allows pharmacists to supply alternative forms of the medicine or alternative antibiotics, if the product stated on the prescription is unavailable. Data on fulfilment times for prescription only medicines is not held centrally.

Asked by Lord Mawson

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address community pharmacists experiencing daily shortages of medicines. [HL4453]

Asked by Lord Mawson

To ask His Majesty's Government what support they will provide to community pharmacy teams, if any, who are (1) dealing with an increasing number of medicines shortages, and (2) spending increasing hours sourcing medicines to ensure that patients do not go without. [HL4456]

Lord Markham: Medicine supply problems can occur for various reasons; for example, due to manufacturing difficulties, regulatory problems, problems with the supply of raw materials, sudden demand spikes or from issues which are related to the distribution of the product.

The Department has well-established procedures to deal with medicine supply issues and works closely with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, the pharmaceutical industry, NHS England and others within the supply chain to help prevent shortages and to ensure that the risks to patients are minimised when they do arise.

One of the tools we use to support pharmacists to manage supply issues are serious shortage protocols (SSPs), a standard procedure used frequently to manage medicine supply issues. They are a safe and effective way to ensure that medicines continue to be available for everyone who needs them, while saving time for patients, pharmacists and prescribers.

Issuing a SSP allows pharmacists to legally supply a specified alternative medicine, removing the need for the patient to return to the prescriber which saves time in general practitioners practices and inconvenience for patients.

Public Expenditure: EU Countries

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Penn on 14 December (HL3949), whether they will list in a table the various constituent parts of the UK's financial commitments to the EU that the payment of c.£11bn sought to settle; and how much of that c.£11bn relates to each of those parts. [HL4389]

Baroness Penn: His Majesty's Government has provided the breakdown of material payments in relation to the financial settlement under the Withdrawal Agreement as well as other obligations during the transition period in the annual publication of the European Union Finances Statement. The details can be found in the documents published in 2021 and 2022, which are accessible on gov.uk and also provided in the attached.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Supporting doc 1
[210706_FINAL_European_Union_Finances_Statement_2020.pdf
]

Supporting doc 2
[20220720_EU_Finances_Statement_2021_with_cover_v3_FINAL.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-12-16/HL4389>

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Baroness Penn on 25 November

(HL3505) and 14 December (HL3949), whether they will now provide a figure in their answer of how much money the UK has paid the EU since its departure; for what purposes that money was paid; how much they expect to pay in the future; and when that money will be paid. [HL4457]

Baroness Penn: All details of how much money the UK has paid the EU since departure, its purposes, forecasts of future payments and timings are set out in the annual publication of the European Union Finances Statement (EUFS). The most recent EUFS is for 2021 and is available on gov.uk.

The financial settlement under the European Union Withdrawal Agreement Act 2020 (WA) represents the negotiated agreement over the UK's historical financial commitments to the EU and those of the European Union (EU) to the UK. This financial arrangement is related to the UK's past obligations as a departing Member State and does not relate to any future arrangements.

As set out in EUFS 2021, the net UK payments under the WA were c.£11bn (€13.4bn) from the UK's departure on 31st January 2020 to the 31 December 2021.

From 31 December 2021 the UK has been further invoiced in April and September 2022; from these the gross contributions between January 2022 and May 2023 are c.£12.7bn. This amount does not include UK receipts. HMG will publish the EUFS 2022 in the coming months that will provide a definitive net figure up to 31 December 2022.

Public Spaces Protection Orders: Enforcement

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Sharpe of Epsom on 8 December (HL3749), how, if at all, they regulate the enforcement of penalties for the breach of public space protection orders by contractors appointed by local authorities. [HL4218]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The regulation of the enforcement of penalties for breaches of public space protection orders by contractors that have been appointed is a matter for the local authorities concerned.

Pupil Exclusions: Travellers

Asked by Baroness Whitaker

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Traveller Movement Disrupting the School to Prison Pipeline, published in July; and what steps they intend to take in response to the recommendations made in that report. [HL4272]

Baroness Barran: The department recognises the issues faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people and how education can make a positive

difference. The report contained seven recommendations for the department and the following sets out how we are responding to those recommendations.

The report recommended that the clear disaggregation of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller identities as adopted by the Office for National Statistics for the 2021 Census, should be implemented across the education sector. As the report references Gypsy, Roma and Traveller data was collected in Census 2021 and phase one of the data has now been released: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/bulletins/ethnicgroupenglandandwales/census2021>. We are currently reviewing the harmonised standard for ethnicity, with any potential question changes being released in early 2024.

The report recommended that the department must ensure a race equality & diversity policy is made a statutory element of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) for all schools. Already the PSED requires public bodies, including maintained schools and academies, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.

Schools have specific legal duties to publish information to demonstrate how they are complying with the PSED, and to prepare and publish equality objectives. Schools are also required to publish information relating to those who share a relevant protected characteristic and who are affected by their policies and practices. It is for schools to develop their own strategies for meeting their duties, however, the Department has published guidance for schools on how to ensure they comply with their duties under the Equality Act.

In regard to Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans, the report recommended that all schools must have the ability and resources to provide assessment of them when requested by a parent or guardian, including annual reviews. Also, local authorities should consider providing base-level EHC Plans funding to all schools. The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Green Paper, published in March 2022 sets out our vision to create a more inclusive education system with excellent local mainstream provision which will improve the experience and outcomes for children and young people who need more intensive support. Amongst those consulted was the department's GRT Stakeholder Group and we are committed to publishing a full response to the consultation through an improvement plan early in 2023.

The report also recommended that the department should require all school and academy trusts to establish an On-Site Inclusion Unit (OSIU). In July 2022 we published updated guidance on Behaviour in Schools and Suspension and Permanent Exclusion statutory guidance. The Behaviour guidance makes clear some schools can choose to have pupil support units (sometimes called 'in-school units') which should be used for two main reasons:

to provide planned pastoral support for vulnerable pupils and as a last resort measure to support pupils at risk of exclusion.

Additionally, the report recommended that expert headteacher panels should be established to provide final assessments for proposed permanent exclusions and the department should develop standardised reporting guidelines for monitoring the use of In-School exclusionary practices, and also develop guidance for best practice and use of in-school exclusionary practices.

The updated Exclusion guidance is clear that, in all cases, schools should consider initial intervention to address underlying causes of disruptive behaviour which may minimise the need for permanent exclusion. Whilst a permanent exclusion may still be an appropriate sanction, schools should take account of any contributing factors.

The statutory process to review school exclusions is clear that governing boards have a role to review the decision of the headteacher to permanently exclude and if the governing board decides to uphold the permanent exclusion, the parents will have the right to an Independent Review Panel.

Railways: North of England

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask His Majesty's Government what additional steps they are planning to take to deal with (1) poor performance by TransPennine Express trains, and (2) any health and safety issues that arise due to overcrowding on the services that are operated. [HL4506]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Department's Rail North Partnership with Transport for the North continues to work with TransPennine Express on plans for how and when the operator will introduce originally-planned services that are reliable, punctual and predictable for passengers.

Railways: Repairs and Maintenance

Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the planned improvements by Network Rail over the Christmas period will still take place given the industrial action at that time. [HL4452]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Network Rail has confirmed only eight of seventy planned work packages will be cancelled as a result of strike action but the majority of its £120 million programme of improvement works will go ahead over the Christmas period. The industrial action means that at the most important work sites, Network Rail will need to take possession of the railway earlier on Christmas Eve and hand it back at the end of the works later on 27 December than originally planned.

Railways: Tickets

Asked by *Baroness Redfern*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the proposed closures of railway ticket offices on people who are (1) elderly, (2) deaf, or (3) blind or partially sighted; and what steps they will take in response to any such assessment. [HL4497]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: If a train operating company (TOC) proposes the closure of ticket offices, they must follow the process set out in the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (TSA). This sets out how TOCs must consider the needs of all passengers when proposing alternative arrangements.

