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**Tuesday**  
**14 May 2024**

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

# **HOUSE OF LORDS**

## **WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS**

**Written Statements ..... 1**

**Written Answers..... 6**

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<b>Earl of Minto</b>	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
<b>Baroness Neville-Rolfe</b>	Minister of State, Cabinet Office
<b>Lord Offord of Garvel</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business and Trade and Scotland Office
<b>Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Culture, Media and Sport
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<b>Baroness Vere of Norbiton</b>	Parliamentary Secretary, HM Treasury
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# Written Statements

Tuesday, 14 May 2024

## Civil Service: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

[HLWS462]

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe:** The Government has a plan to deliver a brighter future for Britain, with long-term economic security and opportunity: where hard work is always rewarded; where ambition and aspiration are celebrated; where young people get the skills they need to succeed in life; where families are supported, where those who have worked hard all their lives have the dignity they deserve in retirement; and, with security at home and abroad.

The Civil Service is crucial to the delivery of that plan. We want to cut waste and inefficiency so civil servants can better support our frontline services. In that light, this Government wishes to ensure that all public spending on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion ('EDI') is proportionate, meeting all statutory requirements, and represents value for money.

Last October, and re-affirmed by the Chancellor in the Autumn Statement, the Government commissioned a review of EDI expenditure across the Civil Service, to identify current spend on roles and activities, and to understand whether existing expenditure is effective and efficient.

The review found that across 95 Civil Service organisations total EDI expenditure for the 2022-23 financial year was £27.1 million. We do not believe that this represents value for money.

We have also been informed by the Inclusion at Work Panel's report from March 2024 which found that many employers want to 'do the right thing', but are implementing EDI initiatives without an evidence base, and many do not know the impact these initiatives are having or whether they represent value for money. In a growing number of cases, particularly relating to positive discrimination and protected beliefs, the report found that EDI interventions are proving to be counterproductive.

In response to these findings, today the Cabinet Office is publishing the Civil Service EDI Expenditure Guidance. This includes an end to all external spending on EDI activity, unless cleared and authorised by Ministers. In addition:

- There will be centralised EDI guidance for departments and Arm's-Length Bodies and EDI learning will be regulated through the Civil Service Learning Framework unless authorised by Ministers through the spend control.

- Standalone EDI roles will also cease to exist outside of HR as Secretaries of State and Permanent Secretaries are expected to consolidate them into existing HR teams.

- Diversity content included in Civil Service job adverts will also be standardised to ensure diversity policy is clearly and consistently shared. This will enable civil servants to focus on their specific job role and on delivering for the taxpayer.

Support for disability will be excluded from these changes, recognising the particular needs of disabled staff. As set out in the Government's National Disability Strategy (2021) and the Disability Action Plan (2024), we will continue to support them and give them the help to achieve their goals and excel.

We are also publishing Guidance on Diversity and Inclusion and Impartiality Requirements. This meets the commitment made in Action 62 of the Inclusive Britain Report.

The guidance makes clear that civil servants must not allow their personal political views to determine their actions or any advice they give related to diversity and

inclusion in any part of their employment. This includes when carrying out government duties, such as developing policy, or engaging in learning and development or participating in staff networks. It will ensure civil servants can carry out their work while retaining the confidence of Ministers and the public, and uphold the political impartiality required by the Civil Service Code.

Further guidance on diversity staff networks will follow, and we will seek to publish additional data on historic spending to assist transparency in this area. We will also consider how such best practice can be embedded across the public sector.

We want to ensure that everyone has the equal opportunity to go as far in life as their ambition will take them. As set out in the Inclusive Britain report, lack of opportunity should not be seen through the prism of identity politics. We do not believe that any group is less intrinsically capable than any other – we know that while ability is spread across the country that has not always been the case when it comes to opportunity.

That is why we have already moved over 18,000 roles out of London, including to new offices across the United Kingdom. Diversity in the civil service should never just be measured in terms of race or sex; it should also be about background and differences of opinion – and, above all, merit.

Increasing social mobility and ending geographical inequalities are core to levelling up. It is essential that we mirror this ambition across the Civil Service to ensure that those developing and delivering our policies reflect and draw upon the widest range of experiences and skills that exist across the populations we serve.

Copies of the associated guidance will be placed in the Library of both Houses, and published on gov.uk.

### Covid-19 Inquiry: Response Costs for Quarter 4 2023-24

[HLWS459]

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe:** Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government acted to save lives and livelihoods, prevent the NHS being overwhelmed, and deliver a world-leading vaccine rollout which protected the nation. In establishing the UK Covid-19 Inquiry, the Government recognised the unprecedented and wholly exceptional circumstances of the pandemic, and the importance of examining as rigorously as possible the actions the state took in response, in order to learn lessons for the future.

As such, the Inquiry is unprecedented in its scope, complexity and profile, looking at recent events that have profoundly impacted everyone's lives.

The Government remains fully committed to transparency throughout this process. The UK Covid-19 Inquiry publishes its own running costs quarterly; the most recent update, covering costs for Quarter 4 of the 2023/2024 financial year, was published on 9 May. The Government's response to the Inquiry is a significant undertaking and accordingly, the Government has updated Parliament on the UK Government costs associated with responding to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry.

Ensuring a comprehensive and timely response to the Inquiry requires significant input from a number of key government departments, including the Cabinet Office, the Department for Health and Social Care, the UK Health Security Agency, the Home Office and HM Treasury, many of which are supported by the Government Legal Department (GLD).

Figures provided are based upon a sample of departmental costs, and are not precise figures for accounting purposes. While every effort has been made to ensure a robust methodology, complexities remain in trying to quantify the time and costs dedicated to the Inquiry alone.

It should be noted that alongside full-time resource within departments, Inquiry response teams draw on expertise from across their organisations. The Senior Civil Servant staff costs associated with appearing as witnesses, preparing witnesses and associated policy development work on the Covid Inquiry are significant. Those costs are not included in the costs below.

#### *Breakdown of Staff and Costs*

The Government's response to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry is led by Inquiry Response Units across departments.

- Number of UK Covid-19 Inquiry Response Unit staff: 265 Full Time Equivalents (Q4)
- Cost of UK Covid-19 Inquiry Response Unit staff: £5,100,000 (including contingent labour costs) (Q4)

- Financial year 2023/24, total cost of UK Covid-19 Inquiry Response Unit staff: £18,000,000 (including contingent labour costs)

	<i>Quarter 1-3</i>	<i>Quarter 4</i>	<i>Cumulative Total</i>
Cost of UK Covid-19 Inquiry Response Unit staff (including contingent labour costs)	£12,900,000	£5,100,000	£18,000,000
Number of UK Covid-19 Inquiry Response Unit staff (Full Time Equivalents)	249		265

#### *Total Inquiry Response Unit Legal Costs*

Inquiry response units across government departments are supported by the Government Legal Department, co-partnering firms of solicitors, and legal counsel. These associated legal costs (excluding internal departmental advisory legal costs) for January - March 2024 are below.

- Total legal costs: £5,300,000 (as of Q4)
- Financial year 2023/24, total legal costs: £26,200,000

	<i>Quarter 1-3</i>	<i>Quarter 4</i>	<i>Cumulative Total</i>
Total legal costs	£20,900,000	£5,300,000	£26,200,000

### Drug and Alcohol Treatment

[HLWS460]

**Lord Markham:** My Rt. Hon Friend the Minister for Public Health, Start for Life and Primary Care (Andrea Leadsom MP) has made the following Written Statement:

The government's landmark ten-year drug strategy From Harm to Hope committed to developing a comprehensive workforce strategy to rebuild the drug and alcohol treatment and recovery workforce. Improving and expanding treatment and recovery services is central to the drug strategy mission, and this cannot be achieved without a resilient, well-trained, and properly supported workforce. The strategy also highlighted the importance of naloxone, an opioid overdose reversal drug, in preventing deaths, and our commitment to reviewing legislation to make it more easily accessible for those at risk.

