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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>
Baroness Smith of Basildon	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
Lord Collins of Highbury	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Whip
Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on Trent	Spokesperson for NI Office, Scotland Office and Wales Office, Whip
Baroness Blake of Leeds	Whip
Baroness Chapman of Darlington	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Lord Coaker	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
Lord Collins of Highbury	Whip
Lord Cryer	Whip
Baroness Gustafsson	Minister of State, Department for Business and Trade and HM Treasury
Lord Hanson of Flint	Minister of State, Home Office
Baroness Hayman of Ullock	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill	Minister of State, Department for Transport
Lord Hermer	Attorney-General
Lord Hunt of Kings Heath	Minister of State, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
Baroness Jones of Whitchurch	Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Department for Business and Trade and Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, and Whip
Lord Kennedy of Southwark	Chief Whip
Lord Khan of Burnley	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Lord Leong	Whip
Lord Livermore	Financial Secretary, HM Treasury
Baroness Merron	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care
Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice, Whip
Baroness Sherlock	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
Baroness Smith of Cluny	Advocate-General for Scotland
Baroness Smith of Malvern	Minister of State, Department for Education
Baroness Taylor of Stevenage	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Whip
Lord Timpson	Minister of State, Ministry of Justice
Baroness Twycross	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Culture Media and Sport, Spokesperson, Cabinet Office, Whip
Lord Vallance of Balham	Minister of State, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
Baroness Wheeler	Deputy Chief Whip

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Written Statements

Wednesday, 12 February 2025

Contingency Fund Advance: UKAEA Pension Scheme

[HLWS437]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: My hon. Friend the Minister for Climate (Kerry McCarthy MP) made the following Statement today:

I hereby give notice of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's intention to seek an advance from the Contingencies Fund of £55,000,000 for the UK Atomic Energy Authority Pension Schemes. This is a cash request to enable pension payments to be made as they fall due.

Parliamentary approval for additional cash of £55,000,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for UK Atomic Energy Authority Pension Schemes. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £55,000,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

The cash advance will be repaid upon receiving Royal Assent on the Supply and Appropriation (Anticipation and Adjustments) Bill.

Electoral Commission Reports on the 2024 Elections: Government Response

[HLWS439]

Lord Khan of Burnley: My Honourable Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Homelessness and Democracy (Rushanara Ali MP) has today made the following statement:

Our democratic systems and institutions are strong and are rightly admired around the world. This Government will build on this, further strengthening our democracy and encouraging full participation from eligible voters.

It was a challenge to deliver separate local and general elections in 2024, following complex reforms to electoral law and Parliamentary boundary changes. The entire electoral community rose to this challenge. I am grateful to returning officers, electoral registration officers and their teams for their hard work and dedication to the successful delivery of these polls – and to every volunteer who gave their time to support the democratic process.

The Electoral Commission, in line with its duties, reported in September 2024 on voter identification at the 2024 General Election; and in November 2024 on how that election was delivered, as well as the delivery of the May local elections, Police and Crime Commissioner elections and Mayoral elections in England and Wales. I am pleased to publish today the Government's response to the Electoral Commission's reports.

I welcome the Commission's views and recommendations and thank them for their work. I note the many positives from their findings: most importantly

that the elections were well run, and electors were highly satisfied with the processes of registration and voting, despite delivering two sets of polls in short succession. I welcome the marked increase in voter confidence since 2019: 83% of the public reported a high confidence in the polls and 87% believed the polls were free from fraud and abuse. Those numbers are a testament to the efforts from across the electoral community in the intervening period – but also an encouragement to improve further.

I also note the challenges that the Commission's reports highlight. We treat their recommendations seriously; this response sets out what this Government is doing about them. Disability must not be a barrier to participation: there is clearly more to be done to help disabled voters access the support that is their legal right where they need it. We must also tackle the unacceptable intimidatory and abusive behaviour some candidates face when standing for public office; review and improve voter identification rules, to make it easier for legitimate voters; reduce the risk to delivery through improved electoral processes; and widen participation in our democracy.

