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**Tuesday
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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

Written Statements1

Written Answers.....8

[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, Whip
Lord Callanan	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
Earl of Courtown	Deputy Chief Whip
Lord Davies of Gower	Whip
Lord Evans of Rainow	Whip
Baroness Goldie	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park	Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
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Lord Johnson of Lainston	Minister of State, Department for Business and Trade
Lord Markham	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care
Earl of Minto	Minister of State, Department for Business and Trade
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, Department for Business and Trade and Scotland Office
Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for 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 Camrose	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions

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Written Statements

Tuesday, 23 May 2023

Children's Social Care: Review and Reform

[HLWS783]

Baroness Barran: My Honourable Friend, The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children, Families and Wellbeing (Claire Coutinho) has made the following statement:

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care was published a year ago today, setting out plans to reset children's social care in England so it delivers for all the children and families it supports. This statement updates the House on progress made in implementing the recommendations set out in that Review.

Around the same time as the Independent Review, two further reviews were published: the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's report into the tragic deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson, and the Competition and Markets Authority's study of children's social care. These reviews also called for urgency in bringing forward reform, specifically to ensure the child protection system keeps children safe, and the care system provides the right homes for children in the right places. Together, the three reviews provide a platform for fundamental, whole system change.

My predecessor, the Member for Colchester started us on the journey towards reform a year ago. He committed in his Oral Statement to publish an ambitious and detailed implementation strategy setting out this Government's plans for reform.

The Department published plans for reform in our *'consultation and implementation strategy: Stable Homes, Built on Love'* on 2nd February 2023. We set out how we will help families overcome challenges, keep children safe, and make sure children in care have stable loving homes, long-term loving relationships, and opportunities for a good life. Alongside this strategy, we announced £200 million investment for these reforms, which builds on an annual investment of over £10 billion in children's social care. The *Built on Love* strategy and its funding cover Phase One of our reforms, addressing urgent issues and laying the foundations for wider-reaching reforms.

'Built on Love' sets out six pillars with actions to transform the system. We are seeking to:

- provide the right support at the right time, so that children thrive within their families and families stay together through our family help offer;
- strengthen our child protection response by getting agencies to work together in a fully integrated way, led by social workers with greater skills and knowledge;
- unlock the potential of kinship care so that, wherever possible, children who cannot stay with their parents are cared for by people who know and love them already;

- make sure the care system has the right homes for children in the right places, and that we provide children in care and care leavers with the right support to help them thrive and achieve their potential into adulthood;

- provide a valued, supported and highly-skilled social worker for every child who needs one; and

- make sure the whole system continuously learns and improves and makes better use of evidence and data.

Through this statement, I am also pleased to inform colleagues of progress against day one commitments made to this House a year ago:

- We committed to develop a National Children's Social Care Framework. We have published our Framework, consulted on it, and intend to issue it as statutory guidance by the end of this year.

- We committed to introduce an Early Career Framework for child & family social workers, to give them the best start in the profession. We have set out plans to invest in high-quality early career development, have begun the process of writing the Framework document setting out the knowledge and skills social workers need at different stages, and recently invited local authorities to express interest in becoming early adopters of our Early Career Framework this year to help us co-design the programme.

- We committed to work with local authorities to recruit more foster carers. Through 'Built on Love' we have pledged to invest over £27 million over the next two years to recruit and retain more foster carers, and are working on plans in the North East to test targeted regional communications campaigns and invest in models that we know work.

- We committed to improve data sharing between safeguarding partners. We have introduced a Data and Digital Solutions Fund to help local authorities improve delivery for children and families through technology.

- We committed to set up a Child Protection Ministerial Group and establish a National Implementation Board. We have set up both forums to champion safeguarding at the highest levels and to receive advice, support and challenge us on the delivery of children's social care reform.

This action is only the beginning. Just last week, consultations closed on our proposals for reform, our draft Children's Social Care National Framework and Data Dashboard, and our plan for addressing the high use of agency social workers in the workforce. Thousands of people engaged and responded to the consultations – including those with personal experience of the care system, dedicated professionals providing key services, and civil society. A Government Response will be published in September.

The Prime Minister set out that building a brighter future requires us to value family, in whatever form that takes, recognising the common bond is love. Reform of children's social care is at the heart of that brighter future.

I look forward to continuing to work across both Houses, and all parties, as we lay the foundations for a new system.

Digital Economy Act 2017: Data Sharing

[HLWS788]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: My Hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Alex Burghart MP, has today made the following statement:

This Government is committed to transforming the delivery of public services, so that they are easier to use, joined-up and provide better value for money to the taxpayer. To this end, the Cabinet Office has today published the Government's response to the public consultation on new data sharing regulations, which will help more people prove who they are online so that they can access the services they need simply and quickly.

From January to March 2023, the Government consulted on draft regulations to improve data sharing so that people may more easily access public services online. The regulations would create a new objective under the Digital Economy Act 2017 for this purpose, allowing controlled data sharing between a number of public bodies already specified in the Act and with four additional organisations: the Cabinet Office, the Department for Transport, the Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs, and the Disclosure and Barring Service. These public bodies either hold information that can be used to verify someone is who they say they are, and/or require the outcome of such checks in order to provide access to their services. The proposed legislation would enable data sharing between the specified organisations only for the purpose of helping someone confirm their identity, when they are requesting access to a government service online. All data sharing under the regulations would continue to comply with robust existing data protection legislation.

Every response has been read and the Government thanks those respondents who expressed their views through the consultation. The devolved administrations support the proposed regulations.

The Government is clear that there isn't public support for national identity cards in the UK and this is not something proposed in, or enabled by, this legislation. Where responses did engage with the specific consultation questions, they highlighted the wider potential benefits of the data sharing regulations, including to physical health and social well-being, and we will make a minor amendment on this basis. The Government has also proposed that the draft regulations would come into force 21 days after, rather than the day after, being approved by Parliament.