The drug strategy was backed by an additional initial three-year investment of £532 million between 2022 and 2025 to improve the capacity and quality of drug and alcohol treatment. This funding is supporting the expansion of the workforce by the end of 2024/25 with:

- 800 more medical, mental health and other regulated professionals.
- 950 additional drug and alcohol and criminal justice workers.
- Additional commissioning and coordinator capacity in every local authority.

We know that recruitment and retention of a high-quality drug treatment workforce is crucial to ensuring we can deliver a world class drug treatment system. In the first year of this additional funding, the sector recruited over 170 medical, mental health and other regulated professionals and 1,250 drug and alcohol workers. The 2022/23 drug strategy recruitment targets for nurses, social workers and pharmacists were achieved.

We are today publishing the strategic plan for the drug and alcohol treatment and recovery workforce. The strategic plan has been developed by the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) and NHS England through extensive sector engagement. It sets out the path to developing a sustainable, multidisciplinary drug and alcohol treatment and recovery workforce, equipped with the skills to reduce the harm of problematic drug and alcohol use and help more people initiate and sustain recovery, by 2034.

The key elements of the plan are to:

- provide clarity on the roles required to deliver effective drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services through the development and implementation of the capability framework
- develop training programmes in line with the capability framework and standardise and accredit training for drug and alcohol workers
- increase the professional mix in the sector, attracting and retaining more medics, nurses, psychologists, social workers and pharmacists
- significantly improve the quality and coverage of clinical supervision and enhance clinical governance systems
- develop the pipeline of regulated professionals entering the system.

In addition, we are also today publishing the government response to the consultation Proposals to expand access to take-home naloxone supplies. This consultation ran for 6 weeks and sought views on proposed changes to who can supply naloxone without a prescription. We received over 300 responses spanning all four nations of the UK and included responses from a variety of organisations and individuals such as charities, NHS trusts, housing services and drug and alcohol treatment workers. Of these responses, approximately 95% agreed with the proposals we set out.

The volume of responses and breadth of support for the changes we outlined from across the UK demonstrates the importance of expanding access to this life-saving medication. On this basis, we are proceeding with plans which will do this through two routes:

- Firstly, by expanding the list of services and professionals named in legislation who are able to supply take-home naloxone without a prescription.
- Secondly, by establishing a registration service enabling professionals and services not named in the legislation to, subject to appropriate training and safeguarding, supply take-home naloxone.

These changes, alongside the publication of the strategic plan, mark an important step forward. Widening access to naloxone will prevent the number of deaths from opioid overdose, and the workforce plan provides a foundation for better and more consistent training, career progression and longer-term workforce planning for the drug and alcohol treatment and recovery workforce. This is a clear demonstration of this government's ongoing commitment to making the ambitions of the drug strategy a reality and delivering world-class treatment and recovery systems of care across England.

## Farm to Fork Summit

[HLWS461]

**Lord Douglas-Miller:** My Right Honourable friend the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Steve Barclay) has made the following Statement:

Today the Prime Minister will host the second UK Farm to Fork Summit alongside government Ministers at No.10 Downing Street, recognising the crucial importance of the farming and food sector. The annual event will bring together representatives from across the supply chain to discuss some of the key challenges and growth opportunities that lie ahead, reaffirming our plans to bolster food security and support a resilient and profitable food and farming sector. The event will build on the progress made since last year's successful Summit, including work to embed fairness in supply chains, investment to unlock innovative new technologies, cutting unnecessary red tape and boosting exports of our great British food.

Despite the challenges farmers have faced in recent months, with the wettest 18 months on record in England, as well as the impacts of Covid and the war in Ukraine, food businesses have continued to put food on our plates day in day out. The Summit therefore reflects the crucial importance of the farming and food sector to our nation and provides an opportunity to explore how to turbocharge the sector as an engine for growth. To coincide with the event, the government has set out a new package of measures to boost food security and support domestic production. This includes plans to:

*Boost the production of UK fruit and vegetables.* Today we have published a draft of the first ever UK Food Security Index, which will allow us to monitor short-term trends across the UK. It complements the three-yearly UK Food Security Report which focuses on longer-term trends. Alongside the Index, we have published our Blueprint for Growing the UK Fruit and Vegetable Sector, which aims to boost production of fresh produce and reduce reliance on imports. This is backed by our new Horticulture Resilience and Growth Offer, where Defra will look to double to £80m the amount of funding given to horticulture businesses when compared to the EU legacy Fruit and Vegetable Aid Scheme, which will be replaced from 2026 onwards. An improved, comprehensive, and simplified offer will recognise the



Producer Organisation model while at the same time bringing individual businesses within scope for support, with up to £10m being made available to help orchard growers access the equipment, technology and infrastructure they need to produce more great British fruit.

*Provide further support for farmers affected by the recent wet weather.* Building on our commitment to extend the Farming Recovery Fund to support farmers who have been flooded, temporary adjustments will be made for farmers and land managers where the wet weather has led to difficulties carrying out the requirements of our Environmental Land Management Schemes. Next week we will be setting out the detail of the £75 million fund to support internal drainage boards (IDBs) to accelerate recovery from the winter 2023-24 storms and provide opportunities to modernize and upgrade assets that support resilience for farms and rural communities.

*Invest in innovation to help our food system to be even more productive and resilient thanks to British science.* We have responded to the Shropshire Review, ensuring that the sector has the labour it needs and funding to support greater automation in the sector. This includes extending the seasonal visa route for five years (2025-2029) with 43,000 visas available for horticulture and 2,000 for poultry in 2025 to address immediate need. We will agree a taper for this period with industry, supporting them to transition away from migrant workers by increasing by up to £50m the existing support for agri-innovation available from within the farming innovation budget. We are also unlocking the opportunities of gene editing with £15m investment into Genetic Improvement Networks, helping to boost access to more resilient crop varieties, that require fewer inputs and cut farmer costs. And we will launch a new Endemics Disease Scheme with over £80m of funding and an Infrastructure Grant for Laying Hens with over £20m of funding as part of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway.

*Grasp opportunities to add value at all stages of the supply chain* including supporting farmers to get a fair price for their products by announcing the next steps in the supply chain reviews for eggs, fresh produce and pigs. In all three sectors we are introducing legislation to enhance fairness and transparency. We are also appointing the new Supply Chain Adjudicator, Richard Thompson, who will focus on ensuring fairness in the supply chain is effectively enforced, and making up to £3m support available for new and mobile abattoirs through the Farming Investment Fund. This builds on the Small Abattoir Fund which opened last year to boost the sustainability and efficiency of red meat and poultry smaller abattoirs across England. We will also remove the 16-week derogation period for the labelling of free-range eggs produced by hens that are under mandatory housing orders due to avian influenza. And we are confirming the appointment of a Commissioner for the Tenant Farming sector, delivering on a commitment in our response to the Rock Review. The commissioner will provide a neutral,

confidential point of contact and advice for tenants, landlords and advisors who have concerns about poor behaviour.

*Support the next generation of farmers and workers within the food system, helping to build a high-skilled workforce that attracts the best domestic minds.* We are already collaborating with the Food and Drink Sector Council on how to make the sector more attractive to the next generation. We will further improve awareness of job opportunities and career paths through the development of regional recruitment strategies, reviewing the current education and skills offerings in the food supply chain, and creating a public facing workforce data product for the food supply chain.

Fulfilling the Prime Minister's priority to turbocharge the farming and food sector as an engine for growth, the government will continue to work hand-in-hand with the industry to champion UK food and drink, both at home and abroad, helping the food supply chain to grow, manufacture and sell more British food. A new Defra-chaired Senior Officials Food Leadership Group will bring together Whitehall departments to help drive progress.

## High Streets

[HLWS458]

**Baroness Swinburne:** My Honourable friend the Minister for Levelling Up (Jacob Young MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Today, we publish the response to the High Street Rental Auction consultation that was launched last year. We sought views on matters relating to the delivery of High Street Rental Auctions and today I am pleased to announce the findings. This is a significant step in responding to landlords, tenants, industry bodies and local authorities, clarifying the design of this important new power.

