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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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<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, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
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
Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton	Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Viscount Camrose	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
Earl of Courtown	Deputy Chief Whip
Lord Davies of Gower	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
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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, Ministry of Defence
Lord Mott	Whip
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 Under-Secretary of State, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
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 Swinburne	Whip
Baroness Vere of Norbiton	Parliamentary Secretary, HM Treasury
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

Thursday, 30 November 2023

Elections Act 2022 and Boundary Review

[HLWS80]

Baroness Penn: My Honourable friend the Minister for Local Government (Simon Hoare MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Evaluation of the Elections Act 2022

The Government is committed to ensuring UK elections remain secure, fair, modern, and transparent. As part of this commitment, the Elections Act 2022 introduced new measures designed to increase the security and integrity of UK elections. Two of these measures, voter identification in Great Britain and enhanced support for disabled voters in polling stations, were delivered for the first time in polling stations at the May 2023 local council elections.

The Government is pleased with the introduction of voter identification in Great Britain, with data gathered in polling stations showing that 99.75% of voters were able to cast their vote successfully under the new measures. This smooth rollout is a testament to the skill and careful planning of local authorities and electoral administrators, without whom the realisation of these measures would not be possible. We thank them.

However, the Government is committed to understanding fully the impact of the Elections Act and to improve its implementation where necessary. It is committed in legislation to undertake an evaluation of the voter identification policy after its first implementation. To this end, the Government appointed external research agency IFF Research to evaluate the implementation of the Act, examining the impact of the voter identification and accessibility measures at the May 2023 local elections. The Government is also committed in legislation to conducting further evaluations at the next two UK Parliamentary general elections.

Today, I am pleased to share IFF Research's first evaluation report. This independent evaluation has used data gathered at polling stations, supplemented by public opinion survey results, the Electoral Commission's data and report on the May elections, surveys with the electoral sector and qualitative research to provide a full picture of the impact and implementation of the voter identification and accessibility measures. While providing further evidence of successful delivery, the report also makes a number of recommendations for both the Government and others including the Electoral Commission for ongoing improvements.

In addition to the government's evaluation, I have today published the government's response to the Electoral Commission's report on the May 23 polls. The government welcome the views of the Commission and has considered its recommendations carefully.

Implementing the Elections Act requires close partnership working between the Government, the

Commission, the electoral sector, and their representative bodies. We look forward to continuing close engagement with all our partners as we implement the remaining measures from the Act and take forward any necessary adjustments in response to this evaluation.

Responding to the evaluation

The IFF evaluation makes an assessment of where adjustments may be made to delivery of the voter identification and accessibility measures that would improve the experience of both voters and electoral administrators. The Government is keen to support the diligent work of the Electoral Commission and other partners and we look forward to discussing these recommendations further.

These recommendations include: action that may be taken on training and guidance for polling station staff and electoral administrators on the reasoning behind which photographic identification documents are accepted in the polling station; how to apply the Electoral Commission's guidance for Returning Officers on supporting disabled voters to enable or make it easier for them to vote in polling stations; activity and communications to address any gaps in awareness or understanding across the whole electorate of the voter identification requirements; the availability of the Voter Authority Certificate; and the additional support and equipment available to disabled voters and more specifically to address this amongst groups where awareness is low; supporting electors who may struggle with the online application process to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate; and increasing the time available for processing Voter Authority Certificates ahead of a UK Parliamentary general election.

Many of these recommendations are, of course, in areas where the Government recognise it should and does not have a direct role, but in these and other aspects of delivery we remain keen to support the brilliant work of Returning Officers, Electoral Registration Officers, their electoral services teams, the Electoral Commission, and all our other partners.

Other recommendations in the report are specific to supporting and strengthening future evaluations, for example by gathering more evidence from specific groups of interest, and these will be taken forward in future plans.

Ongoing evaluation

The Government is committed to maintaining the integrity of the ballot and ensuring that UK elections remain accessible to all. While the evaluation published today demonstrates the significant steps we are taking in achieving these aims, the Government will continue to learn from this and future evaluations and other sources of data. We look forward to further assessments which will be published in the future and the ongoing successful implementation of the Elections Act, ensuring the integrity and accessibility of our democracy now and into the future.