The UK Government intends to take forward legislation as soon as parliamentary time allows. I have asked that the Government response be deposited in the libraries of both Houses in Parliament and published on GOV.UK.

Education Estate: Condition Improvement Fund

[HLWS787]

Baroness Barran: (1) Today, I am announcing the allocation of almost £456 million for 1,033 Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) projects across 859 academies, sixth-form colleges and voluntary aided schools across England to maintain and improve the condition of the education estate.

(2) This funding is provided to enable schools to deliver well maintained and safe facilities that support a high-quality education. Since March 2015 CIF has delivered over 11,000 projects and continues to deliver over 1,200 projects across the school estate with essential maintenance projects.

(3) The CIF funding allocated for projects by region is:

- East Midlands - £41,964,017
- East of England - £81,316,668
- London - £58,711,968
- North East - £8,434,081
- North West - £58,450,018
- South East - £106,179,820
- South West - £23,104,444
- West Midlands - £37,930,631
- Yorkshire and the Humber - £39,738,336

(4) Amounts of funding awarded to individual schools are not being published, as publishing this information would undermine the school's ability to obtain best value from contractors. However, funding information on completed CIF projects is available to view on GOV.UK.

Details of today's announcement are being sent to all CIF applicants and a list of successful projects will be published on GOV.UK. Copies will be placed in the House Library.

Extension of the Ivory Act 2018

[HLWS789]

Lord Benyon: My Right Honourable friend the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Thérèse Coffey) has made the following Statement.

Today the Government is announcing it will extend the Ivory Act 2018 to hippopotamus, walrus, narwhal, killer whale (orca) and sperm whale, delivering on a key animal welfare manifesto commitment. These species are set to receive greater legal protections under the UK's world-leading ban on importing, exporting and dealing in items containing ivory.

Putting the UK at the forefront of global conservation efforts, today's consultation response confirms plans to extend the Ivory Act 2018 to ban all dealing in ivory from these species, including imports and exports.

The Ivory Act is one of the toughest bans on elephant ivory sales in the world, with some of the strongest enforcement measures. Those found guilty of breaching the ban face tough penalties including an unlimited fine or up to five years in jail.

The five species are all listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES), which regulates their trade internationally, and hippopotamus, walrus and sperm whale are listed as vulnerable on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) red list.

The announcement today comes following an extensive public consultation and with the one-year anniversary of the successful ivory ban approaching.

The ban allows for a small number of exemptions with the digital ivory service allowing those who own ivory to register or apply for an exemption certificate. People will only need to register or certify items for the purposes of dealing in exempt items containing ivory. Those who own but are not planning to sell their ivory items do not need to register or certify them.

Since 6 June 2022, there has been over 6,500 registrations and certificates issued for exempted items so that they continue to form part of our artistic and cultural heritage.

Forensic Information Databases Strategy Board: Annual Report

[HLWS779]

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:

I am pleased to announce that I am, today, publishing the Annual Report of the Forensic Information Databases Strategy Board for 2021-22. This report covers the National DNA Database and the National Fingerprints Database.

The Strategy Board Chair, DCC Ben Snuggs, has presented the Annual Report to the Home Secretary. Publication of the Report is a statutory requirement under section 63AB(8) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 as inserted by section 24 of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

The Report shows the important contribution that the National DNA and fingerprint databases (policing collections) make to supporting policing and solving crimes. I am grateful to the Strategy Board for their commitment to fulfilling their statutory functions.

The Report has been laid before the House and copies will be available from the Vote Office and on GOV.UK.

Immigration Update

[HLWS786]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: My rt hon Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department (Suella

Braverman) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The Government committed to bringing net migration down in the 2019 manifesto and remains committed to doing so. In December 2020, we ended decades of uncontrolled migration from the European Union and put in place a new points-based immigration system to give ministers full control of our borders. For the first time since we joined the EU, we gained complete control of who comes to the UK and the ability to operate an immigration system that we can flex to the changing needs of the economy and labour market, as well as tailor to the skills and talent needed by UK businesses and our NHS.

But immigration is dynamic, and we must constantly iterate our approach to take account of changing migrant flows and respond to evidence of abuse or unintended consequences. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) published data in November 2022 which estimated that net migration in the year June 2021 to June 2022 was at 504,000 - up significantly on the previous year, and higher than pre-Brexit volumes. They partly attributed this rise to temporary factors – such as a post-Covid surge and safe and legal routes, like the UK's Ukraine and Hong Kong schemes.

The immigration statistics also highlighted an unexpected rise in the number of dependants coming to the UK alongside international students. Around 136,000 visas were granted to dependants of sponsored students in the year ending December 2022, a more than eight-fold increase from 16,000 in 2019, when the Government's commitment to lower net migration was made. This does not detract from the considerable success that the Government and the higher education sector have had in achieving the goals from our International Education Strategy, meeting our target to host 600,000 international students studying in the UK per year by 2030, for two years running, and earlier than planned – a success story in terms of economic value and exports.

The International Education Strategy plays an important part in supporting the economy through the economic contribution students can bring to the UK, but this should not be at the expense of our commitment to the public to lower overall migration and ensure that migration to the UK is highly skilled and therefore provides the most benefit. The proposals we are announcing today will ensure that we can continue to meet our International Education Strategy commitments, while making a tangible contribution to reducing net migration to sustainable levels. The terms of the graduate route remain unchanged.

Following close working with the Department for Education and HM Treasury, I am pleased to announce a package of measures to help deliver our goal of falling net migration, while supporting the Government's priority of growing the economy.