Amongst a number of topics, the consultation response outlines how Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards will operate in relation to a High Street Rental Auction, and responds to questions raised on the new permitted development right which will be introduced. This is a significant milestone prior to the publication of guidance and the launch of High Street Rental Auctions.

The high street is the beating heart of every town and city. A thriving high street is the centre of a community, a place for socialising, shopping and doing business. They are a snapshot of a place, signalling how well the regional economy is faring. However, our high streets are facing tough times, and when retail and hospitality businesses are under stress the blight of vacant buildings tends to follow. Empty properties lead to a vicious spiral of decline, where fewer shops lead to less visitors, and our once vibrant town centres dwindle.

The Government is working hard to revive the nation's high streets. We designed High Street Rental Auctions to allow all councils to level up economic growth in their communities and improve pride in place. High Street

Rental Auctions, which will apply to England only, are part of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 which will allow local authorities to require landlords to let their empty high street shops through an auction, achieving a rental lease of between 1 and 5 years for a suitable high street use. This permissive power will be further articulated in secondary legislation, with the powers coming into force this summer.

I will be writing to local authorities and sector stakeholders reminding them of the introduction of this new power and the significant role it will play in tackling vacancy.

I will place a copy of the consultation response in the Library of both Houses.

# Written Answers

Tuesday, 14 May 2024

## Agricultural Products: Morocco

Asked by **Lord Hannan of Kingsclere**

To ask His Majesty's Government what impediments remain in the way their ambition to eliminate tariffs on fresh produce imported from Morocco. [HL4401]

**Lord Douglas-Miller:** The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and Department for Business and Trade (DBT) are working closely together to negotiate a balanced and equitable outcome for the Morocco Agriculture Tariff Review, which is a commitment both sides made under the UK-Morocco Association Agreement. We continue to work closely with the Moroccan government to further liberalise any remaining tariffs and maximise trade under the agreement. At the launch of the tariff review last year, we discussed a range of priority sectors, including fresh produce like fruits and vegetables which constitute around 35% of all goods imported from Morocco to the UK. Whilst we are keen to diversify the supply of imported Moroccan goods on UK shelves and seek opportunities to expand exports of British food and drink, we will ensure that this is not done at the expense of British farmers, their produce, and the seasonal nature of UK production more generally.

## BBC: Finance

Asked by **Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury**

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with representatives of News UK, GB News and News Media Association regarding the membership of the Expert Panel for the BBC Funding Model Review. [HL4137]

Asked by **Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury**

To ask His Majesty's Government what advice they have received when determining whether members of the BBC Funding Model Review Expert Panel should sign non-disclosure agreements in relation to their participation. [HL4141]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** The BBC Funding Model Review is a government-led review, supported by an expert panel which incorporates a broad range of views from across the sector, providing advice and external challenge on the issues set out in the review's Terms of Reference, which are available on gov.uk.

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport appointed panel members based on their expertise across relevant sectors, including television, radio, news and international relations. The members were selected in consultation with industry representatives based on their experience and knowledge of wide-ranging issues at the heart of the UK media sector, such as the role of public

service broadcasters, press sustainability, and content for children and young adults. Panel membership is voluntary.

Ministers received advice from officials on establishment of the expert panel, including on confidentiality agreements.

Asked by **Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the BBC Funding Model Review Expert Panel intends to consider the funding options contained in the 1st Report of the Communications and Digital Committee Session 2022–23 Licence to change: BBC Future Funding. [HL4138]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** HM Government believes that there are challenges regarding the sustainability of the BBC's current funding model, and is therefore conducting a review of it. The panel informing that review will provide independent expertise and advice to the Government.

The review is assessing a range of options for funding the BBC, including a number of the options contained in the Communications and Digital Committee's report, 'Licence to change: BBC Future Funding'. Given pressure on household incomes, the Secretary of State has explicitly ruled out the review looking at creating any new taxes.

Asked by **Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury**

To ask His Majesty's Government who will be consulted as part of the BBC Funding Model Review, and what criteria will be used to decide who is consulted. [HL4139]

Asked by **Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury**

To ask His Majesty's Government what form contributions to the BBC Funding Model Review will take, and whether they intend to publish all written and oral evidence submitted. [HL4140]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** As part of the BBC Funding Model Review, HM Government is engaging with a broad range of people and organisations.

Those being engaged are submitting evidence on the basis that the evidence they provide is confidential in nature, especially given potential commercial sensitivities. There is no intention for these submissions to be made public, either in full or in part.

The findings of the review will support the Government's views on the future funding of the BBC. Any final decision on reforming the BBC's funding model would be taken during the review of the BBC's Royal Charter.

Asked by **Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury**

To ask His Majesty's Government what meetings the Chancellor of the Exchequer had with the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport concerning the BBC Funding Model Review since the start of the current



Charter year, and whether they intend to publish any minutes from such meetings. [HL4142]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** The Secretary of State engages with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and other ministerial colleagues on the BBC as appropriate, including in relation to the Funding Model Review.

Minutes of meetings between Ministers are not routinely published.

### Benjamin Netanyahu

*Asked by The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask His Majesty's Government when the Prime Minister last spoke to the Prime Minister of Israel. [HL4159]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Prime Minister last spoke to the Israeli Prime Minister on 30 April 2024.

They discussed the current hostage negotiations, the importance of getting much more aid into Gaza, including via vital land routes, and Israel's commitment to achieving this. The Prime Minister reiterated the UK's support for Israel's security and made clear that our focus is on de-escalation, which is essential and in everyone's interest.

### Block Grant: Northern Ireland

*Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government by how much, and by what percentage, (1) resource funding, and (2) capital funding for the Northern Ireland Block Grant has increased from 2023–2024 to 2024–2025. [HL4192]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** To accurately compare the Northern Ireland Executive's (NIE's) funding between years, it is important to compare the same point in the financial year.

The most comparable figures are the 2021 Spending Review settlement for the NIE, which can be found in Table 4.19 here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/61c495e-be90e07196d2b8383/Budget\\_AB2021\\_Print.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/61c495e-be90e07196d2b8383/Budget_AB2021_Print.pdf)

The (NIE) receives in-year funding through the operation of the Barnett Formula and non-Barnett funding provided at fiscal events and Main and Supplementary Estimates.

*Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether the resource funding provided in the Northern Ireland Block Grant for 2024–2025 falls below a needs-based assessment of funding. [HL4193]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** As committed to in the 2024 Northern Ireland Executive restoration financial package, the UK Government will also agree a Fiscal Framework with the Northern Ireland Executive which

will outline Northern Ireland's long-term funding arrangements.

### Childcare

*Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government what actions they are taking to ensure their targets for additional childcare provision are met for September 2024 and September 2025, given the National Audit Office report into early years entitlements published on 24 April. [HL4190]

**Baroness Barran:** This government exceeded expectations for the first stage of the rollout to working parents of two-year-olds in April, with over 210,000 children accessing funded places to date, and all local authorities confirming that they are able to meet parental demand.

The department is confident that parental demand will be met for the next steps of the rollout, as it was in April.

The department has a number of interventions in place to support local authorities to deliver for September 2024 and September 2025, including £12 million delivery support funding and support through the department's delivery support contractor, Childcare Works.

The department is also taking action to support the childcare market to expand to meet estimated demand from September 2024 and September 2025. This includes significantly increasing rates paid to providers for government funded hours and confirming an additional £500 million to provide certainty that rates will increase in line with cost pressures in the 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years. The department has also launched a nationwide recruitment campaign, introduced a package of flexibilities to help manage staffing pressures, and allocated £100 million of capital investment to increase physical space in nurseries and other childcare settings.

### Childcare and Pre-school Education

*Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government what consultations have taken place with the childcare and early years sectors regarding ways to expand childcare provision. [HL4191]

**Baroness Barran:** The department is delivering the largest expansion of childcare in England's history. Already, over 210,000 two-year-olds are confirmed to have places for 15 hours a week of free childcare, as part of the largest ever expansion of childcare in England, and the rates for the new entitlements have been independently confirmed by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) to be well above market rates. The department will continue to support the sector's expansion with £400 million of additional funding provided to uplift hourly rates next year and a guarantee that rates will increase in line with cost pressures for two years after that.