Copies of the *Electoral Integrity Programme Evaluation Report: Year 1* and the *Government's*

response to the Electoral Commission's Report on the May 2023 polls will be placed in the House libraries.

Implementation of the Boundary Review

The Government's 2019 manifesto committed to ensuring updated and more equal parliamentary boundaries. These help to make sure that votes carry more equal weight in Parliament, across the whole United Kingdom. To this end, Parliament passed the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020, which provided for the number of constituencies in the UK to remain at 650 and for a boundary review to take place on the basis of this number of constituencies and to report before 1 July 2023.

The 2020 Act also provides for regular boundary reviews, which will ensure that the boundaries remain up to date and involve less change at each cycle by not having such a long period between reviews. The Boundary Commissions will likely commence their next review in 2029 and complete it by October 2031.

The four independent Boundary Commissions commenced their review shortly after the Act came into force. Having completed the review, the Boundary Commissions submitted their final reports to the Speaker of the House of Commons on 27 June 2023. The Speaker laid the reports before Parliament on 28 June 2023. We thank the Boundary Commission for its work.

At the Privy Council meeting on 15 November 2023, His Majesty the King made the Order in Council to enact the changes recommended by the Boundary Commissions. The Order came into force on 29 November 2023 and the new Parliamentary constituencies and boundaries will take effect at the next UK Parliamentary general election. Until that time, any UK Parliamentary by-elections will continue to use the pre-existing constituencies and boundaries.

Online Advertising Taskforce: Action Plan

[HLWS77]

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 Minister for Media, Tourism and Creative Industries, Sir John Whittingdale OBE MP:

I am pleased to inform the House that today 30 November we are publishing the Online Advertising Taskforce's Action Plan.

The Online Advertising Taskforce brings together representatives from Government and the online advertising sector to work in collaboration to address illegal harms and the protection of children in relation to online advertising. Its creation was announced in the Government's response to the Online Advertising Programme consultation, published in July, and the Taskforce held its first meeting later that month. It committed to agreeing upon and delivering a programme of work to help address illegal advertising and minimise children being served advertising for products and

services illegal to sell to them ('in-scope harms'), in anticipation of regulation being introduced in due course.

The Action Plan we are publishing today brings together commitments from Government and industry that seek to drive progress against two objectives: improving the evidence about the in-scope harms, and expanding voluntary industry initiatives that seek or have the capacity to address them. This has been a collaborative and ambitious piece of work and we are grateful for the invaluable contribution of Taskforce members since the summer.

The Government has also been working with technology companies as part of its Online Fraud Charter, which will further drive action against fraud, including that which is perpetuated through online advertising, and which is also being published today. Through both programmes of work the government and online advertising companies will implement significant protections from fraud for everyone engaging in business and recreation online.

The Action Plan will be published on the Online Advertising Taskforce [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) page.

Online Fraud Charter

[HLWS79]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: My rt hon Friend the Minister of State for Security (Tom Tugendhat) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Today, I am pleased to inform the House that we are publishing the Online Fraud Charter.

A key deliverable in the [Government's Fraud Strategy](#), the Online Fraud Charter contains a series of ambitious commitments from several of the largest tech companies in the world. These commitments reflect a landmark moment in our fight against fraud and will target some of the most harmful and pervasive frauds that occur online. This includes stronger action to make sure people are who they say they are, on marketplaces and on dating apps. It will ensure that signatory companies make fraud easier to report online. When content or users are found to be fraudulent, immediate and decisive enforcement action will be taken.

Further detail will be published online but the Charter will contain actions focussing on:

- Blocking frauds from occurring in the first place.
- Improved reporting structures and faster takedowns of harmful content and users.
- Making sure advertisers are who they say they are.
- Greater collaboration with law enforcement and other partners to drive further intelligence sharing, transparency, public communications and horizon scanning.

Tech companies have made strong progress in the last several years in combatting fraud and, with the Online Safety Act in the process of coming fully into operation, change will be a statutory responsibility. However, those

that have signed this charter have shown their willingness to work faster and in a more targeted fashion than regulation will require. I commend their constructive engagement and their ambition in agreeing to these commitments. I am pleased to see them taking responsibility to protect their users from fraud.