This Government will work with our partners to increase participation in elections, to ensure a wider range of voices is heard and that people's views are fairly represented. We will deliver on our manifesto commitments to improve registration, extend the right to vote to those 16 and over for all UK elections, review and improve the voter ID rules, and strengthen the political finance framework.

These reforms are not the sum total of our ambition. We continue to work with our partners to scrutinise and improve our election processes, even as we reflect further on the Commission's reports and develop practical responses.

In parallel to this response to the Electoral Commission's reports, I am also pleased to publish the findings of an independent, nationally representative public opinion survey related to voting in the UK, undertaken by Ipsos. This is the third wave of a set of surveys conducted on behalf of the Government to understand elector attitudes to and experiences of several measures in the Elections Act 2022, including voter ID, accessibility and absent voting. Further work will follow, with this research contributing to the Government's evaluation of the impact of the Elections Act 2022 on the 2024 General Election. That evaluation will be published in spring 2025. This Government is determined that all eligible voters will be able to cast their vote, with support where necessary.

The Government will work closely with the Electoral Commission and key stakeholders from across the sector to further understand and assess the impact of recent and future reforms. I am pleased to announce that we will be bringing all this work together into an overall Government Strategy for Elections, setting out the Government's approach to elections and electoral reform for this Parliament. This will be published later this year.

We are the custodians of an internationally renowned democracy that has endured and evolved over hundreds of

years: we will protect our democracy, fix its foundations, and ensure it continues to grow to become stronger, more inclusive and more vibrant than ever before.

The associated documents will be deposited in the libraries of both Houses.

Grenfell Tower

[HLWS438]

Lord Khan of Burnley: My Right Honourable Friend the Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Angela Rayner MP) has today made the following statement:

I want to provide the House with an update on the Government's work with the Grenfell community and on my decision about the future of Grenfell Tower.

Supporting the community

Learning the lessons from the Grenfell tragedy and ensuring lasting change are key priorities for the government. In his statement to this House in September, the Prime Minister committed to supporting the community now and always, and to building a legacy of change in their name.

I am committed to supporting bereaved families, survivors and immediate community, and working to ensure that we never see a repeat of the tragedy. Since my appointment, I have valued hearing directly from the community about the issues that matter to them.

Grenfell Tower

I am responsible for Grenfell Tower and for making a decision about its future. I understand that this is a deeply personal matter for those affected, and I am keeping their voice firmly at the heart of this decision making.

I would like to update the House that over the last week I have met bereaved families and survivors, and residents in the immediate community to explain my decision that Grenfell Tower will be carefully taken down.

Listening to the community

I have reached this decision after listening carefully to the community, and I am grateful to everyone who has shared their personal stories and views, especially bereaved and survivors.

In November last year, I explained to families that I would listen to their views and make sure their voices were heard, as well as to consider expert information before making a decision on the future of the Tower in February.

From November I offered bereaved and survivors the opportunity to meet in-person in North Kensington and Whitehall, or online, at different times and individually when families felt more comfortable with this. I have also spent time with representative groups, residents' associations, schools and faith leaders. I am grateful to everyone who shared their view – whether directly with me, with the Minister or officials – and especially to the bereaved and survivors.

The Tower was the home of the 72 innocent people who lost their lives, and of survivors whose lives were forever changed. It is clear from conversations it remains a sacred site. It is also clear that there is not a consensus about what should happen to it.

For some, Grenfell Tower is a symbol of all that they lost. The presence of the Tower helps to ensure the tragedy is never forgotten and can act as a reminder of the need for justice and accountability. Being able to see the Tower every day helps some people continue to feel close to those they lost. For others it is a painful reminder of what happened and is having a daily impact on some members of the community. Some have suggested that some floors of the Tower should be retained for the memorial, others have said that this would be too painful.