As part of the expansion, the department has held a number of consultations with the sector, including on proposals to support childminders and childminder agencies (closes 10 May) and on an experience-based route for early years practitioners (closes 20 May). The department is also consulting on proposed changes to safeguarding requirements in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework (closes 17 June). The department has also consulted on the EYFS to seek views on a range of proposals to remove burdens and to offer greater flexibility for providers within the EYFS while maintaining quality and safety standards, which included changes to staff:child ratios. The department is considering all responses as part of ongoing policy development.

The number of childcare places has increased by 40,000 in 2023 compared with 2018. Local authorities are responsible for ensuring that the provision of childcare is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area. The department has regular contact with each local authority in England about their sufficiency of childcare, including supporting them through the department's childcare delivery support contract where appropriate. The department is in regular contact with all local authorities and none of them are reporting that they have insufficient places to meet local demand.

On top of funding reforms, the department is providing significant support for local authorities to deliver the early years expansion from April, such as:

- Appointing a delivery support contractor, Childcare Works, to provide local authorities with support, advice, guidance and best practice sharing to help them deliver the expansion and deliver enough childcare places for residents.
- Providing £12 million of delivery support funding to local authorities in the 2023/24 financial year to help them meet the costs associated with the rollout.

The department will continue to work closely with the sector on the implementation of these reforms at every stage. In order to make sure there are enough places across the country for everyone that needs them, the department has already begun investing hundreds of millions of pounds to increase hourly funding rates and is allocating £100 million in capital funding for more early years and wraparound places and spaces.

### Children in Care

*Asked by Lord Laming*

To ask His Majesty's Government what action they are taking to reduce the number of children in care experiencing multiple placements. [HL4152]

*Asked by Lord Laming*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to reduce the number of times children in care must change school. [HL4153]

**Baroness Barran:** The needs of the child are paramount when deciding the right care placement. The Children's Act 1989 places a duty on local authorities to make sure that there is sufficient provision in their area to meet the needs of children in their care and ensure placements safeguard and promote the child's welfare. Further, the guidance is clear that the child's allocated social worker, supported by local authority management and resources, should do everything possible to minimise disruption to the child's education and, where a child is in key stage 4, a move should only be made in exceptional circumstances. Responsibility for looked-after children sits with the local authority. The guidance and regulations of the Children Act 1989 can be found attached.

Every local authority must appoint a Virtual School Head (VSH), who has a statutory duty to promote the educational attainment of all children in their care. All maintained schools and academies must appoint a designated teacher to act as a source of advice and expertise about the needs of the looked-after children on the school's roll. Looked-after children also have top priority in school admissions and attract Pupil Premium Plus funding of £2,570 per child, up to age 16. This is managed by the VSH, who works with the child's education setting to deliver objectives in the child's personal education plan.

Whilst the number of placements experienced by looked after children in a one year period has remained broadly stable over the past 5 years, the government recognises there are issues with finding stable placements. That is why the government has announced over £400 million in capital funding to help local authorities create more beds in their local areas which will aim to further reduce the number of children experiencing multiple placements.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL4152 HL4153 Attachment [HL4152 HL4153 attachment - The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-04-29/HL4152>

### Coal

*Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth*

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made in phasing out coal power. [HL4206]

**Lord Callanan:** In line with our net zero target, the Government is committed to phasing out unabated coal-fired power generation by 1st October 2024, earlier than the original 2025 target. The remaining coal fired power station in Great Britain is scheduled to close before this date.

This will mean that we will have reduced coal's share of our electricity supply from around a third, to zero in the space of only ten years.

## Companies: Registration

*Asked by Lord Mann*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether criminals in China are setting up companies by fraudulently registering addresses in the UK through Companies House in order to bypass Chinese restrictions on cryptocurrency trading. [HL4165]

**Lord Johnson of Lainston:** Companies House is working increasingly closely with law enforcement to understand filing patterns. While I cannot comment on the detail of that, I am confident it will, over time, significantly improve the ability to identify and combat attempts systematically to abuse the company register.

Where Chinese nationals, or others, have registered companies using addresses which they have no authority to use, the Registrar has a suite of powers - recently strengthened by the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 - which allow the misappropriated address to be replaced with a default address. Where companies persistently fail to provide an appropriate address, the Registrar has the power to strike them off the register altogether.

## Confederation of British Industry

*Asked by Lord Naseby*

To ask His Majesty's Government, following changes in the leadership of the Confederation of British Industry, whether they plan to renew their relationship to help business and Government work in partnership. [HL4168]

**Lord Johnson of Lainston:** The Government is focused on driving long-term, sustainable economic growth and an ambition to make the UK the best place in the world to start and grow a business. Following the changes that CBI have put in place over the past year, and the vote of confidence that their members gave them at their EGM last summer, Government is rebuilding a working relationship with the business organisation.

## Debts: Developing Countries

*Asked by Baroness Goudie*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of efforts in New York State to ensure private creditor debtor terms are equal to those of other creditors to lower and middle-income countries; and what plans they have, if any, to enact similar legislation in the UK. [HL4215]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The UK, alongside the G20 and Paris Club, expects creditors, including private creditors, to participate in debt restructurings on comparable terms.

At this stage, the Government is not pursuing a legislative approach that would force private or other lenders to participate in debt restructurings. The Government is focused on delivering a market-based (contractual) approach to private sector participation, including taking the lead in developing Majority Voting Provisions for private syndicated loans. These promote more efficient restructurings and reduce the ability for creditors to hold out.

## Defence: Expenditure

*Asked by The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Prime Minister's announcement on 23 April of an increase in defence spending to a new baseline of 2.5 per cent GDP by 2030 differs from the pledge to increase defence spending to 2.5 per cent by 2030 given by the former Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, at the NATO summit in Madrid in June 2022; and whether a spending review will be required. [HL4161]

**The Earl of Minto:** The Prime Minister's announcement is for a fully funded commitment to reach 2.5% of GDP in financial year (FY)2030-31. It is supported by a commitment not to increase borrowing or debt.

The current spending review period concludes at the end of FY2024-25, and a future Spending Review will formalise spending plans for the following period.

## Democratic Republic of Congo: Rwanda

*Asked by The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask His Majesty's Government, following recent reports by the United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Human Rights Watch, what discussions they have had with the government of Rwanda concerning (1) whether that government are providing logistical support to the M23 rebels to operate inside the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and (2) whether Rwandan troops are reinforcing or fighting alongside the M23. [HL4162]

**Lord Benyon:** We continue to raise the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) with the governments of DRC and Rwanda to urge for an end to the violence, human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law by armed groups including M23. On 9 April, the Prime Minister met with President Kagame and underlined the importance of a political process to resolve the situation. The Minister of State (Development and Africa) also raised this issue with President Kagame during his visit to Rwanda on 6 April. We continue to emphasise to all parties that recent mediation efforts of the Angola-led Luanda peace process should be followed with further tangible action.

## Education: Standards

*Asked by Lord Hampton*

To ask His Majesty's Government, given the findings by Action for Children in its report, *Above and Beyond: How teachers fill gaps in the system to keep children learning*, that (1) nine children in an average class of 25 face challenges outside of school which hinder their ability to learn, and (2) teachers are struggling to support them and their families, what action they are taking to encourage schools to employ family liaison officers to support struggling families. [HL4145]

**Baroness Barran:** The government recognises the pivotal role teachers and education settings play in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable children and families.

The department's 2023 updated statutory guidance 'Working together to safeguard children' confirms that staff working in education settings play an important role in building relationships, identifying concerns and providing direct support to children.

At the last Spending Review, the department announced over £1 billion for programmes to improve early help services from birth to adulthood, including delivering on Family Hubs and helping families facing multiple disadvantages through the Supporting Families Programme and the holiday activities and food programme. Local authorities working with their partners can decide to use this funding to employ family liaison officers or other professionals to support families within education settings.