Together with industry we want to improve and modernise the experience for all passengers, giving staff more flexible roles allows them to better support the overall needs of elderly, deaf, blind or partially sighted passengers.

If called upon to make a determination on a specific ticket office proposal, the Secretary of State will follow the TSA process and comply with his own Public Sector Equality Duty by taking equality implications into account.

Recycling: Labelling

Asked by *Lord Smith of Finsbury*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken (1) to progress plans to introduce mandatory recycling labelling on packaging, and (2) to ensure businesses are able to implement these reforms effectively and at reasonable costs. [HL4179]

Lord Benyon: We confirmed our intention to require recycling labelling on packaging in March 2022 in the Government's Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility consultation response. We continue to engage with stakeholders as we develop these requirements, the approach to assessing recyclability and the regulations to introduce mandatory labelling.

Labelling will be required by 31st March 2026 for all packaging except plastic films and flexibles which will be required to be labelled by 31st March 2027. This should provide sufficient time for business to adopt labelling as part of typical business cycles and to avoid unnecessary costs. It will also allow time for collection services to develop such that all local authorities collect the same packaging materials for recycling.

Asked by *Lord Teverson*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken (1) to prepare for the introduction of mandatory recycling labelling on packaging, and (2) to ensure business is able to implement these reforms effectively and at a reasonable cost. [HL4206]

Lord Benyon: We confirmed our intention to require recycling labelling on packaging in March 2022 in the Government's Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility consultation response. We continue to engage with stakeholders as we develop these requirements, the approach to assessing recyclability and the regulations to introduce mandatory labelling.

Labelling will be required by 31st March 2026 for all packaging except plastic films and flexibles which will be required to be labelled by 31st March 2027. This should provide sufficient time for business to adopt labelling as part of typical business cycles and to avoid unnecessary costs. It will also allow time for collection services to develop such that all local authorities collect the same packaging materials for recycling.

Asked by *Lord Teverson*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that mandatory recycling labelling on packaging will enable consumers to recycle easily and accurately. [HL4207]

Lord Benyon: The Government set out its proposals for recycling labelling on packaging in the consultation response published in March 2022. We stated that the labelling requirements would comprise a recycling symbol (the Recycle Now 'swoosh') and the appropriate wording (Recycle or Do not recycle). This will provide clear information to help consumers recycle easily and avoid confusion caused by the variety of current labelling.

Asked by *Lord Teverson*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the new regulations regarding mandatory recyclability labelling are enforced. [HL4208]

Lord Benyon: The regulations will set out the role of the enforcement authority and the offences and penalties that will apply to businesses that do not comply with the labelling requirements. The Office for Product Safety and Standards has agreed in principle to become the enforcement body and is advising us on the development of the monitoring and enforcement regime.

Refugees: Afghanistan

Asked by *Lord Dubs*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many people they expect to resettle under Pathway 2 of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme in the first year of this pathway. [HL4322]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: We anticipate receiving referrals from UNHCR for up to 2,000 refugees during the first year of this pathway and this number will be kept under review.

The pace of arrivals in any particular period will necessarily depend on some key factors, including the flow of referrals from UNHCR, and the availability of suitable accommodation and support in the UK.

Asked by Lord Dubs

To ask His Majesty's Government how many Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme dependent visas have been issued to family members of Afghans resettled in the UK under Pathway 1 of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme. [HL4323]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: At 4th November 2022:

- 22,833 individuals from Afghanistan have been brought to safety in the UK (since the end of June 2021).
- We have granted Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) to 6,314 people under ACRS Pathway 1.

Whilst I am not able to provide a breakdown of this data for family members, work is underway to assure information relating to all the individuals relocated under the ARAP and ACRS on case working systems. Once this work concludes, further statistics on both schemes - including the number of people resettled under each - will be included in the published Immigration Statistics.

Refugees: China

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to provide reassurance to the Uyghur, Tibetan, Hong Kong and other Chinese refugee communities in the UK about their security, following the 16 October attack on protesters outside the Chinese consulate. [HL4475]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: As the Minister for Security stated to the House of Commons on 1 November, the Home Office works closely with Departments across Whitehall and with devolved Administrations to ensure that our national security is protected and that, in particular, those who have chosen to settle here are free to engage in our democratic society without fear of the regimes that they have tried to leave behind.

Through our excellent police forces and the agencies that work with them, we take a proactive approach to protecting individuals and communities from all manner of threats. Where we identify individuals who may be at heightened risk, we are front-footed in deploying protective security guidance and other measures where necessary.

The upcoming National Security Bill will strengthen our legal powers to deal with transnational repression. Coercion, harassment or intimidation linked to a foreign power that interfere with the freedoms of individuals will be criminalised under the new foreign interference offence in the Bill.

Home Office Ministers have asked officials to step up the work to ensure that our approach to transnational repression is robust, and the Security Minister has asked our Department to review our approach to transnational repression as a matter of urgency. The Security Minister will provide an update on that work to the House in due course.

Regional Planning and Development

Asked by Lord Rogan

To ask His Majesty's Government whether a proportion of the additional £400 million added to round two of the Levelling Up Fund will be allocated to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales in line with the Barnett Formula. [HL4500]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: We received a large number of high-quality applications to the Levelling Up Fund and as such made the decision to allocate additional funds for this round.

This means that up to £2.1 billion will be granted to successful bids in this round across the UK - up to £400 million more than last time.

Over the first and second round of the Fund, we have committed that at least 9% of total UK allocations will be set aside for Scotland, 5% for Wales, and 3% for Northern Ireland, subject to a suitable number of high-quality bids coming forward. This is at least as much as would have been received through Barnett consequentials.

Renewable Energy: Seas and Oceans

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to remove barriers experienced by offshore oil and gas workers when seeking to transition to green jobs in the offshore energy sector. [HL4425]

Lord Callanan: In March 2022, a tripartite agreement was reached between the bodies which oversee offshore wind training and qualifications – OPITO, the Global Wind Organisation, and the International Contractors Association – to align training standards to enable workforce mobility.

As part of the commitments in the North Sea Transition Deal, OPITO published an Integrated People and Skills Strategy in May 2022, highlighting the benefits of a managed energy transition and committed to create an aligned training and standards framework (Energy Skills Passport), which will enable skills transfer across the offshore energy sector. This is expected to be deployed in 2023.

Saudi Arabia: Capital Punishment

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will publish a timeline of assurances given by the government of Saudi Arabia to His Majesty's Government on the existence of a moratorium on the death penalty for drug offences in Saudi Arabia. [HL4136]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government strongly opposes the death penalty in all countries and in all circumstances, as a matter of principle. I [Lord Ahmad] raised the 2021 moratorium with the Saudi Vice

Foreign Minister on 13 December, with the Saudi Ambassador on 24 November, and on 21 December with the President of the Saudi Human Rights Commission. We regularly raise our concerns with the Saudi authorities regarding the death penalty at the highest levels and will continue to do so.

School Milk

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of children under five years old who benefit from the provision of free school milk; and what plans they have to expand that provision. [HL4392]

Lord Markham: Approximately 810,587 children received a portion of milk through the Nursery Milk Scheme every school day during 2021/22. There are no plans to expand the provision.

Schools: Energy

Asked by *Baroness Chapman of Darlington*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the rise in energy bills on ventilation in classrooms over the winter. [HL4435]

Baroness Barran: The department has not made an assessment of the impact of the rise in energy bills on ventilation in classrooms over the winter. Maintaining adequate ventilation remains the responsibility of individual schools.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the government provided over 386,000 CO₂ monitors to schools, colleges, and early years settings to help manage ventilation. As well as helping settings to identify areas that are poorly ventilated, CO₂ monitors can be useful in helping balance good ventilation with keeping classrooms warm.