This package includes:

- i) Removing the right for international students to bring dependants unless they are on postgraduate courses currently designated as research programmes.
- ii) Removing the ability for international students to switch out of the student route into work routes before their studies have been completed.
- iii) Reviewing the maintenance requirements for students and dependants.
- iv) Steps to clamp down on unscrupulous education agents who may be supporting inappropriate applications to sell immigration not education.
- v) Better communicating immigration rules to the higher education sector and to international students.
- vi) Improved and more targeted enforcement activity.

We are committed to attracting the brightest and the best to the UK. Therefore, our intention is to work with universities over the course of the next year to design an alternative approach that ensures that the best and the brightest students can bring dependants to our world leading universities, while continuing to reduce net migration. We will bring in this system as soon as possible, after thorough consultation with the sector and key stakeholders.

This package strikes the right balance between acting decisively on tackling net migration and protecting the economic benefits that students can bring to the UK. Now is the time for us to make these changes to ensure an impact on net migration as soon as possible. We expect this package to have a tangible impact on net migration. Taken together with the easing of temporary factors, we expect net migration to fall to pre-pandemic levels in the medium term.

We recognise that no one single measure will control immigration. As the impacts of temporary pressures becomes clearer, we will keep matters under review. The Government will seek to continue to strike the balance between reducing overall net migration with ensuring that businesses have the skills they need and we continue to support economic growth. Those affected by this package will predominantly be dependants of students who make a more limited contribution to the economy than students or those coming under the Skilled Worker route, minimising the impact on UK growth.

Looked-after Children: Accommodation

[HLWS780]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: My Honourable friend the Minister of State for Housing and Planning (Rachel Maclean MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I, with the support of my Rt Hon colleague the Secretary of State for Education, wish to set out the Government's commitment to support the development of accommodation for looked after children, and its delivery through the planning system.

The planning system should not be a barrier to providing homes for the most vulnerable children in

society. When care is the best choice for a child, it is important that the care system provides stable, loving homes close to children's communities. These need to be the right homes, in the right places with access to good schools and community support. It is not acceptable that some children are living far from where they would call home (without a clear child protection reason for this), separated from the people they know and love.

Today we use this joint statement to remind Local Planning Authorities that, as set out in paragraph 62 of the National Planning Policy Framework, local planning authorities should assess the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community and reflect this in planning policies and decisions. Local planning authorities should consider whether it is appropriate to include accommodation for children in need of social services care as part of that assessment.

Local planning authorities should give due weight to and be supportive of applications, where appropriate, for all types of accommodation for looked after children in their area that reflect local needs and all parties in the development process should work together closely to facilitate the timely delivery of such vital accommodation for children across the country. It is important that prospective applicants talk to local planning authorities about whether their service is needed in that locality, using the location assessment (a regulatory requirement and part of the Ofsted registration process set out in paragraph 15.1 of the Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations) to demonstrate this.

To support effective delivery, unitary authorities should work with commissioners to assess local need and closely engage to support applications, where appropriate, for accommodation for looked after children as part of the authority's statutory duties for looked after children. In two tier authorities, we expect local planning authorities to support these vital developments where appropriate, to ensure that children in need of accommodation are provided for in their communities.

Children's homes developments

Planning permission will not be required in all cases of development of children's homes, including for changes of use from dwelling houses in Class C3 of the Use Classes Order 1987 where the children's home remains within Class C3 or there is no material change of use to Class C2. An application to the local planning authority can be made for a lawful development certificate to confirm whether, on the facts of the case, the specific use is or would be lawful. Where a Certificate is issued, a planning application would not be required for the matters specified in the certificate.

National Tutoring Programme: Funding

[HLWS784]

Baroness Barran: My Right Honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Schools (Nick Gibb) has made the following statement:

The Department for Education will today announce the arrangements for the fourth and final year of the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) in England, which starts in September 2023. The NTP makes available subsidised tutoring for schools as part of a Government commitment to narrowing the attainment gap and improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. By the conclusion of the programme we will have invested more than £1 billion to deliver tutoring, which evidence shows is one of the most effective ways to accelerate academic progress.

Today's announcement includes a change to funding arrangements from those previously put before the House. We have increased for the forthcoming academic year the subsidy for the programme, which means that schools can use their NTP funding to cover up to 50% of the cost of the tutoring they deliver instead of the previously announced 25%. This means that schools need to use less of their own money to be able to provide high-quality tutoring through NTP. We have made this change in response to feedback from schools and to ensure that the maximum possible amount of tutoring is delivered in academic year 2023/24.

We have retained from this year the main elements of the current delivery approach, giving schools consistency to plan for next year. This will see us continue to provide schools with the flexibility to design a tutoring programme that meets the needs of their pupils through the existing three tutoring routes. While tutoring is available for all pupils, we expect schools to focus on those who are disadvantaged and in receipt of pupil premium or those who are below the expected standard or good pass in an applicable subject.

This information is available to schools via the academic year 2023/24 NTP guidance, which is published today. Alongside the guidance, we have published information on the funding each school will receive and a calculator tool to support schools to plan tutoring starting in September.

As we prepare for the final year of NTP, we aim to build on the success of the programme to date, which has seen over 3.4million courses delivered and close to 90% of schools participating.

NatWest Group: Share Buyback Transaction

[HLWS785]

Baroness Penn: My honourable friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Andrew Griffith) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I can inform the House that on 22 May 2023 the government sold c.469m shares in NatWest Group (NWG, formerly Royal Bank of Scotland) to NWG by way of a directed buyback transaction. The transaction value amounts to approximately £1.26bn, representing approximately 4.95% of the company.

This announcement demonstrates the continued progress being made towards the government's intention to return its shareholding in NWG to private ownership by 2025-26, subject to market conditions and achieving

value for money for taxpayers. Following this transaction, the government's shareholding stands at approximately 38.6%.