We are taking the fight to the fraudsters, targeting the criminals that try to exploit us when we are online. Today, my honourable friend the Minister for Media, Tourism and Creative Industries, has also announced the publication of the Online Advertising Taskforce Action Plan, which brings together initiatives from industry and government to tackle illegal online advertising and increase protections for children. Through both of today's announcements, the Government and industry will implement significant steps to make sure that the British public are protected online.

The Online Fraud Charter will be published on the [Joint Fraud Taskforce GOV.UK page](#).

Sudan Update

[HLWS81]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Right Honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Development and Africa (Andrew Mitchell MP), has made the following written statement:

I would like to update the House on the situation in Sudan since the outbreak of conflict on 15 April this year between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF), and the UK's efforts in support of the Sudanese people.

Violence continues across the country. The lack of humanitarian access and a disregard for civilian life is resulting in terrible suffering. The conflict has caused destruction on a massive scale as a result of the indiscriminate use of force by both sides, including shelling and air strikes in urban areas. Since 15 April, more than 6.3 million people have been displaced, including over 1.3 million people who have fled to neighbouring countries, seeking safety, protection and assistance. Twenty-five million people are in urgent need but constraints on humanitarian access mean insufficient aid is reaching them.

There is mounting evidence of abhorrent atrocities against civilians, in particular in Darfur. Women and girls are subject to rape and sexual violence. Houses are being burnt to the ground. People's livelihoods are being destroyed. These attacks have all the hallmarks of ethnic cleansing and may amount to crimes against humanity.

Following the conclusion of the first round of Jeddah Talks that resumed on 26 October, the UK is continuing to support the mediation efforts of the US, Saudi Arabia, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the African Union. I urge both warring parties to engage constructively with these talks to secure short-term ceasefires and improvements in humanitarian access.

But in the meantime, the suffering of the Sudanese people continues. There have been increasing reports from El Geneina and Ardamata in West Darfur of potentially ethnically targeted violence against men and boys and alleged executions, including the murder of Masalit community leader, Al-Farsha Muhamed Arbab. These atrocities must end immediately, and those responsible must be held to account.

We are supporting the Centre for Information Resilience (CIR). CIR work to monitor atrocities in Sudan using satellite imagery to investigate attacks against civilians and infrastructure, and also to monitor hate speech and incitement of violence. This financial year, the UK has provided £600,000 to CIR for this project. Our partnership on this innovative work is vital in documenting the ongoing atrocities, and preserving and sharing evidence, so that those committing these heinous crimes can be brought to justice.

In July, I announced a package of sanctions freezing the assets of three commercial entities linked to both SAF and RSF. We stand ready to take additional measures.

In the UN Security Council (UNSC), UN General Assembly and at the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), we have consistently condemned the violence across Sudan. On 11 October, the HRC adopted the UK-led 'Sudan Core Group' (US, Germany, Norway, UK) resolution which creates an independent and international Fact-Finding Mission to investigate atrocities in Sudan and support future accountability efforts.

As part of our commitment to humanitarian assistance, I announced £21.7 million in humanitarian funding in May for those in need in Sudan, in addition to £5 million to help meet the urgent needs of refugees and returnees in South Sudan and Chad. UKAid is providing nutrition, safe drinking water, medical care and shelter, as well as supporting protection services including for those affected by gender-based violence. In November, the UK confirmed a further £14.3 million in humanitarian aid, bringing the total to £36 million for 2023-2024.

The UK, alongside Norway, jointly funded the Sudan Humanitarian Conference that took place in Cairo on 18 – 20 November; an event that brought together Sudanese grassroots organisations, NGOs and the international humanitarian system to develop coordination mechanisms to give a greater voice to Sudanese organisations in the humanitarian response.

We have also established a new British Office Sudan in Addis Ababa, until a British Embassy can be re-established in Sudan. This makes us the first western nation to set up an operational Office for Sudan in the region. The staff of the British Office Sudan in Ethiopia will continue to work to support our diplomatic and humanitarian aims to bring peace and stability to the people of Sudan, as well as continuing to assist in providing limited remote consular support to British nationals in Sudan. I would like to put on record my thanks to the Government of Ethiopia for enabling the setup of this Office.