In December 2022, the department published guidance on energy efficiency for schools and colleges, including guidance on managing ventilation, which can be found attached and at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-efficiency-guidance-for-the-school-and-fe-college-estate>.

In addition, eligible schools and sixth-form colleges will receive an allocation of £447 million of capital funding to improve energy efficiency in 2022/2023. This is part of an additional £500 million of capital funding for schools and further education institutions in England.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL4435_guidance [HL4435_guidance_on_energy_efficiency.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2022-12-20/HL4435>

Schools: Inflation

Asked by *Baroness Chapman of Darlington*

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent assessment they have made of the impact of inflation on (1) school budgets, (2) the cost of uniforms, (3) classroom staff, (4) extra-curricular activities, (5) schools' energy bills, (6) school meals, and (7) the costs for parents associated with their child's education. [HL4412]

Baroness Barran: Schools will receive an additional £2 billion in each of 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years as a result of the 2022 Autumn Statement. The core schools budget, which covers schools' day-to-day running costs, including schools' energy bills and the costs of providing income-related free school meals, has risen from £49.8 billion in 2021/22 to £53.8 billion in 2022/23 and will continue to rise to £57.3 billion in 2023/24 and £58.8 billion in 2024/25. By 2024/25, funding per pupil will have risen to its highest ever level in real terms. These increases provide support to schools to deal with the impact of inflation on their budgets.

From October 2022 to 31 March 2023, schools will benefit from the Energy Bill Relief Scheme. This provides a price reduction to protect schools from excessively high energy bills over the winter period.

The department is clear that school uniforms should be affordable. No school uniform should be so expensive that pupils or their families feel unable to apply to or attend a school of their choice. In November 2021, the department issued statutory guidance on the cost of school uniforms to ensure the cost of school uniforms is reasonable. The guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cost-of-school-uniforms/cost-of-school-uniforms>. Governing boards should be compliant with much of the guidance by September 2022 and fully compliant by summer 2023.

Teachers' pay is reviewed on an annual basis by the independent School Teachers' Review Body (STRB), which considers the current economic climate. Pay awards this year provide a careful balance between recognising the vital importance of teachers, whilst delivering value for the taxpayer, and being careful not to drive inflation. The department has implemented the STRB's recommendation of an 8.9% pay uplift to teacher starting salaries outside London in 2022/23, bringing them up to £28,000. The department has also implemented the STRB's recommendation of a 5% pay uplift for experienced teachers and leaders in 2022/23. This is the highest pay award for experienced teachers in 30 years. Teachers and other classroom staff will also benefit from wider government cost of living support announced for households.

The department supports a range of initiatives to increase access to high quality extra curricular activities. This includes investing £3.4 million between 2021 and 2024 to support the Duke of Edinburgh's Award to expand into more schools in the most disadvantaged areas

of the country and investing over £200 million a year in the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme. HAF provides free holiday club places with activities and healthy food for children from low-income families during the summer, Easter, and Christmas school holidays. Additionally, both pupil premium and recovery premium can be used to fund extra-curricular activities.

The government spends over £1 billion annually delivering free school meals (FSM) to pupils. Around 1.9 million disadvantaged pupils are eligible for free school meals (FSM) as well as an additional 1.25 million infants who receive a free meal under the Universal Infant Free School Meal (UIFSM) policy. Core schools funding has increased, which includes the FSM factor in the National Funding Formula £470 per eligible pupil this year. Universal Infant Free School Meal funding has also been uplifted to £2.41 per meal per child in June 2022 and backdated to 1 April 2022 in recognition of the cost pressures faced by schools.

The government has announced further support, worth £26 billion, for next year. This is designed to target the most vulnerable households and families. This is on top of the £37 billion cost of living support provided by the government this year.

Schools: Weather

Asked by Baroness Berridge

To ask His Majesty's Government how many school days in England were lost in the last 12 months due to school closures caused by adverse weather conditions. [HL4480]

Baroness Barran: The requested information is not held by the department. Data on sessions missed due to exceptional circumstances is collected, but it is not possible to determine which were missed as a result of adverse weather conditions.

Sky Lanterns

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to tackle the risk of (1) fire, and (2) other serious issues, caused by sky lanterns in England. [HL3656]

Lord Benyon: Local authorities already have powers to restrict or ban the use of sky lanterns on council land and a number of councils have already introduced a ban. We have also supported the industry to develop a voluntary code of practice for sky lanterns which helps ensure that they are manufactured to be safe and are sold responsibly.

Slavery

Asked by Lord McColl of Dulwich

To ask His Majesty's Government when the 2022 UK annual report on modern slavery will be published. [HL4202]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: This Government remains committed to tackling the heinous crime of modern slavery and ensuring that victims are provided with the support they need to begin rebuilding their lives and that those responsible are prosecuted. We will continue to pursue the criminals who seek to profit from these crimes, and ensure genuine victims get the support they deserve.

Given recent changes, Ministers are considering next steps on our strategic approach, including publication of a Modern Slavery Report.

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent assessment they have made of the number of people in modern slavery in the UK. [HL4361]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The hidden nature of modern slavery makes producing an accurate measure of its scale difficult.

In March 2020 the Office for National Statistics noted that there is no definitive source of data or suitable method available to accurately quantify the number of potential victims of modern slavery in the UK.

The Government is, however, committed to improving its understanding of the nature and scale of this complex crime. Since 2019, the Government has invested £10 million in the creation of the Policy and Evidence Centre for Modern Slavery and Human Rights to transform our understanding of modern slavery. The Home Office will continue working with the Centre and other partners to strengthen the evidence base underpinning our policy and operational response to modern slavery and to develop more robust ways to assess prevalence.

Slavery: Supply Chains

Asked by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 in driving slavery out of supply chains. [HL4362]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires businesses with a turnover of £36 million or more to report annually on the steps they have taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.

The landmark 'Transparency in Supply Chains' provisions in the Modern Slavery Act have driven a change in business culture, spotlighting modern slavery risks on boardroom agendas and within the international human rights community. We recognise, however, there is more to do to keep businesses focused on this important issue.

Compliance with section 54 is high. In 2019, the Home Office contracted the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC) to undertake an audit of compliance with section 54. The audit was concluded in January 2020 with data accurate up to this point. The high-level findings of this audit were published on 17 September

2020 in the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner's annual report available here at Gov.UK.

In addition, in March 2021, the Government launched the modern slavery statement registry to radically enhance transparency by bringing together modern slavery statements on a single platform. The registry will provide a key tool for Government and others to monitor and drive compliance with section 54. We have been encouraged by use of the registry. Since launch, over 9,300 modern slavery statements covering over 31,200 organisations have been submitted on a voluntary basis.

Slurry Infrastructure Grant

Asked by *Baroness Kennedy of Cradley*

To ask His Majesty's Government how much funding is available to eligible farmers from the Slurry Infrastructure Grant; and what support they are providing to assist applicants with that process. [HL4364]

Lord Benyon: The Slurry Infrastructure grant will support farmers to invest in eligible slurry stores, slurry store covers and supporting equipment with grants ranging between £25,000 and £250,000.

My department has published full guidance on GOV.UK, which explains what the grant offers, the scheme rules and how to apply and provides advice for planning storage. On 7 December 2022 my officials hosted a webinar to help farmers apply and to answer questions.

Farmers can contact the RPA via telephone or email for further advice at 03000 200 301 and FTF@rpa.gov.uk.

Further support will be provided to farmers invited to submit a full application.