The department's 'Stable Homes, Built on Love: strategy and consultation', announced plans to build on the strengths of these vital early help services through the implementation of family help. In the Families First for Children Pathfinder, the department is testing how it can increase the role of education in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and how local areas can provide targeted support to help children and families overcome challenges at the earliest opportunity. The Pathfinder is running in ten local authority areas across two 'waves': Dorset, Lincolnshire and Wolverhampton (wave one announced July 2023) and Lewisham, Luton, Redbridge, Walsall, Warrington, Warwickshire and Wirral (wave two announced April 2024).

The department is also making the 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance statutory from September 2024. This sets out how schools, local authorities and other services need to work together to support pupils at risk of poor attendance and ensure support provided to these families is consistent across the country.

The department's package of wide-ranging reforms designed to support schools to improve attendance means that there were 440,000 fewer children persistently absent or not attending in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22.

## Film and Television: Economic Situation

*Asked by Baroness Benjamin*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of figures showing that 68 per cent of freelancers in the television and film industry are no longer able to find employment; and of the impact on the UK creative industries. [HL4130]

*Asked by Baroness Benjamin*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to prevent a decline in the UK television and film industry as a result of high numbers of workers leaving the industry because they are unable to make a living. [HL4131]

*Asked by Baroness Benjamin*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to appoint a commissioner for freelancers. [HL4132]

*Asked by Baroness Benjamin*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of (1) reduced budgets, (2) loss of advertising revenue, and (3) a changing production landscape, on the UK television and film sector; and what steps they are taking to incentivise people to work in the sector. [HL4133]

*Asked by Baroness Benjamin*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their long-term strategy to preserve the UK television and film industry and provide employment security for its workers; and what consideration they have given to a freelancer pension scheme or fund, similar to the French model. [HL4134]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** His Majesty's Government has a clear plan to grow the creative industries by a further £50 billion and another 1 million jobs by 2030. This was set out in June 2023 in the Creative Industries Sector Vision, which was accompanied by £77 million of new funding to support the sector's growth. This is in addition to the range of tax reliefs for the creative industries which have been introduced or expanded since 2010, including for film and television.

HM Government is already taking steps to ensure a strong, skilled and resilient workforce for the film and television sector – as well as the creative industries more broadly – across the UK. The Creative Industries Sector Vision set out that by 2030 we want to deliver on our creative careers promise to build a pipeline of talent into the sector, and to support the creation of a million extra jobs. The Sector Vision includes a long-term strategy to improve the quality of jobs and working practices in the sector, including supporting the high proportion of self-employed workers in the sector through the promotion of fair treatment, support networks, and resources (for



example through Creative UK's 'Redesigning Freelancing' initiative).

HM Government also welcomes the steps that our public service broadcasters have taken to support self-employed workers. This includes the support announced by Channel 4 and the BBC in August, in partnership with the National Film and Television School.

DCMS and the industry have also committed to produce an action plan in response to the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre's Good Work Review; these actions include the recent launch of the British Film Institute's £1.5 million Good Work Programme for screen. HM Government will continue to work with the BFI and the Screen Sector Skills Task Force to support a strong skills pipeline into the sector.

On pensions, the new State Pension supports self-employed freelancers as comprehensively as employed people. The new State Pension, introduced in 2016, means that self-employed people can receive a State Pension which is around £2,700 a year higher than it would have been in the previous system. The self-employed are a highly diverse group with varying incomes, assets, and employment experiences. The Department for Work & Pensions has undertaken an initial research and trial programme to test different approaches aimed at increasing private pension-saving. It is currently working with research partners, including looking at international evidence, to explore the feasibility of building and testing retirement savings solutions in digital platforms used by self-employed people to manage their money.

## GREAT

*Asked by Lord Kempson*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to expand their GREAT campaign, and whether they have evaluated options for additional or alternative international brand marketing campaigns for the United Kingdom. [HL4150]

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe:** The GREAT brand has proved to be highly effective. On average for every £1 spent GREAT returns £15 to the UK economy. In the last year we estimate that GREAT has helped to generate over £900 million of foreign direct investment, £548 million of additional expenditure from international students, £210 million of additional expenditure from international tourism and over £90 million of export wins for UK companies.

The GREAT brand was successfully refreshed in Summer 2021 to better reflect the diversity of the UK and update our offer to the world. It is designed to promote the UK as dynamic, outward-looking, confident and collaborative and is used in 164 countries by 26 government departments and ALBs.

The GREAT Ministerial Programme Board meets quarterly to agree the strategic direction of the campaign, including new markets and sectors. As well as continuing

to drive economic growth for the UK through existing campaigns, in 2024/25 the GREAT campaign looks forward to delivering new initiatives such as a GREAT FUTURES event in Saudi Arabia and a new marketing campaign in the US.

## Health Services: Legal Representation

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask His Majesty's Government what was the annual spend by the health service on legal representation at inquests in the previous five years for which information is available. [HL3750]

**Lord Markham:** NHS Resolution manages clinical negligence and other claims against the National Health Service in England. The following table shows the amounts paid in accordance with the rules of the Clinical Negligence Scheme for Trusts (CNST), to support trusts at inquests and for associated costs to investigate entitlement to compensation, in the last five years:

<i>Payment Raised Year</i>	<i>Amount</i>
2018/19	£2,968,153
2019/20	£2,223,095
2020/21	£1,614,820
2021/22	£1,545,135
2022/23	£1,623,211
Total	£9,974,414

Source: NHS Resolution

The CNST handles all clinical negligence claims against member NHS bodies where the incident in question took place on or after 1 April 1995, or when the body joined the scheme if that is later. NHS Resolution is not involved in any arrangements that an individual trust might make outside of the scheme.

Information on the total spend by NHS trusts regarding coroner's inquests is not collated or held centrally.

## Household Cavalry: Horses

*Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the appropriateness of maintaining Household Cavalry horses stabled and deployed in central London in the light of the events of 24 April, and public safety and animal welfare concerns arising from the risks of their environment. [HL4135]

**The Earl of Minto:** The British Army takes the health and wellbeing of its military working horses (MWH) extremely seriously. All of our horses are well looked after, exercised daily and have 24/7 direct access to world-class veterinary care.

Before riding in public, Service personnel undertake training to prove their competence and are fully compliant



with the Highway Code when exercising horses on public highways. A progressive programme of activity, including exposure to London traffic, military bands and environmental noise, ensures our horses are properly and safely prepared for their ceremonial role.

The Army has three mounted units in London: the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment, the Band of the Household Cavalry and King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery. All undertake State Ceremonial and Public Duties in Central London and Windsor throughout the year.

Steps have already been taken to enhance the environment for our MWHs by creating more loose boxes, which provide greater space and comfort to the horses while stabled. Two to three months per year, the horses are also provided with an alternative environment by being sent out to pasture and the herd often visit Norfolk for two weeks, offering time for daily exercise in the countryside and along local beaches.

### Housing: Sales

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the 12 per cent increase in house sales during April; and what steps they are taking to support first-time buyers. [HL4243]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The most comprehensive measure of UK property transactions is published by HMRC. According to this measure, residential property transactions rose by 1% in March 2024 compared to February, the third consecutive monthly increase.

The Government continues to monitor developments in the housing market closely and consider the implications.

### India: Religious Freedom

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of instances of persecution on the grounds of religion or belief in some Indian states; when they last raised this with the government of India, including the High Commission of India in London; and what response they have received from the government of India. [HL4125]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK Government is committed to defending Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) for all and promoting respect and tolerance between different religious and non-religious communities, regardless of faith.

I [Lord (Tariq) Ahmad] discussed human rights with the Government of India, leaders of faith groups and others during my visit to India in May 2023. FoRB was also among the issues discussed during my visit to India in February. Where we have issues, we raise them directly

with the Government of India, including at Ministerial level.

The British High Commission in New Delhi and our network of Deputy High Commissions across India, consistently monitor human rights in the country, regularly engage with civil society and religious representatives, and have run projects supporting human rights.

### National Insurance Contributions

*Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Vere of Norbiton on 25 April (HL3770), how they intend to assess entitlement for contributory working age benefits and pensions, should they abolish national insurance contributions in line with their stated ambition. [HL4295]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** Cutting NICs rates does not affect anyone's entitlement to the State Pension or contributory benefits.