Expert advice

I also considered independent expert advice. Engineering advice says that the Tower is significantly damaged. It remains stable because of the measures put in place to protect it but even with installation of additional props, the condition of the building will continue to worsen over time. Engineers also advise it is not practicable to retain many of the floors of the building in place as part of a memorial that must last in perpetuity.

Taking the engineering advice into account I have concluded that it would not be fair to keep some floors of the building that are significant to some families, whilst not being able to do so for others and knowing that, for some, this would be upsetting.

How the Tower will be taken down

The government is committed to taking the next steps respectfully and carefully. There will be continued support for, and engagement with, the community throughout the process.

In the coming months, the government will confirm the specialist contractor that will develop a detailed plan for taking the Tower down. The work will be led by technical experts with specific health and safety responsibilities and will include a methodology that includes environmental, health and safety measures and a detailed programme of work. The views the community have shared already will inform the plans. The department will continue to work with them, for example on arrangements to pay their respects.

There will be no changes to the Tower before the eighth anniversary. It will likely take around two years to sensitively take down the Tower through a process of careful, progressive deconstruction that happens behind the wrapping.

We continue to support the independent Grenfell Tower Memorial Commission as the community choose a design team to work with them on designing a memorial.

I will ensure that parts of the Tower or materials from the site can be carefully removed and returned for inclusion as part of the memorial, if the community wishes.

The department has regularly consulted the Metropolitan Police, HM Coroner and the Grenfell Tower Inquiry to ensure decisions about the site do not interfere with their important work in pursuit of justice and accountability. The Police and HM Coroner have again recently confirmed they have everything they need.

Continued commitment for the community

My commitment to the community continues. I will ensure bereaved families, survivors and residents continue to have opportunities to speak with me and the Building Safety Minister on issues that matter to them most.

Infected Blood Compensation Scheme

[HLWS440]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: My Right Honourable Friend, the Paymaster General and Minister for the Cabinet Office, the Rt Hon. Nick Thomas-Symonds MP, has today made the following statement:

In August 2024, I established the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme in regulations. This enabled the Infected Blood Compensation Authority (IBCA) to begin making compensation payments to people who are infected and the work to progress payments quickly continues as an absolute priority.

Today I laid before Parliament the draft Infected Blood Compensation Scheme Regulations 2025. These regulations need to be debated and approved by both Houses before they can come into force. Once in force, the regulations will provide IBCA with the powers it needs to begin making payments to eligible affected people (such as partners, parents, children, siblings and in some instances carers) this year, and to make payments to eligible people through the supplementary routes. This is in addition to maintaining the core route for eligible infected people as established last year. As we set out in August, the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme is tariff-based, with the core route setting out tariffs which are intended to work in a way which would be appropriate for the majority of people applying to the Scheme.

The Government has published an accompanying Explanatory Memorandum and Equalities Impact Assessment alongside the regulations on legislation.gov.uk. On gov.uk, we have published an updated compensation scheme explainer and an Addendum Report from the Expert Group.

I would also like to welcome the progress being made in delivering compensation. In addition to the over £1 billion of interim compensation payments we have paid, IBCA have now invited 113 people to claim compensation. So far, 23 offers have been made, totalling over £34 million and 14 offers have been accepted and paid, totalling over £13 million. IBCA remains on track to invite 250 people to apply by the end of March and will continue to publish their monthly statistics on their website. However, this is only the beginning, and there is much more work to do.

By laying these regulations, we are one step closer to having the entire Infected Blood Compensation Scheme fully established in law. This will be a significant moment for all those who have waited for this for too long. My aim remains for these regulations to be in place by 31st March and I hope Parliamentarians from across both Houses support these regulations so that we can finally focus solely on delivering compensation to those who have waited for justice for so long.

Manston Inquiry

[HLWS435]

Lord Hanson of Flint: My hon Friend the Minister of State for Border Security and Asylum (Dame Angela Eagle) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

In fulfilment of the commitments made by the former Home Secretary, the Rt Hon Member for Fareham and Waterlooville, I am today announcing the establishment of an Article 3 ECHR non-statutory Independent Inquiry to investigate the conditions encountered by those detained at Manston Short-Term Holding Facility between June and November 2022.