Policy rationale

The government is committed to returning NWG to full private ownership now that the original policy objective for the intervention in NWG – to preserve financial and economic stability at a time of crisis – has long been achieved.

The government only conducts sales of NWG shares when it represents value for money to do so and market conditions allow.

Directed buyback detail

The government, supported by advice from UK Government Investments, concluded that selling shares to NWG, in a single bilateral transaction, represented value for money.

Share buybacks are a common practice undertaken by companies looking to efficiently deploy their excess capital. NWG has shareholder approval to purchase up to 4.99% of its share capital from HMT on a rolling 12-month basis. This is the third sale of shares via an off-market share sale directly to the company and sixth large block sale of NWG shares undertaken by the government.

The sale concluded on 22 May 2023, with NWG purchasing a limited number of its government owned shares. A total of approximately 469m shares (approximately 4.95% of the bank) were sold at the 19 May market closing price of 268.4p per share. The government's shareholding now stands at approximately 38.6%. The reduction in the government's shareholding is less than the percentage sold as NWG will cancel most of the purchased shares.

Details of the sale are summarised below.

Government stake in NWG pre-sale	c.3,949m shares
Total shares sold to NWG	c.469m shares
Share price at market close on 19/05/2023	268.4p
Total proceeds from the sale	c.£1.26bn
Government stake in NWG post-sale (as % of total voting rights)	c.38.6%

Fiscal impacts

The net impacts of the sale on a selection of fiscal metrics are summarised as follows:

<i>Metric</i>	<i>Impact</i>
Net sale proceeds	c.£1.26bn
Retention value range	Within the valuation range
Public Sector Net Borrowing	Nil. There may be future indirect impacts as a result of the sale. The sale proceeds reduce public sector debt. All else being equal, the sale will reduce future debt interest costs for government. The reduction in government's shareholding means it will not

	receive future dividend income it may otherwise have been entitled to through these shares.	
Public Sector Net Debt	Reduced by c.£1.26bn	
Public Sector Net Financial Liabilities		Nil
Public Sector Net Liabilities		Nil

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

[HLWS778]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Honourable Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (Leo Docherty) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The Hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Gary Sambrook MP) has been appointed as a full representative of the United Kingdom Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in place of the Hon. Member for Yeovil (Marcus Fysh MP).

Postal and Proxy Voting

[HLWS781]

Baroness Scott of Bybrook: Today I have published the draft statutory instrument “The Representation of the People (Postal and Proxy Voting etc.) (Amendment) Regulations 2023” with an accompanying explanatory memorandum. An impact assessment has been drafted and will be available when a draft of the statutory instrument is laid.

The changes set out in these regulations deliver on our manifesto commitment to protect the integrity of our democracy, as legislated for by Parliament through the Elections Act 2022. It is paramount that we preserve trust in our electoral processes and ensure elections remain secure well into the future. The Elections Act stemmed from recommendations made by (then) Sir Eric Pickles and his review into tackling electoral fraud. Voter identification has already been commenced; these regulations now commence provisions relating to postal and proxy voting.

Under these regulations, we are introducing appropriate safeguards to reduce the opportunity for individuals to exploit the absent voting process and steal votes. The new measures limit the total number of electors for whom a person may act as a proxy to four, of which no more than two can be for ‘domestic’ electors for all constituencies or electoral areas.

To further strengthen the security of the ballot, an identity check will be introduced for all applications for an absent vote. This change will apply to applications made on paper and online and bring the absent vote application process in line with the Individual Electoral Registration ‘Register to Vote’ process. This change accompanies a new requirement to reapply for a postal

vote at least every three years, replacing the current five-year signature and date of birth refresh. Transitional processes will be in place for electors with existing postal or proxy vote arrangements.

These regulations will also support the delivery of a new digital service which will enable electors to apply for a postal or proxy arrangement online. The Government anticipates that an online service will alleviate some of the pre-existing challenges for electors and electoral administrators, by reducing the need to rely on manual processes. The online service is currently being built and will be tested to ensure it is robust and accessible for electors.

Although this statutory instrument does not directly relate to Brexit, it does make amendments to 2001 regulations which were made in part under the European Communities Act. In that light, the statutory instrument is published in accordance with the procedure required by Schedule 8 to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 and agreed with Parliament. The statutory instrument is being published in draft at least 28 days before being laid in draft to be considered under the affirmative procedure in Parliament.

These Regulations will apply to UK Parliamentary elections and other reserved elections, referendums and recall petitions. Local elections in Scotland, and local elections in Wales apart from Police and Crime Commissioner elections, are devolved, and thus not in scope of these measures.

Protection of Confidential Patient Information: Statutory Guidance

[HLWS782]

Lord Markham: Today, the Department of Health and Social Care publishes its guidance that sets out how NHS England will protect patient data, following the transfer of NHS Digital’s responsibilities. The guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nhs-englands-protection-of-patient-data>.

On 1 February, NHS Digital legally became part of NHS England, creating a single, central authority responsible for all elements of digital technology, data and transformation for the NHS.

NHS Digital was a powerful force for change in the NHS and guardian of its key data IT and data systems. These IT systems and its expert staff transferred to NHS England.

Laura Wade-Gery was commissioned by the Government to lead an independent review of how we can ensure digital technology and the effective use of data is at the heart of transforming the NHS. Her report ‘Putting data, digital and tech at the heart of transforming the NHS’, published in November 2021, recommended merging the functions of NHS Digital into NHS England, to provide a single statutory body for data, digital and technology to provide the right leadership and support to Integrated Care Systems.

This integration is an important step in bringing together in a single place, the essential systems and programmes to digitally transform the NHS, and to harness the full potential of data. It will enable health and social care services to use digital and data more effectively to deliver improved patient outcomes and address the key challenges we face.