*Asked by The Earl of Clancarty*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Vere of Norbiton on 12 February (HL Deb col 10) that HMRC expects processing times for A1 forms to return to normal by April, what assessment they have made of progress so far, and what steps they are taking to improve processing times. [HL4324]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** HMRC has taken steps to address the backlog of A1 applications, have achieved their recovery strategy ahead of time and they are now achieving service levels. Since September 2023 the processing times for online applications have decreased to 6 days from 15 weeks previously, and for post applications, it is now also 6 days, down from 33 weeks. The Standard Level of Service Agreement targets for both are 15 days and 40 days respectively. As of 3rd May, HMRC has reduced the number of cases on hand to approximately 2500.

### National Insurance Contributions: Overseas Workers

*Asked by The Earl of Clancarty*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Vere of Norbiton on 12 February (HL Deb col 10) that HMRC expected processing times for A1 forms to return to normal by April, what are the "normal" target processing times. [HL4386]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** HMRC processing timescales for A1 forms are to clear 75% of online applications within 15 working days, for postal applications it is to clear 75% within 40 working days.

## Northern Ireland: Terrorism

Asked by *Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have made any representations to the government of the Republic of Ireland concerning the coroner's findings on the 1976 shooting in Kingsmill. [HL4526]

**Lord Caine:** The Kingsmill massacre is an appalling example of the pain and suffering inflicted by the Provisional IRA during the Troubles. The families have fought for many decades to get information and accountability from those responsible. The Government hopes that the findings delivered by the coroner have brought some form of comfort to the families affected.

The coroner, in his findings, expressed gratitude for the assistance the inquest received from the Irish authorities. It is the Government's view, however, that such cooperation should not be limited to high-profile cases. It is disappointing that the Irish Government has, to date, declined to commit to cooperating with the new Independent Commission for Reconciliation & Information Recovery to help facilitate the provision of information to families who request it. The Government continues to encourage the Irish Government to cooperate with the ICRIR, just as it has done in the Kingsmill inquest and Operation Denton.

I made these points directly to the Irish Government at the most recent meeting of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on 29 April.

## Offshore Industry and Wind Power: Decommissioning

Asked by *Lord Berkeley*

To ask His Majesty's Government who is responsible for undertaking and funding the decommissioning and removal of (1) offshore oil and gas platforms and connections, and (2) offshore wind turbines and connections. [HL4203]

**Lord Callanan:** Following the 'polluter pays' principle, industry is responsible for undertaking and funding the decommissioning and removal of (1) offshore oil and gas platforms and connections and (2) offshore wind turbines and connections.

The Petroleum Act 1998 and Energy Act 2004 provide a statutory regime to ensure industry fulfil these responsibilities.

## Omagh Bombing Inquiry

Asked by *Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have made any representations to the government of the Republic of Ireland to encourage them to hold a public inquiry into the Omagh Bombing. [HL4525]

**Lord Caine:** We all remember vividly where we were when we heard the news of that awful atrocity in August

1998, and I pay tribute to Michael Gallagher and the other Omagh families who have pursued their case with great dignity and tenacity.

The Government is doing everything in its power to ensure that the Omagh Bombing Inquiry, under the expert guidance of Lord Turnbull, provides answers. Along with the significant powers provided to it under the Inquiries Act 2005, the Inquiry will need the cooperation of Irish agencies to be as effective as possible.

I raised this directly with the Irish Foreign Minister and Tánaiste at the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on Monday 29 April, and I am pleased that he committed to full Irish Government co-operation with the Omagh bombing inquiry. The Government's focus is on ensuring that the inquiry has every chance of success, and the Irish Government's role in that is crucial.

At the last two British-Irish Intergovernmental Conferences, the Secretary of State and I pressed the Irish Government to cooperate fully with both the Omagh inquiry and the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery to provide information for victims and families who desire it. The Secretary of State also wrote to the Tánaiste in January, challenging the Irish Government's own approach to addressing legacy issues, including the number of Troubles-related prosecutions brought in Ireland since April 1998.

## Overseas Students

Asked by *Lord Wigley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have received from UK universities proposing the relaxation of restrictions for overseas students, such as rules relating to their employment in the UK after graduation. [HL4317]

**Baroness Barran:** The government seeks to ensure that the UK has a fair and robust migration policy whilst maintaining the UK's place as a top destination for the best and brightest students from around the world. The UK has four universities in the top 10, and 17 in the top 100. The UK has a highly sought after higher education (HE) experience, which is respected by students across the globe.

The government recognises the significant economic and cultural contribution that international students make to the UK's HE sector and their positive impact on society as a whole.

Ministers and departmental officials regularly engage with the HE sector on a range of issues, including on international students.

## Pakistan: Development Aid

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the reply by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 25 April (HL Deb col 640GC–641GC), whether a percentage of the

increased official development assistance for Pakistan will be allocated to education for destitute girls from the country's minorities. [HL4126]

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the reply by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 25 April (HL Deb col 640GC–641GC), whether a percentage of development aid to Pakistan will be allocated to professional training projects for young people from Pakistan's minorities. [HL4127]

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the reply by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 25 April (HL Deb col 641GC), whether religious minorities in Pakistan will be included in the list of marginalized communities prioritised for UK aid. [HL4128]

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the reply by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 25 April (HL Deb col 624GC–643GC), whether a percentage of aid to Pakistan will be allocated to improving the living conditions of people from religious minorities, including the provision of fresh running water and electricity, and the creation of primary schools. [HL4129]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK's targeted aid programmes are working to alleviate the issues facing minorities in Pakistan. Our £46.7 million Aawaz II programme is tackling social intolerance and exclusion by supporting systemic reforms and promoting interfaith dialogue. Our £130 million Girls and Out of School Action for Learning programme is improving education outcomes for marginalised children, including those from religious minorities; by 2027, the programme will support 250,000 children from marginalised sections of society. Our £4.2 million Hate Speech and Disinformation Programme is helping to protect vulnerable groups, with a focus on making digital spaces safer for women and religious minorities. These programmes tackle broad issues which impact across a variety of vulnerable demographics. We assess that this is the most effective way of helping vulnerable populations.

### **Prime Minister: Wales**

*Asked by Baroness Smith of Llanfaes*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many times the Prime Minister has met the new First Minister of Wales. [HL4357]

**Lord Harlech:** My Rt Hon Friend the Prime Minister spoke to the First Minister of Wales on 20 March 2024 to congratulate him on his appointment.

More broadly, I refer the Noble Lady to the answer Baroness Swinburne gave to question HL1907 on 1 February 2024.

I also refer the Noble Lady to the answer given to question 21826 by my Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Wales on 17 April 2024.

Details of the Prime Minister's future official meetings and visits will be announced in the usual way.

### **Public Expenditure: Northern Ireland**

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Northern Ireland Executive, since the restoration of devolved institutions in Northern Ireland on 3 February, about financial allocations from the Treasury. [HL4234]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The UK Government has regular discussions with its devolved administration counterparts, including the Northern Ireland Executive.

Since the restoration of the Northern Ireland Executive, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has met with the Northern Ireland Finance Minister on three occasions.

UK Government officials continue to engage regularly with the Northern Ireland Executive on the implementation of all aspects of the UK Government's £3.3 billion restoration financial package which will stabilise and transform Northern Ireland's public finances.

### **Public History of British Policy During the Northern Ireland Conflict Expert Advisory Panel**

*Asked by Baroness Hoey*

To ask His Majesty's Government what funding has been allocated to the work of the Expert Advisory Panel for public history of British policy during the Northern Ireland conflict; and whether the members of the Expert Advisory Panel are being paid. [HL4459]

**Lord Caine:** The Public History expert advisory panel is independent of Government. Its members are not paid to perform their roles. The panel will be reimbursed for associated costs, for example workshops and seminars in line with recommendations made in the Pilling Report 2009 and the panel's terms of reference.