The Inquiry will investigate the decisions, actions and circumstances which led to those conditions, and will reach conclusions on the treatment of those detained. The Inquiry may make recommendations regarding the conditions and should investigate whether there are lessons to be learned regarding the Home Office's handling of the incident.

The formal start date of the Inquiry will be 17 March 2025 and I will place a copy of the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry in the Libraries of both Houses.

The Inquiry will be chaired by Sophie Cartwright KC, who has experience in inquests and inquiries. Arrangements for the Inquiry will be a matter for her, but as the sponsoring department, the Home Office will provide support and ensure the Inquiry has the resources needed to fulfil its Terms of Reference.

The Government will make no comment on issues which are now in the purview of the Inquiry until it has concluded, but we will encourage all current and former public officials with evidence to provide to the Inquiry to cooperate with its requests for assistance.

Probation Service: Prioritisation

[HLWS443]

Lord Timpson: My Rt Hon Friend, the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP), has today made the following statement:

The Probation Service is an essential part of our criminal justice system. Keeping our streets safe and cutting crime depends upon the vital work of probation officers and staff. Today, it supervises just over a quarter a million offenders, from those on community sentences to those released from custody. That is not all. The

Probation Service provides sentencing advice to judges and magistrates every day in our courts, oversees more than 4 million hours of community payback each year, monitors 9,000 offenders on tags at any given moment, provides a vital link to thousands of victims, through the Victims Contact and the Victims Notification schemes and works in close partnership with policing and the voluntary sector to keep our communities safe.

The pressure facing our probation service is considerable and I am grateful for everyone who works tirelessly across the system. It is only right to acknowledge the incredibly hard, and often hidden, work that probation officers do across England & Wales. These dedicated staff have been the single constant throughout the last decade of change. We need to ensure that the Probation Service can deliver the vital work that needs to be done to keep the public safe and reduce reoffending. However, the Probation Service this government inherited was burdened with a workload that was, quite simply, impossible. We need to be honest and open about the state that the Probation Service was left in by the previous government. The Transforming Rehabilitation strategy failed. The rhetoric was of a revolution in how we manage offenders, but the reality was far different. Workloads increased, as new offenders were brought under supervision for the first time, and scarce resources were stretched further than ever. We know that morale plummeted, and worrying numbers of staff voted with their feet, leaving the service altogether, leading the then Inspector to declare a “national shortage” of probation professionals.

The new structures failed. The privately owned Community Rehabilitation Companies set up to manage medium and low risk offenders underperformed, and between 2017 and 2018, just 5 of 37 CRC audits carried out by HMPPS demonstrated that expected standards were being met. In 2019, 8 out of the 10 CRCs inspected that year received the lowest possible rating – “inadequate” – for supervising offenders. The Chief Inspector of Probation called them ‘irredeemably flawed’. The previous administration reunified the Probation Service but wasted a decade and millions of pounds.

When we took office, we discovered that orders handed out by courts were not taking place. In the three years to March 2024, around 13,000 Accredited Programmes, a type of rehabilitative course, did not happen. This was not because an offender had failed to do what was expected of them, but instead because the Probation Service had been unable to deliver these courses in the required timeframe.

For that reason, I have asked the Probation Service to put in place a process of prioritisation. Accredited Programmes handed down by the courts to those who are considered to have the higher risk of reoffending will be prioritised. This isn’t a decision I take lightly. But it is a decision to confront the reality of the challenges facing the Probation Service. Those who will not complete an accredited course will remain under the supervision of a probation officer. And all the requirements placed upon them will remain in place. Any breach of a community

sentence could see them hauled back into court, and any breach of a licence condition could see them back behind bars.