The UK remains committed to supporting Sudanese civilians to chart their own future for their country. Neither of the warring parties should have any future role in power in a future democratic Sudan. I therefore warmly welcome the gathering of Sudanese civilian actors and stakeholders in Addis Ababa on 23 October as an important step towards the formation of an inclusive and representative pro-democracy civilian front.

The UK will continue to advocate for a ceasefire, safe and unfettered humanitarian access, an end to atrocities and a return to a civilian-led government that can deliver the peace and stability the Sudanese people deserve.

UK Priorities for COP28

[HLWS78]

Lord Callanan: My right hon. friend the Minister of State (Graham Stuart) has today made the following statement:

The UK is committed to tackling climate change and restoring nature. We have reduced our emissions by more than any other major economy since 1990 and, going forward, have one of the most ambitious target for 2030. Our emissions are down 48% per cent compared to 1990 and we've grown the economy by 70% over the same period.

We brought the world together at the COP26 Glasgow Summit to speed up the global net zero transition, as well as brokering a historic deal to end deforestation and kickstart new green finance markets. However, limiting global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees will only be possible if countries around the world commit to join the UK on a net zero pathway. The science is clear that global emissions need to peak by 2025 and must be reduced by 43% in 2030 compared to 2019 in order to achieve this.

The upcoming 28th Conference of the Parties under the UNFCCC (COP28), to be hosted by the UAE in Dubai (30 November – 12 December), will mark an important moment to get to net zero. Amid record global temperatures, the first Global Stocktake of progress against the Paris Agreement will show that the world is currently off track and urgent action is needed to keep the 1.5 degree goal within reach. The world needs to take a hard look at what is working and where we are failing to deliver, focusing our resources on practical, deliverable solutions. This COP must deliver the framework and targets already agreed, including in Glasgow, and set out the long-term decisions that are needed to bring everyone with us, from rural communities to the countries most impacted by climate change.

The context is challenging, given the current geopolitical tension, conflict and macroeconomic environment where countries are battling inflation and debt. At the same time, the widespread impacts from increasing global temperatures have never been felt more, underscoring the need to deliver on our climate commitments and reduce emissions.

His Majesty The King will attend the Opening Ceremony of the World Climate Action Summit at

COP28 at the invitation of the UAE and at the request of HMG, and will deliver an opening address. The Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Environment Secretary and other Ministers will attend the summit. I will lead the negotiations for the UK.

The Prime Minister's focus will be on forests, finance and net zero transitions. These are areas where the UK can lead global progress, building on our track record, and working with the UAE Presidency, other countries, business and civil society.

Overall at COP28 the UK wants to see progress in five priority areas:

- 1) New commitments and action to keep 1.5 alive. Coming out of the Global Stocktake, we need renewed leader-level political consensus and increased ambition to keep 1.5 in reach. We need commitment to peak global emissions by 2025 and clear guidance for the next round of NDCs. And we need a clear, forward-looking roadmap with global targets in key sectors and commitment to action including through the Breakthrough Agenda, on forests, and through the phasing out of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). Since 2010 the UK has seen nearly £200bn of public and private finance investment in low carbon energy sectors. We will use this domestic experience to spearhead efforts to accelerate decarbonisation of key sectors of the global economy.
- 2) A clean energy package with clear commitments to transition away from fossil fuels. This includes commitments to triple global renewables and double energy efficiency by 2030, to phase out unabated fossil fuels - in line with the G7 commitment the UK helped to deliver earlier this year – and to end new unabated coal power and phase out coal power globally.
- 3) An outcome on finance that helps deliver the trillions needed to accelerate the transition. This includes reform of international financial institutions, delivery this year of the collective goal of \$100bn climate finance per year for developing economies, and progress on the post-2025 climate finance goal with contributions from a broader range of donors. Based on preliminary data, the OECD has stated that it is likely that the \$100bn goal was met in 2022. The UK will play its part. We are fully committed to delivering on our £11.6bn of international climate finance and we are a world leader in green finance. We will work with partners to realign financial flows with the Paris Agreement and Global Biodiversity Framework.
- 4) Progress on building resilience to climate impacts - demonstrating progress on the Glasgow commitment to double adaptation finance by 2025 and establishing an effective loss and damage fund to support countries that are particularly vulnerable. We are pleased that the loss and damage transitional committee, mandated by COP27, has put forward a recommendation on the fund. The UK was instrumental in securing that recommendation and we hope it will be agreed at COP28. We will continue to advocate for the priorities