### **Qualifications**

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that applied general qualifications are still available to students in future. [HL4284]

**Baroness Barran:** The aim of the department's Post-16 Qualifications reform at level 3 and below is to streamline the qualifications landscape, simplify choices for students, and only fund qualifications that are high-quality and lead to good progression outcomes. By ensuring that approved qualifications meet new, more rigorous criteria, young people can be confident that they will be able to progress to university and higher technical education, and directly

into apprenticeships and skilled employment. It will place world class A levels and T Levels at the heart of level 3 study programmes for 16 to 19-year-olds, and link other technical qualifications directly with occupational standards which have been designed by employers. Students studying these qualifications can be confident that they are gaining the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed for future jobs.

In the new post-16 qualification landscape, students will continue to have a range of options available to them at level 3, in addition to A levels and T Levels, there will be new technical occupational qualifications (TOQs) and Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs).

Where occupational standards are not covered by a T Level, the department is allowing TOQs to be developed, where students can continue to study areas currently covered by applied general qualifications (AGQs), such as travel consultant, highways electrician, and personal trainer, to list a few. The key distinction here is that they will be based on employer led occupational standards, unlike current AGQs.

On the academic side, current AGQs will be replaced by AAQs. There will be new small AAQs in a range of strategically important subjects such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and those supporting entry into NHS careers. These qualifications are an important part of how the department will support diverse student needs and deliver skills required by the economy. Small AAQs can be studied alongside A levels as part of mixed academic programme. The department will also fund large AAQs in areas that A levels and T Levels cover less well such as performing arts and sport. AAQs must demonstrate a clear link to related higher education (HE) courses and will be assessed by the department against the new funding approval criteria.

The department knows that students who take A levels have better outcomes overall in terms of progressing into, and staying in, HE than those who study AGQs. This is supported by the evidence, which shows that students progressing to HE with alternatives to A levels, such as AGQs, generally experience worse outcomes than their peers taking A levels, even after controlling for differences in background characteristics. Current AGQs also provide very mixed outcomes for students.

The qualification reforms also include reforming level 2 qualifications to ensure they are high-quality, have clear purposes, and lead to better outcomes, either supporting progression to reformed level 3 study, for example via the T Level Foundation Year, or directly into skilled employment in occupations at level 2 or via apprenticeships. This means that studying a reformed level 2 qualification will lead to better long-term outcomes than studying a poor-quality level 3 qualification.

## Republic of Ireland: Terrorism

*Asked by Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have made any representations to the government of the Republic of Ireland about (1) recognising any historic role it may have had in the forming, funding and training of the Provisional Irish Republican Army, and (2) how it may have dealt with terrorist activity during the Troubles. [[HL4524](#)]

**Lord Caine:** It is clear that the Irish Government has legitimate questions to answer regarding its record of dealing with legacy matters in its own jurisdiction. The coroner in the Kingsmill Inquest found, "the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland was "exploited by terrorists" and allowed for "... planning, training, organisation, weapons storage and retreat at a safe physical and legal distance from the authorities that would be faced with investigating terrorist acts in Northern Ireland".

It is clear that, for many families, effective information recovery will also require the cooperation of the Irish Government and its agencies. The Government continues to encourage the Irish Government to cooperate with the new Independent Commission for Reconciliation & Information Recovery to help facilitate the provision of information to families who request it, including most recently at the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on 29 April 2024.

## Rivers: Environment Protection

*Asked by The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many river habitats in England have good ecological status; how many are polluted by chemical waste, including raw sewage and agricultural waste; and what steps they are taking to ensure the existing regulatory framework for managing the water environment in the UK is more effectively applied. [[HL3522](#)]

**Lord Douglas-Miller:** The last Water Framework Directive (WFD) full water body classification results in 2019 showed 16% of all surface water bodies (14% for river water bodies), in England achieved good ecological status (GES) (or good ecological potential for artificial and heavily modified water bodies), and 64% of surface water bodies achieved moderate ecological status (or potential).

The next full results will be published by the Environment Agency (EA) in 2025. The headline reporting for WFD creates a simplified picture and is just one way of understanding the water environment. For example, the last classification results for England showed the 79% of elements the EA test for GES were classed at Good.



Most water bodies failing to reach GES are subject to multiple pressures. The top three pressures are physical modification of water bodies, diffuse agricultural pollution and waste water management. More detailed information on water body reasons for not achieving good are publicly available on the EA's Catchment Data Explorer.

The EA has developed a Prioritisation and Early Warning System (PEWS) for chemicals of emerging concern to assess their presence and quantities in our rivers. This allows the Agency to prioritise suitable management. Additionally, EA has developed a list of priority chemicals of concern which are regularly monitored alongside appropriate measures to protect aquatic wildlife and human health.

The government is committed to achieving the goals of the Environment Improvement Plan to bring 75% of our water to as close to its natural state as soon as practicable. Our Plan for Water, published last year will go further and faster towards that goal and deliver a safe, reliable, resilient supply of clean and plentiful water underpinned by increased investment in infrastructure, increased regulation and stronger enforcement.

### Royal Albert Hall

Asked by *Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Charity Commission about the governance of the Royal Albert Hall. [HL4146]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** As the governmental sponsor of the Charity Commission, Ministers and officials from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport regularly meet the Charity Commission to discuss a range of matters, including the Royal Albert Hall.

### Royal Fleet Auxiliary

Asked by *Lord West of Spithead*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they plan to appoint a new Commodore of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. [HL4195]

**The Earl of Minto:** An external recruitment campaign for the Senior Civil Servant Pay Band 1 position of Deputy Director Royal Fleet Auxiliary had an application closing date of 24 March 2024. The selection process is ongoing, and the result will be announced in due course on conclusion of that process.

Asked by *Lord West of Spithead*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of recent trends in recruitment and retention of civilian seafarers in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. [HL4196]

**The Earl of Minto:** The Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) continues to meet all its Operational Commitments around the globe and continues to steadfastly support Royal Navy (RN) vessels on Operations worldwide.

Recruitment and retention of staff are a priority for the RFA and there are a number of initiatives under way to support this.

For recruitment, the RFA is fostering relationships with universities and colleges to raise awareness of the opportunities available, planning to launch a graduate engineer scheme, sponsoring academic top up schemes to attract newly qualified engineers, and introducing a mechanism for seamless transfer to the RFA for RN service leavers. In addition to this work, the RFA plans to release a focused RFA recruitment marketing campaign.

For retention, the RFA is undertaking a number of initiatives which include: enhancing human resources management with more efficient, digitised processes for claims and reporting; maximising development opportunities; enabling participation in team building and physical activities; introducing a dedicated wellbeing team and creating new and exciting shore posts.

Asked by *Lord West of Spithead*

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have had with recognised trade unions concerning the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. [HL4197]

**The Earl of Minto:** The Ministry of Defence has regular scheduled discussions and meetings with both Nautilus International and the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers in accordance with an established Partnership Agreement.

The most recent discussions have taken place during April 2024.

Asked by *Lord West of Spithead*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many officers and other ranks there are in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. [HL4198]

**The Earl of Minto:** As of 1 January 2024, there are 623 Officers and 1046 Other Ranks within the RFA.

### Sudan: Arms Trade

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Leeds*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to prevent arms sales from the United Arab Emirates and other third parties to those involved in the conflict in Sudan. [HL4156]

**Lord Benyon:** There is a UN Arms Embargo and Sanctions Regime on Darfur, which the UN renewed in March 2023. There is also a longstanding bilateral UK arms embargo in place for the whole of Sudan. In our engagement with all our international partners, the UK continues to emphasise the importance of refraining from actions that prolong the conflict.



## Sudan: Community Relations

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Leeds*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support members of the Sudanese diaspora in the UK. [HL4155]

**Lord Benyon:** The FCDO maintains a relationship with, and supports, the Sudanese diaspora in the UK, including through engagement with them at events and at the monthly meeting between the FCDO and the APPG for Sudan and South Sudan.

## Tibet: Human Rights

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will take action following reported cases of self-immolation and suicide among Tibetan Monks protesting against the government of China; and in particular whether they have made representations to that government, including in relation to the death of monk Tenzin Dorjee. [HL4124]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK Government consistently raises human rights issues with the Chinese authorities, including in relation to Tibet. The Minister of State for the Indo-Pacific raised human rights during her visit to China in April, and the Foreign Secretary did so in a meeting in February with China's Foreign Minister. We also regularly raise concerns about China's actions in Tibet in multilateral fora, for example, in January at China's Universal Periodic Review, and in March as part of our Item 4 statement at the United Nations Human Rights Council.