In July, I committed to bringing on 1,000 trainee probation officers by March of this year – a commitment that we are making progress towards. Next financial year, we will onboard at least another 1,300. New probation officers are the lifeblood of the service, and they will guarantee its future. And I want to ensure that we are taking advantage of the latest technology, like AI. We must give probation staff access to modern digital services, drawing in data from across the justice system. Work is already ongoing that is improving the flow of information, so critical to an accurate assessment of an offender’s risk, and new tools are beginning to strip away the administrative burden that gets between a probation officer and an offender.

However, given the challenges faced by the Probation Service, new staff and better processes are not sufficient on their own. Faced by a caseload of just over a quarter of a million we need to think about how we use the Probation Service most effectively. If the service is to fulfil its historic purpose – protecting the public by reducing reoffending – we need to look hard at what works, and where officers time is best spent. When it comes to the value of a probation officers’ time the evidence is clear that we must shift more of probation officers’ time towards the higher risk offenders, spending more time on protecting the public, working with partners, and working with the offender to rehabilitate them and motivate them to change.

This Government will focus the Probation Service on the interventions that have the greatest impact. For lower risk offenders, we will task probation officers with a swifter intervention. They will spend more time with an offender immediately after their sentencing or release from prison to assess the root causes of an offender’s crime. Then they will refer them to the services that will address that behaviour, which could be education, training, drug treatment or accommodation. Once they are following that direction, as long as the offender stays on the straight and narrow, we must then focus probation officers’ time more effectively. This means more time spent with the offenders who pose the higher risk of harm or reoffending and more time with offenders whose prolific offending causes so much social and economic damage to local communities.

Security and Intelligence Agencies: Contingencies Fund Advance 2024-25

[HLWS444]

Baroness Twycross: My Honourable friend the Parliamentary Secretary for the Cabinet Office, Abena Opong-Asare MP, has today made the following statement:

The Security and Intelligence Agencies will be seeking a Supplementary Estimate for 2024-25. As it will be some time before the associated legislation receives Royal

Assent, the Agencies are seeking an advance from the Contingencies Fund in order to meet contractual commitments. Parliamentary approval for additional resource of £56,879,000, capital of £51,762,000 and cash movements of £168,000,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the Security and Intelligence Agencies. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £276,641,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund. As the Security and Intelligence Agencies are non-Ministerial departments, I am making this statement on behalf of their Accounting Officer to ensure that Parliament is informed of this advance from the Contingencies Fund.

Security Service: Correction of Evidence

[HLWS441]

Lord Hanson of Flint: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department (Yvette Cooper) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The purpose of this statement is to notify the House that MI5 has corrected previously incorrect evidence that it provided to the High Court and the Investigatory Powers Tribunal, in relation to the case of Agent X and alleged acts of domestic abuse. The High Court has today varied the injunction covering this case which allows further information to be reported. The Investigatory Powers Tribunal case is continuing and is expected to conclude later this year.

It is clearly a very serious matter to provide incorrect information to the court and MI5 has apologised directly for this.

I have commissioned an independent external review to report to me and to the Director General of MI5 to understand what led to incorrect information being provided by MI5 to the High Court. Sir Jonathan Jones KC, former HM Procurator General, Treasury Solicitor and Head of the Government Legal Service, will lead the review and ensure that an independent authoritative view can be taken on what went wrong, and any actions MI5 needs to take to prevent a similar occurrence in the future. Sir Jonathan will report his findings directly to me and Sir Ken McCallum, and I will ensure these are shared with the Investigatory Powers Commissioner and the Intelligence and Security Committee.

MI5 do an incredibly difficult and important job every single day to keep our country safe from a wide range of threats, working to the highest of standards, and it is of course essential that those high standards must always be maintained.

Protecting national security is the first duty of the State, and the work of our intelligence agencies is critical to keeping the UK and its citizens safe. Covert Human Intelligence Sources – or agents – play a crucial role in that work, and maintaining the secrecy of their identities is essential to protect them, their families, the vital

intelligence they provide, and the recruitment of future sources.