In harnessing the full potential of data to digital transform the NHS, this statutory guidance makes clear that NHS England should maintain high standards of data protection, information governance, and transparency, as NHS Digital did, to demonstrate that it is a trustworthy custodian of health and care data. NHS England must have regard to this guidance and also undertake an annual review of how effectively it has discharged the data functions transferred over from NHS Digital.

UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly: Membership

[HLWS777]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Honourable Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (Leo Docherty) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The Hon. Member for Wimbledon (Stephen Hammond MP) has been appointed as a full representative of the Parliamentary Partnership Assembly in place of the Hon. Member for Dudley South (Mike Wood MP).

The Hon. Member for Northampton South (Andrew Lewer MP) has been appointed as a full representative of the Parliamentary Partnership Assembly.

The Rt Hon. Member for Chelmsford (Vicky Ford MP) has been appointed as a full representative of the Parliamentary Partnership Assembly in place of the Hon. Member for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine (Andrew Bowie MP).

The Hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (David Duguid MP) has been appointed as a full representative of the Parliamentary Partnership Assembly in place of the Hon. Member for Wolverhampton South West (Stuart Anderson MP).

The Baroness Meyer CBE has been appointed as a full representative of the Parliamentary Partnership Assembly in place of the Lord Godson.

The Hon. Member for Stirling (Alyn Smith MP) has been appointed as a full representative of the Parliamentary Partnership Assembly in place of the Hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Philippa Whitford MP).

Written Answers

Tuesday, 23 May 2023

Ambulance Services: Motor Vehicles

Asked by *Baroness Merron*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Delivery plan for recovering urgent and emergency care services, published in January, what progress they have made in delivering 800 new ambulances and increasing the fleet by 10 per cent. [HL7786]

Asked by *Baroness Merron*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many of the ambulances ordered so far to meet the increase in numbers as set out in the Delivery plan for recovering urgent and emergency care services, published in January, are replacement vehicles. [HL7787]

Lord Markham: All ambulance trusts have now placed their ambulance orders for delivery in the current year, 2023/24, under existing contracts and tenders have been received for mental health ambulances which are being evaluated by NHS England.

In total, NHS England expect delivery in 2023/24 of 628 Dual Crew Ambulances, 154 lightweight ambulances, 40 Mental health ambulances and 11 electric ambulances.

The timing of the decommissioning of existing vehicles is a matter for individual ambulance trusts. NHS England is working with ambulance trusts to quantify fleet replacement plans as they are firmed up over the coming months.

Asylum

Asked by *Lord Scriven*

To ask His Majesty's Government which safe third countries they have made an agreement with for the purposes of processing asylum claims for people coming to the UK via irregular routes, as outlined in the Illegal Migration Bill; and how many individuals are logistically possible to be processed in each of those countries in (1) 2023, and (2) 2024. [HL7797]

Asked by *Lord Scriven*

To ask His Majesty's Government which safe third countries they expect to make deals with in (1) 2023, and (2) 2024, for the purposes of processing asylum claims as outlined in the Illegal Migration Bill for people coming to the UK via irregular routes. [HL7798]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: We have agreed a Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda, whereby those arriving in the UK through dangerous, unnecessary, and illegal methods may be relocated there to have their asylum claim considered. This arrangement is uncapped.

We are unable to comment on discussions or negotiations that may be being held with other countries.

Asylum: Children

Asked by *Lord Touhig*

To ask His Majesty's Government under which legal provision the Home Office has assumed child protection powers for unaccompanied migrant children. [HL7803]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: We expect local authorities to meet their statutory obligations to children from the date they arrive in the UK. The best place for these young people is and will remain within a local authority care placement.

The Home Office is not currently in the position of corporate parent to any unaccompanied child.

There is nothing in the Illegal Migration Bill which changes this position.

It will continue to be for the local authority where an unaccompanied child is located to consider its duties under the Children Act 1989.

Asylum: Interviews

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Durham*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether there have been any changes to asylum screening interviews since 7 March. [HL7688]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: There have been no changes to the asylum screening interview template since 7 March.

Cancer: Screening

Asked by *Lord Campbell-Savours*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the national target time for (1) analysis, and (2) assessment, of biopsy results for patients being treated for cancer-related conditions; and what assessment they have made of whether the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading is meeting these. [HL7619]

Lord Markham: There is no national target time for analysis and assessment of biopsy results for patients being treated for cancer related conditions.

Coronavirus: Immunosuppression

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what measures they are taking to protect clinically extremely vulnerable and immunocompromised people from COVID-19. [HL7790]

Lord Markham: As set out in the Written Ministerial Statement on 30 March 2023, in 2023/24 the Government will maintain a range of capabilities to protect those at

higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Given the continued effectiveness of vaccines and improved treatments, for most people there is a much lower risk of severe illness compared to earlier in the pandemic.

Appropriate levels of testing will remain to support diagnosis for clinical care and treatment and to protect very high-risk individuals and settings. Those who are clinically extremely vulnerable and immunocompromised are part of the group who are eligible for COVID-19 treatments in the community, enabling them easy access to anti-viral treatments. High risk individuals are also part of the priority cohort in line for booster vaccines. The Government will continue to consider the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on future vaccine selection and booster programmes for those at greatest risk.

The Government will also maintain essential COVID-19 surveillance activities in the community, primary and secondary care, and in high-risk settings.

Department for Business and Trade: Ministerial Duties

Asked by Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the ministerial responsibilities of each of the three Lords ministers for the Department for Business and Trade. [HL7777]

Lord Johnson of Lainston: I have responsibility for Investment. My noble Friends, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Lord Offord of Garvel) is the Minister for Exports, and the Minister of State (The Earl of Minto) is the Minister for Regulatory Reform.

Further details of each Minister's responsibilities can be found on the Department's GOV.UK home page under 'Our Ministers':

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-and-trade>.