Small Businesses: Urban Areas

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to encourage local small businesses to set up on the high street. [HL4316]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: This Government is committed, through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, to reinvigorate high streets and town centres and ensure local economies thrive and evolve. This new legislation will play an important role in reviving our high streets by introducing High Street Rental Auctions (HSRAs). HSRAs will empower places to tackle decline by bringing vacant units back into use and will seek to increase cooperation between landlords and local authorities, and to make town centre tenancies more accessible and affordable for tenants, including SMEs, local businesses and community groups.

Social Rented Housing: Young People

Asked by *Baroness Lister of Burtersett*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many young people aged 16 to 25 are currently on social housing waiting lists in England. [HL4255]

Asked by *Baroness Lister of Burtersett*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the decline in social housing lettings to young people aged 16 to 25 over the last decade; and in any such assessment, what conclusions they have drawn as to the explanation for this. [HL4256]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: The Department does not hold this information in the format requested.

Local authorities are responsible for allocating social housing through schemes they set locally and therefore they ensure that the priority for social housing goes to those who need it most.

Soil

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park on 8 September 2021 (HL Deb col 867) in which he said that they "will publish a soil health action plan for England", when they will publish this plan. [HL4404]

Lord Benyon: The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP), due to be published by 31 January 2023, will set out the government's strategic direction for improving and protecting soil health so that it is valued and appropriately managed, balancing sustainable food production alongside increasing biodiversity and protecting our environment. We are currently planning to engage with stakeholders in the new year on next steps, once the EIP is published.

South Sudan: Politics and Government

Asked by *The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the current political and security situation in Kodok, South Sudan; and what support they are providing to the UN peacekeeping force in that area. [HL4379]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: We have received credible reports from partners in Upper Nile State of hundreds of civilians killed, tens of thousands displaced, homes and livelihoods destroyed, and sexual and gender-based violence being perpetrated. On 16 December, the Troika (UK, US and Norway) and the EU issued a statement on the escalation in violence in Upper Nile and Jonglei States (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-by-the-troika-and-the-european-union-on-violence-in-upper-nile-and-jonglei-states>). The United Nations Mission in South

Sudan (UNMISS) has a peacekeeping presence in Kodok and is providing protection to civilians there. The UK provides almost £58 million to UNMISS via the UN peacekeeping budget.

Special Educational Needs

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the average waiting time between requesting an assessment and an Education, Health and Care Plan being issued; which local authorities have the longest assessment, planning and review processing times for these plans; and what plans they have, if any, to change statutory timelines for the delivery of these plans. [HL4381]

Baroness Barran: The Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) Regulations 2014 set out that the local authority must, unless certain specified exemptions apply, finalise the education, health and care (EHC) plan within 20 weeks of the local authority receiving a request for an assessment. 62,200 new EHC plans were issued during 2021, an increase of 3% compared to the previous year, and 59.9% of the EHC plans were issued within the statutory 20 weeks.

The department does not collect data on the average waiting times for EHC plans, but instead collect and publish data on the number and percentage of EHC plans issued within 20 weeks at the local authority level, both including and excluding exceptions. From this data, the department cannot establish which local authorities have the longest average waiting times.

In March 2022, we published the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Green Paper, which sets out our proposals to ensure that every child and young person has their needs identified quickly and their needs met consistently. The department proposes to improve families' experiences of the EHC plan process by introducing standardised and digitised EHC plans. The department is committed to publishing a full response to the SEND and AP Green Paper in an improvement plan early in 2023.

The department will continue to support the system in the immediate term to continue to improve the experience and outcomes for children and young people with SEND and those who need AP.

Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government what (1) number, and (2) percentage, of (a) nursery, (b) primary, and (c) secondary, school pupils in England have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. [HL4465]

Baroness Barran: Data is collected in the school census on the number of pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan, which replaced statements of special educational needs. Figures are published in the Special Educational Needs (SEN) in England statistical release, which can be found here: [https://explore-](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england)

[education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england).

In January 2022, there were:

- 535 state-funded nursery pupils (1.4%) in England with an EHC plan.
- 105,756 state-funded primary school pupils (2.3%) in England with an EHC plan.
- 76,838 state-funded secondary school pupils (2.2%) in England with an EHC plan.

Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, if any, of the proportion of children with Special Educational Needs statements in England compared with other parts of the UK. [HL4516]

Baroness Barran: The numbers of education, health and care (EHC) plans in England for those aged 0-25-years-old, and the proportions of pupils in schools with such plans are published at SEN2, which can be found at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans>, and SEN in England, which can be found at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>. This system of issuing EHC plans has replaced that for issuing statements of special educational need.

Education is a devolved matter and there are different systems for supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The statutory criteria for eligibility for EHC plans in England are not replicated in the other parts of the United Kingdom. Although there are some similarities over the approach to supporting pupils with SEND across the four nations, any direct comparison of the relevant data should be treated with caution.

Special Educational Needs: Finance

Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government what was the total (1) budget, and (2) spend, on pupils with Special Educational Needs in England for each of the last five years. [HL4466]

Baroness Barran: The department does not identify a budget for the total education spending on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). It is not a specific category of spending that is recorded by the department, or by local authorities, schools, colleges, and other education providers.

The department allocates funding for SEND provision in various ways, with the most significant amounts being channelled through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to local authorities. Within the DSG, the department allocates high needs funding for children and young people with complex SEND, along with those who need support outside a mainstream school in alternative provision. The table below sets out the DSG high needs

funding block allocations from 2018/19 to 2022/23. The DSG amounts for 2022/23 and 2023/24 remain provisional until final adjustments and payments have been made.

<i>Financial year</i>	<i>DSG high needs block allocations (£ million)</i>
2018/19	£6,115
2019/20	£6,279
2020/21	£7,063
2021/22	£7,906
2022/23	£8,988
2023/24	£9,953

The totals in the table above do not include other streams of funding that schools, colleges, local authorities, and other providers use to support children and young people with SEND. In particular, it does not take account of support that mainstream schools provide to those with SEND drawn from their own core budgets, where funding is provided through another element of the DSG.

Schools are not required to identify their spending on SEND provision separately from other spending. Local authorities report their spending from their high needs budgets, which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/section-251-materials>.

Special Educational Needs: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the statement by the Secretary of State on 24 November (HCWS385) on finances for the Northern Ireland departments for 2022–23 and the budget outlook for 2023–24, what assessment they have made of the budgetary resource pressures for Special Needs Education within these overall budgets. [HL4517]

Lord Caine: The budget set out in the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland's Written Statement to Parliament on 24 November is an appropriate settlement that prioritises spending in education and gives the Northern Ireland Department of Education a total allocation of £2.64 billion. This is an increase of £286 million above 2021–22 spending (after excluding accounting for one-off COVID support in 2021–22). The Northern Ireland Department of Education will now be required to manage its allocated funding in order to live within this budget total. This includes managing funding provision for areas such as Special Educational Needs.

The Secretary of State will shortly legislate for the budget in a Budget Bill. This does not, however, remove the pressing need to have locally accountable political leaders in place to take the fundamental decisions which will secure a more sustainable future for the people of Northern Ireland.

Special Educational Needs: Qualifications

Asked by Lord Addington

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the advantage for pupils of moving from the current qualification for a Special Educational Needs Coordinator requiring 600 hours training and a Masters qualification, to the proposed 75 hour National Professional Qualification. [HL4397]

Asked by Lord Addington

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the proposed reduction in training hours for Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators by 525 hours, whether the resources previously allocated to training will be used to provide more specialist support in schools. [HL4398]

Baroness Barran: In March 2022, the Department published the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Green Paper. This included the proposal to replace the current mandatory qualification for Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs), the National Award for SEN Co-ordination (NASENCO), with a new leadership level National Professional Qualification (NPQ). The NASENCO is a Level 7 postgraduate qualification funded from school budgets, typically equivalent to a third of a full Masters' degree, taking approximately 225 hours to complete. The time commitment required for leadership NPQs varies between courses and providers.