The Government maintains and supports the principle of neither confirming nor denying allegations about whether individuals may or may not be operating on behalf of the UK intelligence agencies.

The Investigatory Powers Tribunal case related to which this incorrect evidence was provided is still ongoing, and therefore I cannot provide further information or comment to the House on this case at this time.

The Government is also clear that all organisations must have robust safeguarding policies under continuous review and must take any allegation of domestic abuse extremely seriously. The public and Parliament must have the highest confidence in the processes in place to protect the most vulnerable and protect those most at risk in society.

Social and Affordable Housebuilding and Supported Housing: Next Steps

[HLWS442]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: My Honourable Friend the Minister of State for Housing and Planning (Matthew Pennycook MP) has today made the following statement:

England is in the grip of an acute and entrenched housing crisis. The detrimental consequences of this disastrous state of affairs are now all pervasive. We have a generation locked out of homeownership; 1.3 million people languishing on social housing waiting lists; millions of low-income households forced into insecure, unaffordable and far too often sub-standard private rented housing; and 160,000 homeless children living in temporary accommodation.

Among the most important causes of the housing crisis is a failure over many decades to build enough homes of all tenures to meet housing demand and housing need. That is why the government's Plan for Change includes an ambitious milestone of delivering 1.5 million safe and decent homes in this Parliament.

We are also determined to deliver the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation. Today, I am announcing further support for the Affordable Homes Programme and the Local Authority Housing Fund, and outlining the steps the government intends to take to raise standards and better regulate supported housing.

Affordable Homes Programme

We will set out details of new investment to succeed the 2021-26 Affordable Homes Programme at the Spending Review later this year. This new investment will deliver a mix of homes for sub-market rent and homeownership, with a particular focus on delivering homes for Social Rent.

In October 2024, we announced £500 million in new in-year funding for the Affordable Homes Programme. As a result of significant demand from housing providers

across the country, that additional funding is already oversubscribed.

I am therefore pleased to announce that the government is allocating a further £300m to the Affordable Homes Programme. This will support the near-term delivery of more social and affordable housing, delivering up to 2,800 new homes with more than half being Social Rent homes.

Local Authority Housing Fund

In addition to further funding for the 2021-26 Affordable Homes Programme, I am announcing a £50m increase to the third round of the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF 3). This takes the total funding for this round of the programme to £500m, alongside c.£30m of existing funding being reallocated.

LAHF provides funding to local authorities to help them deliver better quality temporary accommodation and to support UK commitments to those on Afghan resettlement schemes who are fleeing persecution. The Fund's Third Round, which we confirmed in July 2024, has had high levels of interest from local authorities, with over 150 taking part. In total, LAHF 3 will deliver more than 2,700 homes by 2026.

The majority of the additional £50m allocated will be used to procure better quality temporary accommodation so that local authorities can appropriately support local families in need of housing.

We recently invited councils to express an interest in delivering additional housing through LAHF, and we will be contacting those councils shortly to confirm the allocation of both the additional and reallocated funding.

Supported housing

While there are many excellent supported housing providers undertaking crucial work to help vulnerable people get back on their feet and improve their lives, there are still significant numbers of unscrupulous providers who fail to provide high-quality accommodation to their tenants and a minority of rogue exempt accommodation operators who exploit gaps in the existing regulatory regime to profiteer.

The impact of poor-quality, non-commissioned exempt accommodation on vulnerable individuals can be devastating, whether it is the physical and mental consequences of living in squalid conditions, the risks that arise from the absence of effective supervision and safeguarding arrangements, the money gouged from hard-up residents through service charge costs that are ineligible for housing benefit purposes, or simply the inability to sustain an exempt accommodation tenancy, or to move on from one, because of a lack of care or support.

This government is determined to improve the quality of accommodation in the supported housing sector and assisting local authorities to drive up standards in their areas. That is why we are committed to implementing the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023.