## T-levels

Asked by *Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask His Majesty's Government what research they have undertaken into (1) reasons for the dropout rate for T Levels, (2) why only 8 per cent of students taking foundation level T Levels progress to full T levels, and (3) whether T Levels or BTECs provide a more appropriate preparation for employment in different skill areas. [HL4285]

**Baroness Barran:** As relatively new qualifications, retention rates on T Levels may be expected to fluctuate. The department is keen to understand the reasons behind students dropping out of their T Level programme and have undertaken a range of research. This has included discussing the issue in routine conversations with further education (FE) providers and holding workshops with a variety of providers to explore further the reasons for students dropping out of specific T Levels. The department has also reviewed data from the Individualised Learner Record and school census to identify patterns in students dropping out of T Levels, and examined responses to the Technical Education Learner Survey (2021 and 2022) to understand student

motivations for dropping out. Links to these surveys can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-education-learner-survey>, and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-education-learner-survey-2022>. The department has also spoken to Awarding Organisations to discuss student retention on T Levels.

The T Level Foundation Year is the first step on a 3-year path to achieving a T Level, for those who need it. The programme is supporting good progression to level 3 destinations in its first two years, compared with other level 2 courses. Reasons why more students are not progressing onto T Levels may include not meeting providers' entry criteria and the early cohorts being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The T Level Foundation Year is still early in its rollout and the department will monitor outcomes as the programme continues to roll out and funding is removed from level 3 qualifications that overlap with T Levels. Research by the National Foundation for Education Research and the Technical Education Learner Surveys provide information on the early cohorts. This research can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-on-early-delivery-of-the-t-level-transition-programme>.

The department is undertaking further research with providers to identify good practice and success factors in supporting progression to T Levels.

Lord Sainsbury's report on technical education defined the skills areas suitable for T Levels, drawing on analysis of relevant apprenticeship standards, existing taught qualifications, and labour market information. All T Levels are based on the same employer-led occupational standards as apprenticeships, and these standards were led by, and updated with, employers. That means that employers and young people can be confident in these new qualifications. This is not consistently the case with the large qualifications they are replacing, which often do not support a young person to enter the sector they thought the qualification was preparing them for. For example, in the latest data for health and social care qualifications only 9% of those who complete worked in 'Health and social care' the following year. This data can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/detailed-destinations-of-16-to-18-year-olds-in-further-education>. T Levels will not be the only technical qualification available in the future landscape. Where there are occupational standards at level 3, but no T Level, the department is allowing technical qualifications to be developed, which will allow students to continue to study areas currently covered by applied general qualifications such as travel consultant, highways electrician, and personal trainer, to list a few. The key distinction here is that they will be based on employer led occupational standards, unlike the current applied general qualifications. The department will also allow for large alternative academic qualifications in areas not well served by A levels or T levels and where an academic pathway is required, such as performing arts and sport.

## T-Levels: Student Wastage

Asked by *Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many students have dropped out of T Levels since 2020; and what percentage of those enrolling have dropped out. [HL4283]

**Baroness Barran:** The department's recently published 2023/24 T Level Action Plan outlines the developments and next steps for T Levels. It also includes the latest student data for the programme. It shows that 5,321 students began their T Level in 2021/22. In summer 2023, 3,592 of those students were retained (68%), and 3,510 were retained and assessed (66%). Similar statistics for students that began their T Level in 2020/21 are not published. Further data about T Levels, as well as details of the methodology used in the above data can be found in the T Level Action Plan Analytical Annex, which is attached.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL4283 - T Level Action Plan Analytical Annex [HL4283 attachment - T Level Action Plan.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-05-01/HL4283>

## UK Special Representative for Sudan and South Sudan: Public Appointments

Asked by *Lord Oates*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to appoint a UK Special Envoy for the Sudan crisis who would work to facilitate humanitarian access to Sudan and bring the conflict to an end. [HL4169]

**Lord Benyon:** The Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea spends a significant amount of time on efforts to secure peace in Sudan, working closely with other envoys covering Sudan. Our HMA to Khartoum - now based in Addis Ababa - continues to engage with key international partners on achieving the UK's strategic objectives to support peace in Sudan, as do other British Ambassadors in the region.

## UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement

Asked by *Lord Leigh of Hurley*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Vere of Norbiton on 25 April (HL3766), when they sought permission from the

EU to extend the sunset clause for enterprise investment schemes and venture capital trust schemes. [HL4157]

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton:** The government's engagement with the EU Commission on the extension of the Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS) and Venture Capital Trust (VCT) sunset clauses is ongoing.

The government believes the schemes continue to be consistent with subsidy control principles and address an evidenced market failure.

## UNRWA: Finance

Asked by *The Marquess of Lothian*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Independent Review Group on the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Independent Review of Mechanisms and Procedures to Ensure Adherence by UNRWA to the Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality, published on 22 April; and what assessment they have made of the implications of the findings in that report on the UK's funding of UNRWA. [HL4158]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Allegations that UNRWA staff were involved in the events that took place on 7 October in Israel are appalling, which is why we took decisive action to pause future funding to the organisation.

The Prime Minister has been clear that the UK will set out its position on future funding to UNRWA following careful consideration of Catherine Colonna's final report, UNRWA's response and the ongoing UN Office for Internal Oversight Services investigation into these allegations.

## Zimbabwe: Development Aid

Asked by *Lord Oates*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have made an assessment of the effectiveness of UK Official Development Assistance spending in Zimbabwe. [HL4170]

**Lord Benyon:** UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) in Zimbabwe works primarily through multilateral organisations, non-governmental organisations and private contractors, to ensure maximum impact and targeted support for the poorest Zimbabweans. A portfolio evaluation of the UK's work in Zimbabwe under the 2016-2020 business plan is publicly available as are annual reviews for each programme.

## Index to Statements and Answers

<b>Written Statements.....1</b>	
Civil Service: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion ..1	Pakistan: Development Aid ..... 13
Covid-19 Inquiry: Response Costs for Quarter 4 2023-24.....2	Prime Minister: Wales ..... 14
Drug and Alcohol Treatment.....2	Public Expenditure: Northern Ireland..... 14
Farm to Fork Summit .....3	Public History of British Policy During the Northern Ireland Conflict Expert Advisory Panel ..... 14
High Streets .....4	Qualifications..... 14
<b>Written Answers.....6</b>	Republic of Ireland: Terrorism ..... 15
Agricultural Products: Morocco .....6	Rivers: Environment Protection ..... 15
BBC: Finance .....6	Royal Albert Hall..... 16
Benjamin Netanyahu .....7	Royal Fleet Auxiliary ..... 16
Block Grant: Northern Ireland.....7	Sudan: Arms Trade ..... 16
Childcare .....7	Sudan: Community Relations ..... 17
Childcare and Pre-school Education .....7	Tibet: Human Rights ..... 17
Children in Care .....8	T-levels ..... 17
Coal .....8	T-Levels: Student Wastage..... 18
Companies: Registration .....9	UK Special Representative for Sudan and South Sudan: Public Appointments ..... 18
Confederation of British Industry.....9	UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement ..... 18
Debts: Developing Countries .....9	UNRWA: Finance ..... 18
Defence: Expenditure .....9	Zimbabwe: Development Aid..... 18
Democratic Republic of Congo: Rwanda.....9	
Education: Standards .....10	
Film and Television: Economic Situation .....10	
GREAT.....11	
Health Services: Legal Representation.....11	
Household Cavalry: Horses .....11	
Housing: Sales .....12	
India: Religious Freedom .....12	
National Insurance Contributions .....12	
National Insurance Contributions: Overseas Workers .....12	
Northern Ireland: Terrorism .....13	
Offshore Industry and Wind Power: Decommissioning .....13	
Omagh Bombing Inquiry.....13	
Overseas Students.....13	