of the most vulnerable. I co-chaired a third Climate and Development Ministerial (C&DM) alongside the UAE, Malawi and Vanuatu at Pre-COP last month. This focussed on enhancing access and delivery of adaptation finance, the equitable delivery of high-quality grant-based finance and concessional finance.

5) Real progress towards protecting, restoring and sustainably managing nature, on land and in the ocean which is crucial to delivering on net zero and building resilience. We need COP28 to maintain momentum on the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework agreed at CBD COP15 last year, to make concrete progress on the historic agreement to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. We want to see forests prioritised in the Global Stocktake and to use the Forest and Climate Leaders' Partnership as the vehicle to drive accelerated delivery of the Glasgow Leaders Declaration on forests and land use. To date UK International Climate Finance has avoided over 410,000 hectares of ecosystem loss.

We will continue to deliver ambitious reductions, embracing innovation and green finance opportunities. The UK will go into COP28 with a strong record at home

and internationally. We recently committed \$2bn to the Green Climate Fund second replenishment, the biggest single international funding commitment the UK has made to help tackle climate change, and making us the top contributor cumulatively to the world's most prominent international climate fund.

In his recent net zero speech, the Prime Minister set out the long-term decisions to enable a just transition to net zero, while maintaining public support. We are absolutely clear, net zero is the right thing to do for our long-term national security, economic prosperity and the future of our children.

All countries around the world need to do more to keep 1.5 alive. The UK is delivering significant progress, and following the clear framework and targets agreed at Glasgow COP, we saw 90% of global GDP committed to net zero. We must now drive progress and support other nations constituting 99% of emissions to grasp the benefits of green growth.

We will update the house in the usual way once negotiations have concluded.

Written Answers

Thursday, 30 November 2023

Antimicrobials: Drug Resistance

Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the combined impacts of microplastics and antimicrobial pollutants in driving antimicrobial resistance emergence in the environment, and what steps they are taking to mitigate these impacts. [HL264]

Lord Benyon: Defra, the Environment Agency and the UK Health Security Agency have a joint research programme on antimicrobial resistance in the environment. This includes examination of potential drivers of selection for antimicrobial resistance in environmental organisms. So far, this work has concentrated on the effect of antimicrobials and biocides so has not examined the additional role of microplastics, as this was not identified as likely to have a high impact and therefore be a high priority for the research. However, we continue to consider issues for further investigation as part of our ongoing research where emerging evidence suggests it is needed.

Cost of Living

Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Autumn Statement made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 22 November (HC Deb cols 325–57), what assessment they have made of impact of the level of taxation on individuals struggling with the increased cost of living. [HL575]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: In recent years the government has taken significant action to support lower earners through the tax system. The significant increase to the NICs starting thresholds in July 2022 means that all workers can now earn £1,000 a month before paying any tax. A UK employee can earn more money before paying income tax and Social Security Contributions than an employee in any other G7 country.

At Autumn Statement 2023, the Government cut the main rate of employee National Insurance by 2pp from January 2024, as well as cutting and reforming taxes for the self-employed from April 2024. As a result of above-inflation increases to thresholds since 2010, and the Autumn Statement 2023 NICs cut, an average worker in 2024-25 will pay over £1,000 less in personal taxes than they otherwise would have done. From April, a full time National Living Wage worker's take home pay will be 30% greater in real terms than it was in 2010, due to successive increases in the National Living Wage and changes to personal tax rates and thresholds.

Homelessness: Rural Areas

Asked by **The Lord Bishop of St Albans**

To ask His Majesty's Government what processes are in place for counting and identifying instances of rural homelessness. [HL429]

Baroness Penn: The Government understands rural homelessness presents unique challenges which can differ from urban areas.