We are today announcing that on 20 February 2025, we will publish a consultation on a number of the regulatory

reforms contained within it. These include proposals for National Supported Housing Standards and a locally-led licensing regime to give local authorities the powers they need to effectively manage the supported housing markets in their areas.

We are committed to taking a sensible and proportionate approach to the introduction of these planned reforms and we look forward to receiving feedback through the consultation from good providers, local authorities and residents to ensure we get things right.

Statutory Gambling Levy: Prevention

[HLWS436]

Baroness Twycross: Today I am updating the House on the Government's plans to introduce the statutory gambling levy, further to the government's response to the levy consultation published on 27 November 2024.

In that response, the Government was clear that delivering prevention activity at the local, regional, and national levels with effective commissioning and oversight arrangements is highly complex and needed further consideration. The levy will for the first time provide increased, independent, dedicated investment for prevention initiatives and we wanted to take the time to get the policy right, while ensuring necessary legislation is passed. It is a priority for the Government to have the levy in place by April 2025 with funding flowing as soon as possible thereafter.

To ensure that there is sufficient trust, expertise and authority in the use of the levy funding for prevention, I can confirm that we have appointed the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) in the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to take on the role as lead commissioning body in this area for England, alongside appropriate bodies in Scotland and Wales.

Prevention remains a crucial part of the government's efforts to tackle gambling-related harm. An effective prevention plan seeks to identify the right mix of interventions to be applied at both the population and individual level. In its broadest sense, prevention will include a wide spectrum of measures, including but not limited to regulatory restrictions on products, place, and provider, as well as tailored measures for at-risk groups and individuals, including education and early intervention activities, with the ultimate goal of delivering on the government's objective to reduce gambling-related harm in Great Britain.

That is why the government is increasing investment through the levy to facilitate a comprehensive approach to harm reduction in all three nations of Great Britain. We will allocate 30% of levy funding to the prevention stream, up to £30 million each year, alongside the significant funding allocated for research and treatment.

Ringfenced investment in this area will help to encourage innovation and support a strengthened, integrated and coordinated approach to prevention in Britain. As the Government's lead on improving

England's health, we are confident OHID is well-placed to capitalise on its expertise and relationships in this area. It will maximise the impact of the dedicated funding the UK Government is putting behind this effort. OHID, working closely with appropriate bodies in Scotland and Wales, will seek to develop a comprehensive approach to prevention and early intervention, supporting improvement across respective nations.

OHID and appropriate bodies in Scotland and Wales will undertake necessary design work to determine the final scope of prevention activity, working closely with the research and treatment leads to ensure a joined-up approach. We will develop and provide clear and measurable outcomes for the prevention strand of the statutory levy system, as we have already done for research and treatment. However, future activity may focus on:

- Awareness-raising: building the public's understanding of the risks associated with gambling-related harm is crucial to preventing harm before it

occurs. Population level campaigns could be used to raise awareness of gambling-related harm and reduce the stigma often associated with seeking help.

- Local and regional initiatives: delivery of more upstream interventions to address harms earlier and more effectively at local and regional levels, with interventions tailored to the needs of those communities, and the development of a national approach would be a significant step forward.
- Building capacity: providing investment for organisations, particularly those in frontline settings, to further understand and deliver harm reduction activities that will reduce harm for at-risk people.

The statutory levy will for the first time provide ringfenced investment towards the prevention of gambling-related harms. Together with OHID and the wider levy system, we are confident that the levy will play a crucial role in the government's manifesto commitment to reducing gambling-related harm.

Written Answers

Wednesday, 12 February 2025

Anaesthesia Associates

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the meeting of the NHS England's physician associate and anaesthesia associate prescribing working group on 3 July 2024, what action has been taken regarding the concern about the use of patient specific directives, particularly where a range of dosages and frequencies is given, when the drugs are to be administered under the oversight of anaesthetist associates. [HL4619]

Baroness Merron: The exploratory work undertaken by NHS England's Physician Associate (PA) and Anaesthesia Associate (AA) prescribing group has been paused in light of the Leng Review.