The proposal seeks to improve the level of expertise and leadership amongst SENCOs and ensure they have the knowledge and skills for the role at the earliest opportunity, enabling them to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. NPQs are underpinned by the latest and best evidence. This would bring the SENCO qualification in line with wider teacher development reforms, with content and delivery quality assured by the Education Endowment Foundation and Ofsted.

The Department is now carefully considering the feedback received through the 16-week consultation period. The Department is committed to publishing a full response to the SEND and AP Green Paper, including the proposals on SENCOs, in an Improvement Plan early in the new year. If the proposed SENCO NPQ is to be introduced, the Department will communicate the arrangements around the funding for NPQs in due course.

Streptococcus: Screening

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the medical efficacy and value to users of commercial Strep A tests, and (2) any extra costs that might result for the NHS as a result of such tests. [HL4478]

Lord Markham: Rapid tests for Group A Streptococcus (Strep A) are not currently recommended

by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) for individuals aged five years old and over presenting with a sore throat. However, in response to the ongoing national increased incidence of Strep A infection, UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) are concurrently reviewing the literature on clinical scoring tools and rapid tests for Strep A infection in people presenting with a sore throat.

UKHSA have commissioned a desktop to bedside review of existing antigen-based lateral flow devices for Strep A infection, adopting a tried and tested process that was developed for coronavirus testing device approvals. This process will identify the tests that are most likely to perform well in the diagnosis of sore throats caused by Strep A in community settings.

No specific assessment of the extra costs to the National Health Service associated with commercial tests have been made.

Students: Cost of Living

Asked by Baroness Chapman of Darlington

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support students with the cost of living. [HL4407]

Asked by Baroness Chapman of Darlington

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effects of increases in the cost of living on access to higher education for students from (1) ethnic minority, and (2) disadvantaged, backgrounds. [HL4408]

Baroness Barran: The department recognises the additional cost of living pressures that have arisen this year and that have impacted students. Many higher education (HE) providers have hardship funds that students can apply to for assistance. There is £261 million of student premium funding available this academic year to support disadvantaged students who need additional help. The department is working with the Office for Students (OfS) to ensure universities support students in hardship using both hardship funds and drawing on the student premium.

All households will save on their energy bills through the Energy Price Guarantee and the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme discount. Students who buy their energy from a domestic supplier are eligible for the energy bills discount. The Energy Prices Act passed on 25th October includes the provision to require landlords to pass benefits they receive from energy price support, as appropriate, onto end users. Further details of the requirements under this act are set out in the legislation.

A HM Treasury-led review is being undertaken to consider how to support households and businesses with energy bills after April 2023.

Decisions on student support for HE courses are taken on an annual basis and changes for the current 2022/23

academic year were made through Regulations laid in December 2021.

The government is currently considering options for changes to loans and grants for living and other costs for the 2023/24 academic year starting in August 2023 and an announcement will follow in due course.

The UCAS end of cycle report shows that in 2022 there were record numbers of 18-year-olds getting into university, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. An English 18-year-old from a disadvantaged background today is 86% more likely to go to university than in 2010.

The department's widening participation publication from 2022 shows that progression to higher education has increased across all students, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds. Black pupils have seen the greatest increase in the proportion entering HE by age 19, increasing from 44.1% in 2009/10 to 62.1% in 2020/21.

Students: Loans

Asked by Baroness Chapman of Darlington

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of maintenance loans rising by 2.3 per cent on (1) ethnic minority, and (2) disadvantaged, students. [HL4409]

Baroness Barran: Decisions on student support are taken on an annual basis. The department has continued to increase student living costs support each year with a 2.3% increase to maximum loans and grants for living and other costs for the 2022/23 academic year. Students who have been awarded a loan for living costs for the 2022/23 academic year that is lower than the maximum, and whose household income for the tax year 2022/23 has dropped by at least 15% compared to the income provided for their original assessment, can apply for their entitlement to be reassessed.

An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken prior to a decision being taken on increases to maintenance loans and grants by 2.3%. The overall assessment was that the changes would have a marginally positive impact for those with and without protected characteristics. This can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-student-finance-2022-to-2023-equality-analysis>.

The UCAS end of cycle report shows that in 2022 there were record numbers of 18-year-olds getting into university, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. An English 18-year-old from a disadvantaged background today is 86% more likely to go to university than in 2010.

The department's widening participation publication from 2022 shows that progression to higher education has increased across all students, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds. Black pupils have seen the greatest increase in the proportion entering HE by age 19, increasing from 44.1% in 2009/10 to 62.1% in 2020/21.

The department recognises the additional cost of living pressures that have arisen this year which have affected students. Decisions on student finance will have to be taken alongside other spending priorities to ensure the system remains financially sustainable and the costs of higher education (HE) are shared fairly between students and taxpayers, not all of whom have benefited from going to university.

Many HE providers have hardship funds that students can apply to for assistance. There is £261 million of student premium funding available this academic year to support disadvantaged students who need additional help. The department works alongside the Office for Students to ensure that universities support students in hardship, using both hardship funds and drawing on the student premium.

In addition, all households will save on their energy bills through the Energy Price Guarantee and the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme discount. Students who buy their energy from a domestic supplier are eligible for the energy bills discount. The Energy Prices Act, passed on 25 October 2022, includes the provision to require landlords to pass benefits they receive from energy price support, as appropriate, onto end users. Further details of the requirements under this Act are set out in the legislation.

Sudan: Democracy

*Asked by **The Earl of Sandwich***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the latest agreement between the Army and civilian organisations in Sudan, and (2) whether this agreement will support the development of a democratic government in that country. [[HL4174](#)]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The Minister for Africa and Development joined the other members of the Quad (KSA, UAE and US) and the Troika (US and Norway), as well as the Friends of Sudan in welcoming the signing of an initial framework agreement on 5 December as an essential first step towards establishing a civilian-led government in Sudan. We urge all Sudanese actors to engage constructively in the ongoing dialogue to secure a democratic transition. The UK supports the role of the tripartite mechanism (UN-AU-IGAD) in facilitating negotiations and calls on parties to do the same. A concerted effort by all parties to reach a final political agreement is crucial to address Sudan's current economic, political and humanitarian challenges.

Sudan: Humanitarian Aid

*Asked by **The Earl of Sandwich***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the international community, including the UK, retain any recognised role in Darfur, Sudan, as a humanitarian shield for the local population; and if not, what protection remains for non-governmental organisations in that country. [[HL4175](#)]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The UK continues to provide support to those affected by the ongoing violence in Darfur and has provided over £250 million in humanitarian assistance to Sudan over the past five years; much of which has been allocated to Darfur. The UK works closely with the UN mission in Sudan (UNITMAS) to support its mandated tasks. This includes assisting the Sudanese authorities to implement the Juba Peace Agreement and their National Plan for the Protection of Civilians to help establish a secure environment and address instability in regions such as Darfur. We have consistently sought to maintain attention on the humanitarian situation in Darfur; by raising this issue at the UN Security Council and advocating for the Sudanese military to allow unfettered humanitarian access to allow support to reach those in need.

Syria: Armed Conflict

*Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of attacks on villages in northern Syria, including Derik, Rotan, Um Harkan, Shalthomya, and Malla Abbas, on or around 20 November, resulting in civilian fatalities, including journalists. [[HL4085](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We do not hold sufficient evidence to comment on these reported attacks. The UK is closely monitoring developments. We are engaging partners, encouraging restraint from activity that could lead to further destabilisation or civilian loss of life. Security and stability in the region are necessary to prevent worsening of the already serious humanitarian situation in northern Syria and enable the Global Coalition and its partners to continue the fight against Daesh.