We support local areas to put in place robust measures to identify people sleeping rough. This includes collecting [monthly management information](#), alongside the official [annual rough sleeping snapshot](#) statistics, which support local authorities to understand better how people experience rough sleeping in their areas so they can design tailored local services.

Homeless Link have been funded by DLUHC since 2010 to provide guidance to local authorities who conduct the snapshot and independently verify all local authorities' snapshots. This includes advice about how areas should take different approaches depending on the characteristics of their area.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Rough Sleeping [HL429 - Rough sleeping snapshot in England_ autumn 2022 - GOV.UK.pdf]

Support for people sleeping rough [HL429 - Support for people sleeping rough in England, June 2023 - GOV.UK.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2023-11-20/HL429>

Inflation

Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to maintain consistency in the recent downward trajectory of inflation. [HL441]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Although recent data shows inflation has halved since its peak in October 2022, it remains the biggest challenge to the economy. There are three key things the government is doing to further reduce inflation:

- Remaining steadfast in our support for the Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of England as it takes action to return inflation sustainably to the 2% target.
- Taking difficult, but responsible fiscal decisions by resisting calls for reckless spending that would make inflation worse, reducing borrowing and introducing ambitious measures to support growth. This includes ambitious measures to help people get back into work, investing in clean, home-grown energy, and encouraging banks to pass on higher savings rates.
- Boosting labour supply, as labour market conditions are a key problem affecting UK businesses' growth, as well as a significant driver of domestic inflation. Together, the packages at Autumn Statement and

Spring Budget 2023 were the two largest increases to labour supply and potential GDP resulting from policy the OBR has ever scored.

The IMF said in May that, in response to last year's inflation shock, the government took "decisive and responsible" action to prioritise restoring price stability and achieve the right balance of fiscal and monetary response, while also focusing on growing the economy. The government remain committed to seeking the right balance between fiscal and monetary policy as the UK continues to navigate challenging circumstances.

The OBR confirms policies at the Autumn Statement do not materially impact inflation or demand as we continue to support the MPC to return inflation to the 2% target.

Intensive Care: Children

Asked by Lord Balfe

To ask His Majesty's Government, with reference to the report Disagreements in the care of critically ill children published by the Department of Health and Social Care on 18 September, what changes they intend to make to the care of critically ill children and when they anticipate these will come into effect. [HL333]

Lord Markham: The Department is considering the recommendations made in the report and what actions can be taken to help avoid disagreements arising between the parents of critically ill children and clinicians treating them and, where this is not possible, resolve disagreements more quickly and compassionately.

Internet: Fraud

Asked by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to raise awareness of the risks of online scams, particularly for those with limited digital skills. [HL360]

Viscount Camrose: This Government is committed to protecting those who are most vulnerable to online scams.

The Online Safety Act will require social media providers to take steps to safeguard their users from illegal scams and fraudulent advertising. In overseeing the framework, Ofcom must ensure that there are adequate protections for those that are most vulnerable to online harm.

The legislation also expands Ofcom's duty to promote media literacy under the 2003 Communications Act. The regulator is now required to raise the public's awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe online. It will need to publish a strategy for achieving this, which must be updated every three years.

In tandem, the Government is taking action to improve people's media literacy more widely. In July 2021, we published the Online Media Literacy Strategy. This seeks to support the empowerment of internet users with the skills they need to make safe and informed choices online. Through the Strategy, the Government is funding multiple

organisations to support the media literacy and critical thinking skills of vulnerable internet users.

Loans: Interest Rates

Asked by Earl Attlee

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Financial Conduct Authority regularly undertakes spot checks of firms offering loans to ensure that the contract details accurately reflect the advertised annual percentage rate of the financial product. [HL457]

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is responsible for regulating the consumer credit market. It is part of a robust regulatory system which is helping to deliver the government's vision for a well-functioning and sustainable consumer credit market which meets consumers' needs.

The FCA oversees firms through its supervision strategy. In the *FCA Mission – Approach to Supervision April 2019*, the FCA set out that to make the best use of its resources and deliver the greatest public value, it takes a proportionate approach to supervising firms. It supervises most firms as members of a portfolio of firms that share a common business model. It analyses each portfolio and agrees a strategy to take action on firms posing the greatest harm.