Euston Station: Trees

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Vere of Norbiton on 9 May (HL7361), what is their reason for cutting down the trees adjacent to the taxi rank at Euston Station; what works in particular necessitated cutting those trees; and at what future date those works are scheduled to take place. [HL7683]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The trees adjacent to the taxi rank at Euston station were removed in February 2023 to enable the diversions of utilities, piling for the London Underground Interchange, and civil engineering work for the Euston Square link.

Great British Railways

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask His Majesty's Government whether it remains their policy to introduce Great British Rail; and if so, which aspects of the policies set out in the Great British Railways: Williams-Shapps plan for rail can be introduced without primary legislation. [HL7756]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: In February, the Secretary of State set out his vision for a customer-focused, commercially led industry, with the creation of Great British Railways (GBR) as the guiding mind for the sector. Derby was announced as the location for the GBR Headquarters in March. We are working closely with the Great British Railways Transition Team (GBRTT) and the sector and will progress legislation when parliamentary time allows.

Ahead of legislation, many reforms and tangible benefits for rail users can be delivered, including workforce reform, the rollout of Pay-As-You-Go ticketing, simplifying fares, building local partnerships, as well as the publication of the first draft of the Long-Term Strategy for Rail.

Healthy Start Scheme

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to expand the Healthy Start voucher scheme. [HL7925]

Lord Markham: The Department has no plans to expand the Healthy Start scheme. The scheme is kept under continuous review.

Humanitarian Aid

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of aid from the UK, including through multi-lateral programmes, to Somalia, in particular in relation to (1) curbing piracy, (2) promoting civilian government, (3) disarming of militias, and (4) improving the economy; and to what extent they have collaborated with (a) the European External Action Service, (b) the African Union, and (c) other bodies, to achieve these goals. [HL7698]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The UK, in coordination with partners including the African Union, US, EU and the UN, is supporting the Federal Government of Somalia's programme to counter al-Shabaab and pursue economic and political reform. As the Debt Relief Champion for Somalia, we have helped unlock almost \$2 billion of investments from the World Bank since 2020, strengthening Somalia's economy by

improving the business environment, building critical infrastructure and improving access to finance. Since 2022, the UK has committed £47.5million to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), which has played a key role in supporting Somalia's security from the threat posed by al-Shabaab. The UK, alongside the European Commission and others, was instrumental in tackling the threat of piracy off the coast of Somalia and bringing a dramatic decline in attacks, including through its leading role in the Contact Group for Piracy and funding for the UN Office on Drugs and Crime's Counter Piracy Programme.

Immigration Controls: Families

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of families with children that will be (1) detained, and (2) removed, under the Illegal Migration Bill in 2024. [HL7772]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: As set out in clause 1(1), the purpose of the Bill is to prevent and deter unlawful migration, and in particular migration by unsafe and illegal routes, by requiring the Home Secretary to return illegal migrants to their home country or remove them to a safe third country.

An economic impact assessment will be published for the Bill in due course.

India: Legal Profession

Asked by Lord Sahota

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps are being taken to promote free movement for lawyers between England and Wales and India, including steps (1) to make visas easier to obtain, and (2) to streamline processes relating to qualifications. [HL7606]

Lord Johnson of Lainston: The ongoing UK-India trade negotiations present an opportunity to facilitate legal services trade which is a key professional and business services sector contributing to over £34bn to the UK economy in 2022.

Whilst I am unable to disclose details of live negotiations, as part of extensive stakeholder engagement we know that UK businesses struggle with barriers to services trade, including legal services. Stakeholder input helped to inform our negotiation objectives, which can be found on gov.uk.

Outside negotiations, the UK Ministry of Justice is closely engaged with Indian counterparts on shared interests, including India's new legal services regulations, through existing fora.

Infant Foods: Shortages

Asked by Baroness Kingsmill

To ask His Majesty's Government how they plan to address the current shortage of baby milk formula. [HL7877]

Lord Markham: The Department maintains close engagement with industry to ensure continued supply across a broad range of products. We are not aware of any significant issues with the supply of infant formula products. Within the infant formula sector, there are multiple suppliers and different types of formula which allows parents to switch to an alternative product or brand if their preferred option is unavailable.

Israel: Surveillance

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Southwark

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by Amnesty International published on 2 May into the use of the Israeli military facial recognition system, Red Wolf, in mass surveillance and whether they support the call by Amnesty International for an end to mass and targeted surveillance in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. [HL7714]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has a regular dialogue with the Government of Israel on the conduct of its occupation of Palestinian territories. The UK respects the necessity of Israeli security measures as part of the occupation, but we continue to stress to the Israeli authorities that the impact of such security measures must not disproportionately impact the lives of ordinary Palestinians or their right to non-violent protest.

Oil: Imports

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask His Majesty's Government how they can ascertain whether oil sold by India to the UK and other countries has not been refined from Russian oil, thereby circumventing sanctions. [HL7719]

Lord Callanan: The import, acquisition, supply and delivery of Russian oil and oil products into the UK has been banned since 5 December 2022. The ban uses the well-established non-preferential rules of origin under which products are regarded as originating from a country if there has been substantial, and economically justified, processing in that jurisdiction. Processing is regarded as substantial if it results in the manufacture of a new product such as the refining of crude oil into fuels.

In the three months to February 2023, since the ban came into effect, there has been no marked change in the volume of imports from India compared to the year before.

Oil: Russia

Asked by **Lord West of Spithead**

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the percentage of Russian oil as a proportion of all Indian oil imports (1) prior to the invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, and (2) at present. [HL7718]

Lord Callanan: According to the International Energy Agency, Russian oil exports to India totalled 2.1 million barrels a day in March 2023, an increase of 1.7 million barrels a day compared to March 2022.

More precise data on international oil flows is observed by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero but is subject to commercial licensing agreements and cannot be published by the Department.