Tax Evasion: Criminal Investigation

*Asked by **Lord Kennedy of Southwark***

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase the number of tax compliance investigations. [[HL4365](#)]

Baroness Penn: HMRC closed 256,000 civil compliance checks in 2021-22, up from 248,000 the previous year. Compliance yield fell during the pandemic as we reprioritised work recognising the challenges faced by individuals and businesses. Any compliance risks that we did not pick up during the Covid period are still there and available for us to work.

The most efficient way to get tax right across 45 million individuals and 5 million businesses is for HMRC to guide the taxpayer by intervening before anything has the chance to go wrong. That includes things like prompts built into the online Self Assessment System, which flag when a customer's entry is out of line with what is expected. It also includes creating policies that make it easy for people to do the right thing and in a way that

makes some historical forms of non-compliance nearly impossible.

HMRC's approach is underpinned by cutting-edge data analysis, which we use to identify where tax is most at risk of not being paid and design tailored, targeted and proportionate interventions to address it. A 'compliance check' allows us to investigate someone's tax affairs if we think they may not be paying the right amount of tax.

The Government continues to invest in HMRC to ensure the right amount of tax is paid. For example, new measures were announced at the Autumn Statement 2022 which are forecast to raise £1.7 billion in tax revenue over the next five years.

Tax Evasion: Prosecutions

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask His Majesty's Government how many criminal prosecutions for tax offences have been undertaken by HMRC each year since 2010 up until the last year for which records are available. [[HL4366](#)]

Baroness Penn:

<i>Financial Year</i>	<i>Prosecutions</i>
2011/12	449
2012/13	576
2013/14	761
2014/15	709
2015/16	880
2016/17	887
2017/18	917
2018/19	749
2019/20	691
2020/21	163
2021/22	236
Total	7372

The information provided above shows the number of prosecutions resulting from HMRC criminal investigations since the start of the 2011/2012 financial year - when the Department's assured data begins.

However, HMRC is not a prosecuting authority. Cases are prepared to the highest evidential standard and passed to the relevant prosecuting authority, who decide if a case progresses to court.

HMRC is therefore reliant on the prosecuting authorities and the criminal justice system to progress cases to conclusion. This is a lengthy process and outcomes achieved in any given year are not necessarily reflective of HMRC's activity in the same period.

The number of prosecutions has fallen over the last three years. There are a number of contributing factors

here, including ongoing delays within the courts system due to the pandemic, and HMRC's strategic choice to focus on harder-to-reach targets and tackle the most serious frauds.

Prosecutions represent one element of a wide-ranging HMRC response to tax fraud, which also includes civil investigations and sanctions, data and intelligence analysis, risk detection and profiling, education, legislative change, partnering with the public and private sectors, and target-hardening of our systems and processes.

In practice, the Department focusses interventions where they have most impact, an approach which is about reaching the right outcome for the UK, rather than chasing arbitrary targets for arrests and prosecutions.

Most of HMRC's work to tackle tax fraud makes use of civil powers because these are the most proportionate, economical and effective way to recover monies owed and tackle fraud; as such, criminal investigations are focused on cases which meet certain criteria to ensure they deliver both value for money for the taxpayer and the maximum impact on tax fraud.

Taxation: Self-assessment

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent assessment they have made of self-assessment as a mechanism for ensuring the collection of all taxes owed to HMRC. [[HL4367](#)]

Baroness Penn: Over £100 billion of tax receipts in 2021-2022 were received through Income Tax Self Assessment and Corporation Tax Self Assessment.

Individuals and businesses with taxable income that has not already been fully taxed at source are required to report that income and pay the tax due through the Income Tax Self Assessment system. Companies self-assess their tax liabilities and pay their tax through the Corporation tax self assessment system.

HMRC has the power to check self-assessed tax liabilities, investigate and assess further tax if necessary.

HMRC monitors the effectiveness of Self Assessment in a variety of ways, including the annual measurement of tax receipts and through estimates and analysis of the tax gap. HMRC also engages with taxpayers and their representatives at a variety of customer and agent community forums such as the Admin Burden Advisory Board, the Individual Stakeholder Forum and the Business Tax forum.

Teachers: Labour Turnover and Recruitment

Asked by Baroness Chapman of Darlington

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve the (1) recruitment, and (2) retention, of teachers. [[HL4436](#)]

Baroness Barran: The number of teachers remains high, with over 465,500 working in state-funded schools across the country at Full Time Equivalent (FTE). This is 24,000 more than in 2010.

The department recognises there is more to do to ensure teaching remains an attractive, high status profession, and to recruit and retain teachers in key subjects and areas. Reforms are aimed at increasing teacher recruitment through an attractive pay offer and financial incentives such as bursaries, as well as at ensuring teachers stay and succeed in the profession.

The department remains committed to delivering starting salaries of £30,000 to attract and retain the best teachers.

The department is investing £181 million in financial incentives. For those starting initial teacher training (ITT) in the 2023/24 academic year, bursaries worth up to £27,000 and scholarships worth up to £29,000 are offered to encourage talented trainees to apply to train in key secondary subjects such as mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing. This offer has also been expanded to international trainees in physics and languages.

The department offers a Levelling Up Premium worth up to £3,000 annually for mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing teachers working in disadvantaged schools in the first five years of their careers.

In autumn 2021, the new digital service, 'Apply for teacher training' was launched. This provides a more streamlined, user-friendly application route, to make it easier for people to train to become teachers.

The department is also taking action to enable teachers to succeed by transforming their training and support. 500,000 teacher training and development opportunities will be delivered by the end of 2024, giving all teachers and head teachers access to world class, evidence based training and professional development at every stage of their career.

To support retention in the first few years of teaching, the department has rolled out the Early Career Framework (ECF) nationally, providing the foundations for a successful career in teaching, with over £130 million a year in funding.

Additionally, the department has published a range of resources to help address teacher workload and wellbeing, including the Education Staff Wellbeing Charter, which schools are being encouraged to sign up to as a shared commitment to promote staff wellbeing. The charter can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-staff-wellbeing-charter>. Additionally, the workload reduction toolkit has been developed alongside head teachers and has been published here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-workload-reduction-toolkit>. Several other resources have also been published to support schools to implement effective flexible working practices, and these can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/flexible-working-resources-for-teachers-and-schools>.

Teachers: Pay

Asked by **Baroness Garden of Frognal**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to reach a negotiated settlement with trade unions representing the teaching profession in the ongoing industrial dispute over teacher pay and conditions. [HL4489]

Baroness Barran: The department thoroughly appreciates the work the teaching profession does to build a world class education system and offer an excellent education to all. The department acknowledges the dedication and passion of those within the sector.

By 2024/25 school funding will reach £58.8 billion. This investment will be funding schools, in real terms per pupil, at the highest ever level in history. In 2023/24 mainstream school funding will increase, on average, by 5.6% per pupil. The department implemented the School Teacher Review Body's recommendation of a significant 8.9% pay uplift to teacher starting salaries outside London, keeping us on track to deliver the manifesto commitment of £30,000 starting salaries. We also implemented a 5% uplift for experienced teachers. This is the highest pay award for experienced teachers in 30 years and underlines the importance this government attaches to schools. On top of this, around 40% of teachers will get pay increases through progression or promotion of up to 15.9%.

Department officials and Ministers meet regularly with teaching unions and other representative bodies to discuss a wide range of school and college policy issues, including actions to improve the daily working lives of teachers. Since confirmation of a formal trade dispute, Ministers have met with unions on multiple occasions. The department will continue to engage going forwards.

Tigray: Armed Conflict

Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Eritrean soldiers continue to target civilians in the Tigray region of Ethiopia following the cessation of hostilities on 2 November; and what assistance they are providing to the affected communities. [HL3982]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The presence of Eritrean forces in Tigray has fuelled the conflict in northern Ethiopia making its resolution more difficult. The peace agreement is clear that Ethiopian Government forces will safeguard the sovereignty of the country and prevent provocation or incursion on either side of the border. We continue to urge the Eritrean Government to withdraw its troops in support of this peace agreement.