Firms are required by FCA rules to include a representative APR in certain circumstances. The FCA's handbook (CONC 3.5) provides further rules and guidance on when a representative APR must be shown, how it should be denoted and the level of prominence it must be given.

While not all consumers will get the advertised APR, they should be told in advance of entering into the agreement what APR they have been offered and this will be shown in the pre-contract information required to be given under the Consumer Credit Act 1974.

If a customer is concerned that they may have been mis-sold a credit agreement, they may wish to consider making a formal complaint to the firm in question in the first instance. If they then feel that their complaint has not been dealt with satisfactorily, they are able to refer the matter to the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS) – an independent body set up to provide arbitration in such cases.

NHS England

Asked by Baroness Manzoor

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the overall budget of NHS England, how many staff it has, and how it measures its own performance in driving the delivery of services in primary and secondary care. [HL562]

Lord Markham: The overall budget for NHS England in 2023/24 is £172.1 billion. NHS England publishes quarterly data on the number of staff working in National Health Service Support Organisations and Central Bodies.

The latest data for June 2023 shows there are 16,328 full time equivalent staff employed by NHS England.

In May 2023, NHS England published a delivery plan for primary care. Integrated care boards (ICBs) will lead the change for their local health systems as commissioners of primary care. The plan sets out how ICBs are expected to report progress, including through their public board reporting, with national and regional support being offered to any ICBs that are falling behind. A copy of the plan is attached.

On elective care, the NHS published a delivery plan in January 2022 setting out a clear vision for how the NHS will recover and expand elective services over three years. This includes targets to reduce maximum waiting times, so that waits of longer than a year for elective care are eliminated by March 2025, prioritising diagnosis and treatment so that 95% of patients needing a diagnostic test will receive it within six weeks by March 2025 and transforming the way the NHS provides elective care. A copy of the plan is attached.

On urgent and emergency care, performance measures include meeting the ambitions set out in our *Delivery plan for recovering urgent and emergency care services*, published in January 2023, including improving accident and emergency and ambulance performance to 76% of patients being admitted, transferred or discharged within four hours by March 2024, and improved ambulance response times for Category 2 incidents to 30 minutes on average over 2023 to 2024, with further improvement against both of these measures towards pre-pandemic levels in 2024 to 2025. A copy of the plan is attached.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Attachment [B2034-delivery-plan-for-recovering-urgent-and-emergency-care-services (1) (3).pdf]

Attachment [PRN00283-delivery-plan-for-recovering-access-to-primary-care-may-2023 (2).pdf]

Attachment [C1466-delivery-plan-for-tackling-the-covid-19-backlog-of-elective-care (2).pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2023-11-23/HL562>

NHS: Private Sector

Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle**

To ask His Majesty's Government how integrated care boards assess the initial and continuing financial stability of private companies from which NHS services are commissioned, and what assessment they have made of the overall financial stability of private companies providing NHS services. [HL544]

Lord Markham: Integrated care boards (ICBs) assess the financial stability of companies subject to the current rules on procurement, including the Public Contract Regulations 2015. ICBs are responsible for their own due

diligence and governance surrounding procurement, the award of contracts, and the assessment of suppliers for those purposes.

The Department has not made a central assessment of the overall financial stability of private companies providing services to the National Health Service.

Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle**

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the decision by One Norwich Practices to stop providing services to the NHS, including a walk-in centre, because of financial problems, whether they will conduct an investigation into the board of that company and its management of services. [HL545]

Lord Markham: Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board (ICB) and One Norwich Practices have been working constructively to identify appropriate alternative providers and develop plans to transfer services and staff. The ICB's immediate priorities are to ensure that disruption to patient care is minimised and to protect the wellbeing of staff at One Norwich Practices. Once these immediate priorities are addressed, the ICB will be in a position to undertake its own internal review of the circumstances that may have contributed to One Norwich Practices' insolvency.

As a commissioner, the ICB is not in receipt of the financial information of its contractors, and the ICB is not responsible for the financial viability of any organisation, nor any subsequent arrangements, financial or otherwise, within a wider group of companies or partners with whom the ICB does not directly commission services.