Pension Credit

Asked by **Baroness Altmann**

To ask His Majesty's Government what their latest estimate is of the take-up of Pension Credit in the past five years. [HL7669]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: Estimates for Pension Credit take-up in a financial year are available in the "Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up" publication, which can be accessed on the statistics section of gov.uk. [Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up: financial year 2019 to 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-2019-to-2020)

The latest estimates for Pension Credit take-up relate to the financial year 2019 to 2020. The table below outlines take-up estimates for this year, and the four years preceding:

<i>Financial Year</i>	<i>Estimate of Pension Credit take-up</i>
2019 to 2020	66%
2018 to 2019	63%
2017 to 2018	61%
2016 to 2017	61%
2015 to 2016	61%

Please note – methodological refinements have been applied to the data from 2016 to 2017. Therefore, comparison to previous years should be treated with caution.

Prisoners

Asked by **Lord Hylton**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will publish a breakdown of the current prison population by length of sentence. [HL7700]

Lord Bellamy: The Ministry of Justice publishes a breakdown of the prison population by length of sentence as part of the Offender Management Statistics Quarterly.

The information requested can be found in the table attached.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Prison population by custody type/sentence length [2023-05-23 PQ HL7700 table.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2023-05-09/HL7700>

Prisoners' Release

Asked by **Lord Hylton**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many inmates are released from prison each year. [HL7699]

Lord Bellamy: During 2022, there were 46,034 prisoner releases from determinate and indeterminate sentences.

Data on prison releases is published regularly as part of the Offender Management Statistics Quarterly.

Processed Food

Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the answers by the Minister for Primary Care and Public Health on 17 March and 24 April (HC163765, HC180118, and HC180748), what steps they are taking (1) domestically, and (2) internationally, to produce a "universally agreed definition of ultra-processed foods". [HL7901]

Lord Markham: The United Kingdom's Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) is currently carrying out a scoping review of the evidence on processed foods and health and aims to publish its initial assessment in July 2023. This will include evaluating existing classifications of processed foods, including ultra-processed foods and the NOVA classification. We are not aware of any plans to agree a definition internationally.

Radioisotopes

Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the reply by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero on 22 February (HC Deb, col 286), when they expect NHS England to report on its review of NHS trusts' radiopharmacy services; and whether that report will be made public. [HL7707]

Lord Markham: NHS England is commissioning an internal review of National Health Service trust radiopharmacy services to take stock of facilities and equipment, workforce and capacity. NHS England

expects to finish this review by quarter four of 2023/24. This is an internal review and as such NHS England does not intend to publish any report.

Railways: Timetables

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask His Majesty's Government for what reasons Network Rail is proposing to reduce the timetable publication requirement from 12 to 8 weeks; and what assessment they have made of the impact of this change on passengers booking advance tickets and event organisers. [[HL7753](#)]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Network Rail is seeking to reduce the time it takes to produce rail timetables to improve the industry's ability to respond more quickly to changes in demand patterns. This would mean that final timetables are published 8 weeks in advance rather than 12 weeks as they are currently required to do. Network Rail has been working with operators to develop systems that would enable provisional timetables to be published earlier to facilitate advance ticket booking.

Plans for this change have not been finalised. The plans would require a change to the Network Licence Conditions for Network Rail. As the regulator, the Office of Rail and Road will be undertaking a formal public consultation which will enable it to take public views into account when making its decision about the licence change.

Rare Diseases: Medical Treatments

Asked by Baroness Merron

To ask His Majesty's Government how they plan to hold integrated care boards to account on meeting NICE guidelines on the uptake of treatments for people with rare diseases. [[HL7535](#)]

Lord Markham: The Care Quality Commission does assess the processes by which providers implement and comply with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance, and as part of the future regulatory assessments will consider how Integrated Care Systems and Integrated Care Boards consider and implement NICE guidance and other national guidance on best practice in care and treatment.

Research and Science

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support young and emerging scientists, including those whose research is contributing to the treatment and eradication of malaria and other infectious diseases. [[HL7710](#)]

Viscount Camrose: Early-career researchers are at the heart of securing the UK's place as a global science superpower, and that is why the Government is working with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) on a New Deal

for Postgraduate Research. As part of this work, UKRI recently announced a 5.4% uplift to the minimum stipend for UKRI-funded students for the academic year 2023/24.

UKRI's Medical Research Council (MRC) invests around £85 million annually to support around 1,600 PhD students. The MRC Unit at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine was awarded £2.8 million between 2022-2027 to fund studentships, with the majority focused on infectious diseases, including malaria.

Sudan: Armed Conflict

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the current security situation in Sudan, and in particular of any escalation of violence in Khartoum between government forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF); how many British nationals they estimate remain in Sudan; and what action they are taking, together with international partners, to support the talks in Saudi Arabia aimed at securing a ceasefire and enabling humanitarian relief in Sudan. [[HL7784](#)]

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The FCDO is pursuing all diplomatic avenues to secure a ceasefire of hostilities and the protection of civilians. We welcome the Jeddah Declaration signed by the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces on 11 May. We will continue to support efforts to end the violence, de-escalate tensions and secure humanitarian access, including through our multilateral engagement with the Trilateral Mechanism (the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and the United Nations), and the Quad (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the UK and the US). We do not have verifiable data on British nationals remaining in Sudan. We advise all British nationals to monitor the Sudan Travel Advice which is updated regularly and includes the details of our 24/7 consular assistance helpline.