According to the UN, approximately 5.4 million people in Tigray require life-saving aid. In the last nineteen months the UK has provided nearly £90 million to communities across Ethiopia affected by crises, including Tigray. Our partners on the ground are responding to the

current crisis with UK funding, including via the £6 million we contributed to the Ethiopian Humanitarian Fund in August 2022 and via the £14 million for UNICEF announced during the former Minister for Development's recent visit to Ethiopia and disbursed to UNICEF in November.

Trade Unions

Asked by Lord Balfre

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the reply by Lord Callanan on 19 December (HL Deb col 947) in which he said that "75 per cent of workers in this country are not in trade unions", what assessment they have made of whether there is a link between (1) levels of union membership, and (2) levels of workforce care and HR practices, in the private sector versus the public sector. [HL4430]

Lord Callanan: Statistics on trade union membership, including proportion of public and private sector employees who belong to a union are published on Gov.uk.

Trade unions can have a constructive role to play in representing their members' interests. Strikes, however, should always be a last resort given the impact that they have on the public and we would always encourage unions to exhaust all other avenues to resolve disputes before taking this step.

Transcaucasus: Roads

Asked by Lord McInnes of Kilwinning

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Azerbaijan regarding reports of the blocking of the Lachin Corridor between Armenia and Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabakh on 12 December. [HL4259]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government has made clear that blocking the Lachin corridor and disrupting gas supplies in winter risk severe humanitarian consequences. We continue to urge the governments of both Azerbaijan and Armenia to abide by all ceasefire commitments in good faith. This is consistent with our support for international efforts to facilitate a sustainable and peaceful settlement to the conflict. The Minister for Europe reinforced this position in calls with the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers in September, in recent meetings with senior officials from both capitals, and in meetings in London with the Armenian and Azerbaijani Ambassadors to the UK.

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking, if any, to support the re-opening of the road from Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh, following its blocking by Azeri forces; and what discussions they have had with the government of Russia as the mediator and guarantor of the ceasefire in that region. [HL4296]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government is clear that blocking the Lachin corridor and disrupting gas supplies in winter risk severe humanitarian consequences. We continue to urge the governments of both Azerbaijan and Armenia to abide by all ceasefire commitments in good faith. This is consistent with our support for international efforts to facilitate a sustainable and peaceful settlement to the conflict. The Minister for Europe reinforced this position in calls with the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers in September and in meetings in London with the Armenian and Azerbaijani Ambassadors to the UK and other senior officials from Yerevan and Baku. Following Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, the UK Government has suspended all engagement with the Russian authorities except on a very limited number of issues including the Russian Government's reprehensible actions in Ukraine. The UK Government currently has no plans to engage directly with the Government of Russia on the South Caucasus region.

Asked by Baroness Cox

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to reports of (1) the death of a patient due to a lack of medical treatment, and (2) the reduction of essential supplies for civilians, in Nagorno-Karabakh, what representations they have made to the government of Azerbaijan regarding the closure of the road from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. [HL4447]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government has made clear that the closure of the Lachin corridor risks severe humanitarian consequences. Our Embassies in Baku and Yerevan continue to urge the Governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan to abide by all commitments in relation to the Lachin corridor in good faith, and to settle the remaining conflict issues as soon as possible. The UK has spoken at the Organization for Security Co-operation in Europe and at the United Nations Security Council, as well as in Baku, to urge the immediate reopening of the corridor given the risk of severe humanitarian consequences.

Trespass

Asked by Lord Haworth

To ask His Majesty's Government how many protected sites had been designated under section 128 of the Serious and Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 as of 1 June. [HL4291]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: As of 1 June 2022, there are 60 protected sites designated under section 128 of the Serious and Organised Crime and Police Act 2005. A list of these sites are publicly available on gov.uk.

Ukraine: Antitank Missiles

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask His Majesty's Government how many NLAW anti-tank missiles (1) have been, and (2) are planned to

be, provided to Ukraine; and how many (a) have been, and (b) will be, delivered from the manufacturers to the UK Army in (i) 2022, and (ii) 2023. [HL4467]

Baroness Goldie: As of 21 December 2022, we have delivered approximately 5,500 NLAW anti-tank missiles to Ukraine. We do not comment on future plans for donations of military aid for operational security reasons.

No new NLAW missiles were delivered to the British Army in 2022. However, as announced by the Defence Secretary on 7 December 2022, the UK signed a contract with Saab and Thales for several thousand NLAW units which will be delivered to the UK between 2024-2026. This is in addition to an earlier delivery of around 500 units to be delivered in 2023.

Ukraine: Armed Conflict

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the findings of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry for Ukraine that sexual and gender-based violence has been committed against children as young as four; and what steps they are taking to ensure that perpetrators of such crimes are held to account. [HL4245]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UN Commission of Inquiry's findings, including credible evidence of sexual violence against children, highlight the scope and scale of the atrocities committed in Ukraine, supporting claims that Russian forces are responsible for serious violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes.

The UK is supporting the investigations of both the Ukrainian authorities and the International Criminal Court (ICC). This includes our £2.5 million Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group contribution that supports Ukraine's investigations and prosecution of core international crimes, and a £1 million contribution, in addition to our £10.5 million annual contribution, to the ICC.

Ukraine: Children

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the help provided so far to children in Ukraine whose schooling has been interrupted by the conflict in that country; and whether they will change their current level of support to those children. [HL4336]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has contributed £15 million to UNICEF's appeal for Ukraine and a further £5 million to UNICEF in Moldova. Our support has helped UNICEF provide formal and non-formal education to over 850,000 children, as well as access for Ukrainian women and children to essential services including health,

nutrition, and specialist trauma and Gender Based Violence services. Delivery of this assistance is ongoing. An assessment of UNICEF delivery will be published in the Annual Review of the UK's humanitarian support. Decisions on humanitarian spending beyond March 2022, including to education, are to be determined.

Ukraine: International Assistance

Asked by The Earl of Dundee

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the G7 Conferences in Berlin on 25 October and Paris on 13 and 14 December, on what date the international donor and recovery conference for Ukraine will take place in London. [HL4276]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK will host, jointly with Ukraine, the 2023 Ukraine Recovery Conference on 21-22 June in London. The date and location of the conference was announced at the G7 Leaders virtual meeting on Monday 12 December.

Asked by The Earl of Dundee

To ask His Majesty's Government what (1) preparations are being made, (2) objectives are being defined, and (3) partners are being sought, for the international donor and recovery conference for Ukraine taking place in London. [HL4277]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Plans for the 2023 Ukraine Recovery Conference are under development. It will be a high-profile event co-hosted with the Government of Ukraine, and attended by senior representatives from G7 and other international partners, International Finance Institutions, the private sector and civil society. We expect it will focus on actions to support Ukraine's recovery and economic prosperity as well as build support for the reforms needed to make these a success. We are in discussion with the Government of Ukraine about the shape and objectives of the conference.

Asked by The Earl of Dundee

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of how (1) the Council of Europe, (2) the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and (3) their respective national parliamentary delegations, might support the international donor and recovery conference for Ukraine taking place in London and its outcome. [HL4278]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK will host, jointly with Ukraine, the 2023 Ukraine Recovery Conference on 21-22 June in London. Plans for the URC23 are under development, and the size, scope, participants and objectives of the conference are under discussion but it will be a major, high-profile event attended by senior representatives from G7 and other international and multilateral partners, International Finance Institutions, the private sector and Civil Society.

Undocumented Migrants

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the Prime Minister's statement on illegal migration on 13 December, whether they will respond to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' appeal to the UK to uphold its legal obligations. [HL4394]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: I can assure the Honourable Bishop that the statement is under consideration and any response deemed necessary will be made by the Government in due course.