Offences against Children

Asked by **Baroness Helic**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many transfers of residency orders have been issued by family courts in the past two years; and of those, (1) how many were issued following findings or allegations of parental alienation, and (2) how many were made in favour of a parent previously accused of child sexual abuse. [HL282]

Asked by **Baroness Helic**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many cases involving allegations of child sexual abuse perpetrated by a parent have been heard in private law family proceedings in the past two years; and how many findings of child sexual abuse were made in those proceedings. [HL283]

Asked by **Baroness Helic**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many cases involving allegations of parental alienation or alienating behaviours have been heard in private law family proceedings in each of the past five years; and how many findings of parental alienation or alienating behaviours were made in those proceedings. [HL284]

Lord Bellamy: Transfers of residency orders, incidences of findings of child sexual abuse in private law proceedings, and cases involving allegations of parental alienation or alienating behaviours are not recorded centrally. Such information could only be obtained by analysis of individual case files at disproportionate costs.

Regarding the term “parental alienation”: as part of his judgment in the case of *Re C*, the President of the Family Division outlined that most family judges regard the label of “parental alienation”, and the idea that it “may be a diagnosable syndrome” as being “unhelpful”. He noted that instead the courts should focus on identifying any specific “alienating behaviours”.

Trade Promotion: Kazakhstan

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask His Majesty's Government which directorate produces the list of invitees for the Kazakh–British Trade and Industry Council; and what are the criteria for selection for the invitees. [HL533]

Lord Offord of Garvel: The Kazakh-British Trade and Industry Council no longer exists.

Trade Promotion: Turkmenistan

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask His Majesty's Government which directorate produces the list of invitees for the Turkmenistan United Kingdom Trade and Industry Council; and what are the criteria for selection for the invitees. [HL532]

Lord Offord of Garvel: The Turkmen Government choose participants on their side, made up mainly of government ministries, but of late, with business representatives. On the UK side, the British Embassy in Ashgabat suggests companies that might be interested in joining, in consultation with the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and the Department for Business and Trade. Our criteria is to identify companies with an interest in exporting to the market.

Trade Promotion: Uzbekistan

Asked by Viscount Waverley

To ask His Majesty's Government which directorate produces the list of invitees for the Uzbek–British Trade and Industry Council; and what are the criteria for selection for the invitees. [HL531]

Lord Offord of Garvel: The British Embassy have set up a registration site that is open to all interested parties. The event is published publicly on the GREAT website, and the Department for Business and Trade and Uzbekistan's Ministry of Investment work together to amplify and raise awareness of the event among businesses. No criteria are applied to those that wish to register and attend.

Water: Standards

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government, with regard to water quality, what assessment they have made of whether the replacements to the EU Water Framework Directive will result in the improved monitoring of water quality; whether they intend to create a UK specific Hazardous Watch List; and if so, whether this will consider antimicrobial resistance selection risk of chemicals in aquatic environments, as has been included in recent iterations of the EU Water Framework Directive's Watch List. [HL267]

Lord Benyon: The Environment Agency (EA) has introduced a new long-term ‘river surveillance network’ monitoring programme for rivers to give a national overview of the state of England's rivers. It does not replace the Water Framework Directive compliant monitoring which will still continue.

This network is a key part of the ‘Natural Capital and Ecosystems Assessment’ which will provide a statistically robust assessment of the health of the water environment.

The formalisation of a UK-wide Watchlist would be a matter for the UK and Devolved Administrations. In England the EA has developed a Prioritisation and Early Warning System for new substances of concern and monitors changes to the EU's Watch List. The EA also works closely with the devolved agencies to share information and approaches to monitoring programmes for emerging chemicals of concern in the water environment, including pharmaceuticals which might contribute to Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR).

Further, the UK has set out a 20-year vision for containing and controlling AMR through a One-Health approach. A cross-departmental project called Pathogen Surveillance in Agriculture, Food and the Environment (PATH-SAFE) was established in 2021 to understand how pathogens and AMR are spread in the environment and the agri-food system. This will inform future monitoring of the water environment and commitments within the UK National Action Plan on AMR.

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