Syria: Sanctions

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration has been given to broadening the general licence granted in relation to the Syria sanctions (1) beyond the current six-month timeframe, and (2) to cover all humanitarian assistance necessary, in order to address new and existing needs in Syria. [[HL7696](#)]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: In February the UK Government published two General Licences to facilitate earthquake relief efforts in Syria and Turkey. These built on an existing humanitarian exception for UK-funded persons by simplifying licensing for those conducting earthquake relief efforts. The UK will continue to monitor the situation in Syria through regular engagement with

Non-Governmental Organisations and financial institutions and is committed to minimising any unintended consequences of sanctions, including through using our humanitarian licensing grounds where appropriate.

Undocumented Migrants

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask His Majesty's Government whether people who meet the four conditions in Clause 2 of the Illegal Migration Bill who make a (1) protection, and (2) human rights, claim will undergo an asylum screening interview. [HL7687]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The implementing measures and processes relating to people falling within the scope of clause 2 of the Illegal Migration Bill will be set out in due course.

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask His Majesty's Government what they plan will happen to a person whose protection or human rights claim is deemed inadmissible under Clause 4(2) of the Illegal Migration Bill but who cannot be removed from the UK. [HL7689]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The purpose of the Illegal Migration Bill is to prevent and deter unlawful migration, and in particular migration by unsafe and illegal routes, by requiring the Home Secretary to return illegal migrants to their home country or remove them to a safe third country.

Under clauses 2 and 5 of the Bill, the Home Secretary is under a duty to make arrangements for the removal of a person who meets the conditions in clause 2 as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Undocumented Migrants: Children

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask His Majesty's Government how many children they predict will be subject to the duty to remove under Clause 2 of the Illegal Migration Bill in 2024. [HL7686]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The purpose of the Illegal Migration Bill is to prevent and deter unlawful migration, and in particular migration by unsafe and illegal routes.

The duty to make arrangements for removal under clause 2 of the Bill only applies to children who are part of a family group. We do not inadvertently create incentives for people smuggling to target vulnerable individuals.

Undocumented Migrants: Detainees

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask His Majesty's Government how many people they forecast will be detained under the powers

contained in Clause 12 of the Illegal Migration Bill in (1) 2024, (2) 2025, and (3) 2026. [HL7690]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The purpose of the Illegal Migration Bill is to prevent and deter unlawful migration, and in particular migration by unsafe and illegal routes.

Those who arrive illegally will be liable to detention and will be swiftly removed to their home country or to a safe third country. The powers to detain are contained in clause 10 of the Bill.

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask His Majesty's Government what role, if any, the detention gatekeeper will have in relation to decisions to detain people under Clause 12 of the Illegal Migration Bill. [HL7691]

Lord Murray of Blidworth: The powers to detain are contained in clause 10 of the Illegal Migration Bill. The detention gatekeeper will continue to have a role in assessing an individual's suitability for detention, in line with published policy.

The detention gatekeeper works independently of both referring operational teams (for example Border Force, Immigration Compliance and Enforcement & others) and detained casework teams (National Returns Command, Foreign National Offenders Return Command and others) to ensure individuals only enter immigration detention where detention is for a lawful purpose and is considered to be a proportionate measure on the facts of the case.

Uzbekistan and Xinjiang: Forced Labour

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report of Dr Adrian Zenz, Coercive Labor in the Cotton Harvest in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and Uzbekistan, published in the Journal of Communist and Post-Communist Studies by University of California Press. [HL7671]

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what conclusions they have drawn following the assertion in the report of Dr Adrian Zenz that "state-sponsored forced labor is characterized by pervasive state-induced and systemic dynamics of coercion that are deeply embedded within sociocultural contexts" in Xinjiang. [HL7672]

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government how they intend to respond to the findings of the report of Dr Adrian Zenz that "Xinjiang's labor transfer program [...] is predominantly designed to achieve Beijing's wider ethnopolitical goals in the region." [HL7673]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of Dr Zenz's recent report. To date, the UK Government has taken robust action in response to forced labour concerns. We have provided guidance to UK companies on the risks

of doing business in Xinjiang, introduced enhanced export controls, and committed to introduce financial penalties for organisations that do not comply with modern slavery reporting requirements. Additionally, the Procurement Bill enables contracting authorities across the public

sector to reject bids and terminate contracts with suppliers which are known to use forced labour themselves or anywhere in their supply chain. We continue to closely monitor the situation in Xinjiang and to keep our policy response under review.

Index to Statements and Answers

Written Statements.....1	
Children’s Social Care: Review and Reform1	Pension Credit..... 11
Digital Economy Act 2017: Data Sharing2	Prisoners 11
Education Estate: Condition Improvement Fund .2	Prisoners’ Release..... 11
Extension of the Ivory Act 20182	Processed Food 11
Forensic Information Databases Strategy Board: Annual Report3	Radioisotopes..... 11
Immigration Update.....3	Railways: Timetables 12
Looked-after Children: Accommodation.....4	Rare Diseases: Medical Treatments..... 12
National Tutoring Programme: Funding4	Research and Science 12
NatWest Group: Share Buyback Transaction.....5	Sudan: Armed Conflict..... 12
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe6	Syria: Sanctions 12
Postal and Proxy Voting.....6	Undocumented Migrants 13
Protection of Confidential Patient Information: Statutory Guidance6	Undocumented Migrants: Children 13
UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly: Membership.....7	Undocumented Migrants: Detainees..... 13
Written Answers.....8	Uzbekistan and Xinjiang: Forced Labour 13
Ambulance Services: Motor Vehicles8	
Asylum8	
Asylum: Children8	
Asylum: Interviews8	
Cancer: Screening.....8	
Coronavirus: Immunosuppression.....8	
Department for Business and Trade: Ministerial Duties.....9	
Euston Station: Trees.....9	
Great British Railways9	
Healthy Start Scheme9	
Humanitarian Aid9	
Immigration Controls: Families10	
India: Legal Profession.....10	
Infant Foods: Shortages10	
Israel: Surveillance10	
Oil: Imports10	
Oil: Russia11	