Undocumented Migrants: Albania

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the UK–Albania announcement on a joint task force against illegal migration, how many British caseworkers will be sent to Tirana; and how much is the total cost of the policy. [HL4395]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: Following the new approach agreed with the Albanian government on 13th Dec, we are in close discussions with them on the operational details. Under the joint communiqué, the UK will support the relevant Albanian structures to bolster mechanisms used to refer victims for appropriate support and increase the existing Albanian Responsible Authority and National Referral Mechanism capacity to reinforce processes and decision-making in line with the European Convention on Action against Trafficking of Human Beings. We are not currently expecting to send any caseworkers to Tirana; rather support will be offered from the UK and the British Embassy in Tirana. Currently resources are being reprioritised and reallocated to deliver on the commitments made from within existing budgets.

Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Asked by *Lord Rosser*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the UK–France joint statement: enhancing co-operation against illegal migration, published on 14 November, when the full details will be published. [HL4342]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: There are no plans to publish further details to the recently announced 2022/23 UK-France joint statement.

Asked by *Lord Browne of Belmont*

To ask His Majesty's Government (1) how many, and (2) what class, of naval ships will be required in the Channel to tackle illegal migrant crossings. [HL4434]

Baroness Goldie: The Royal Navy currently utilises one Class One Offshore Patrol Vessels (from three on rotation), six Archer Class P2000 Patrol Boats, three held at Ramsgate and three held at Portsmouth and a pair of Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats (RHIBs) in support of

Defence primacy for responding to small boat migration in the channel. As announced by the Prime Minister, primacy will transfer back to the Home Office from 31 January 2023. In anticipation of this, the Home Office will procure a number of Crew Transfer Vessels to replace the capacity provided by Royal Navy assets.

VAT: Registration

Asked by *Lord Harris of Haringey*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Harlech on 14 December (HL3897), what proportion of VAT registration applications received in (1) June, (2) July, (3) August, and (4) September, had been dealt with by 30 November; and what were the equivalent figures in 2021. [HL4324]

Baroness Penn: The data requested is not straightforward to provide as HMRC do not report this data internally in the form requested. As such, the information cannot be provided within the timeframe without incurring disproportionate cost.

In July 2022 HMRC came under a significant attack from VAT registration fraudsters and we saw the number of registrations being sent to HMRC increase to unprecedented levels.

To deal with this issue a number of measures were urgently put in place to protect genuine customers and to stop the increase in fraudulent activity. These measures entailed additional security checks that meant that some genuine customers were caught in the new processes to ensure the authenticity of the registration being made. HMRC does understand the frustrations from agents and businesses, and are working to ensure all genuine registrations are processed as quickly as possible.

HMRC aims to turnaround most VAT registrations within 40 working days and is currently meeting that service level agreement, although some cases do take longer due to additional compliance checks or complexity.

Due to the high numbers of new registrations being submitted to HMRC during the summer, HMRC did not always meet the service standard over that time period.

Asked by *Lord Harris of Haringey*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Harlech on 14 December (HL3897), what representations they have received about the length of time it takes for VAT registrations to be processed. [HL4325]

Baroness Penn: In July 2022 HMRC came under a significant attack from VAT registration fraudsters and we saw the number of registrations being sent to HMRC increase to unprecedented levels. To deal with this issue a number of measures were urgently put in place to protect genuine customers and to stop the increase in fraudulent activity. These measures entailed additional security checks that meant that some genuine customers were

caught in the new processes to ensure the authenticity of the registration being made. HMRC understands the frustrations from agents and businesses and are working to ensure all genuine registrations are processed as quickly as possible.

Due to the high numbers of new registrations being submitted to HMRC during the summer, HMRC did not always meet their service standard over that time.

HMRC has received representations from individuals and organisations regarding timescales for registering customers for VAT. Where representations are made, HMRC has and will continue to work with individuals and businesses to overcome any challenges they are facing where possible.

HMRC works hard to be open and transparent, particularly with business and agent representative bodies who HMRC meet regularly. HMRC have also, this year, stepped up their transparency by explaining processing times to agents through the HMRC Service Dashboard on GOV.UK.

Visas

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they keep records of how often, following a visa application being authorised, the documents are returned to the applicant to allow for travel in time for the start date for which the visa has been sought; if so, (1) how often the authorised documents are returned within this period, and (2) what proportion of all visa applications this represents; and if they do not maintain such records, whether they will do so. [HL4396]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: This information is not published.

TLS Contact and VFS Global operate the network of overseas Visa Application Centres (VACs) on behalf of UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). Customers are notified that their visa decision is ready for collection as soon as the decision is received at the VAC.

Decisions on visa applications are made by Home Office officials. The length of time it takes for a decision to be made varies depending on the route in which a customer has applied, however, UKVI aims to process decisions within published service standards. The date the customer puts on the visa application form as the date of travel may be in advance of the published service standard for that route, which may result in the travel date not being met.

UKVI encourages all customers to apply in good time ahead of intended travel dates, and customers can also make use of UKVI's optional priority visa services in certain locations if they need a quicker decision.

Visas: Seasonal Workers

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to mitigate any shortages of foreign workers caused by the operation of the seasonal farm worker visa scheme. [HL4242]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The Seasonal Worker route allows workers to come to the UK for up to six months to pick both edible and ornamental crops, enabling UK growers to access seasonal workers throughout the calendar year.

The UK government is committed to supporting the agricultural industry. The Seasonal Worker route will be expanded in 2023, with 45,000 visas available. The separate poultry quota will remain at 2,000 places.

This enlarged route will be kept under review with the potential to increase it by a further 10,000 if necessary, and is contingent on sponsors and growers improving and abiding by worker welfare standards, including ensuring workers are guaranteed a minimum number of paid hours each week.

Employers should look to recruit from the domestic labour market in the first instance which includes those who have EU settled status or others with status which provides general work rights.

Vocational Education: Assessments

Asked by Baroness Chapman of Darlington

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to investigate delays to vocational and technical exam and assessment results in 2022. [HL4411]

Baroness Barran: This is a matter for Ofqual, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation. I have asked its Chief Regulator, Dr Jo Saxton, to write to the noble Lady and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Wandsworth Prison: Staff

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to restore a full staff level at His Majesty's Prison Wandsworth to prevent 23-hour lock-ups, eliminate rats, and restore the operation of the prison chapel. [HL4420]

Lord Bellamy: As with all establishments where there is a current or future need to fill vacancies, there is a recruitment campaign open for prison officers at HMP Wandsworth. To manage vacancies, establishments are also able to cover these through payment plus (an overtime payment for prison officers). Where staffing

levels are being impacted by reasons other than vacancies, including sickness and restricted duties, this is being managed by Governors in line with national policy. If any establishments feel that their staffing levels will impact on stability, they can apply for extra resource through submitting a business case to the HMPPS Operational Resource and Stability Panel.

The Senior Leadership Team at HMP Wandsworth are committed to creating a regime that will allow prisoners to spend longer out of their cells and in work and education-related activities, which is essential to effective rehabilitation.

Similarly to other London-based buildings where a large number of people live and work, HMP Wandsworth takes steps to support the control of rats and other vermin,

with Rentokil (a specialist hygiene provider for prisons and police) regularly visiting to implement control measures. This is supplemented with regular cleaning parties who are deployed to keep rubbish to a minimum and focused waste management at the prison, which supports rubbish disposal of internal and external waste. The prison has also implemented a new window project to limit the ability to throw rubbish outside. These measures are underpinned by a committed focus on creating a hygienic environment for prisoners.

There is an ongoing Government Facility Services Limited project to replace the roof and refurbish the prison's chapel. Religious services will continue to be catered for across the prison whilst the work is underway, which is due to be completed in 2024.

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