Following the July 2024 working group meeting, NHS England engaged with NHS Employers, who published updated guidance on the role of PAs and AAs in the National Health Service. The guidance sets out that under locally determined governance arrangements, an AA may administer medicines under a patient specific direction (PSD).

Whilst any suitably trained and competent person may follow a PSD for administration, some organisations may extend or limit those who are authorised to administer medicines under a PSD within their local medicines policies and governance arrangements.

The employer is responsible for ensuring that the healthcare professionals it employs are properly trained, and undertake only those responsibilities specified in the agreed job descriptions.

Antisemitism

Asked by *Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government what further measures they are taking to combat antisemitism. [HL4340]

Lord Khan of Burnley: Antisemitism has absolutely no place in our society, and tackling antisemitism in all its forms is a top priority for this Government. We are working closely with Lord John Mann as HMG's Independent Adviser on Antisemitism on the most effective methods to tackle antisemitism and advocate for British Jewish communities. We will ensure that the Jewish communities concerns about antisemitism are heard and acted upon.

This Government has also allocated further funding of £54m for the Community Security Trust to enable them to continue their vital work in protecting UK Jewish communities until 2028.

Tackling hate crime will be a key part of this Government's work to overcome divisions and create connections between all communities, and we are exploring a more integrated and cohesive approach to achieve this.

Archives: Northern Ireland

Asked by *Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to support the digitisation and exhibition of "media and historical archives that reflect the richness and diversity of traditions in Northern Ireland", as described in Annex B of Strengthening the Union (CP1021). [HL4496]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The Government has made good progress towards supporting the digitisation and exhibition of media and historical archives that reflect the richness and diversity of traditions in Northern Ireland, as set out in Annex B of the Safeguarding the Union command paper, and intends to provide a further update on this work in the coming weeks.

Armed Conflict: Interpreters

Asked by *Baroness Coussins*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer on 31 July 2024 by Lord Collins of Highbury (HL27), what progress has been made towards a UN Security Council Resolution on the protection of civilian interpreters working with the Armed Forces in conflict zones who may not be classified as conducting humanitarian activities. [HL4598]

Lord Collins of Highbury: We recognise the vital role that interpreters play in conflicts, and the threats they face. The most effective way to protect civilians and safeguard human rights, including those civilians working as interpreters, is by improving implementation of existing UN Security Council resolutions, compliance with International Humanitarian Law and seeking accountability for violations.

The UK takes seriously our duty of care responsibilities for civilian interpreters and other locally employed civilians working with our Armed Forces, as the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme demonstrates. The ARAP scheme, administered by the Ministry of Defence, provides safe resettlement routes for those formerly employed, directly or indirectly, by the UK Government.

Artificial Intelligence: Commonwealth

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of engaging with the Commonwealth to

expand artificial intelligence development in the UK. [HL4565]

Lord Vallance of Balham: The UK recognises the importance of international collaboration in order to drive safe, responsible AI innovation. We were pleased to discuss AI at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Apia, Samoa, October 2024, as well as supporting the Commonwealth AI Consortium.

Berlin: Global Disability Summit

Asked by Baroness Sugg

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans Ministers have to attend the Global Disability Summit, due to be held in Berlin in April. [HL4561]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The 2025 Global Disability Summit is an important moment for the UK to reinforce our commitment to galvanising international efforts on disability inclusion and launch the refresh of our Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Disability Inclusion and Rights strategy (2022-30), setting out new priorities. The Cabinet Office and the FCDO are working closely together to draw up the UK's delegation and final decisions will be made soon.

Bombings: Omagh

Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have made any representations to the government of the Republic of Ireland to hold a public inquiry into the Omagh bombing. [HL4570]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The Government was pleased that the Tánaiste reconfirmed the government of Ireland's commitment to cooperate with the Omagh Bombing Inquiry, in his statement on 28 January 2025.

Nothing can bring back those that were lost that terrible day in August 1998, but the Government wants to ensure that the Omagh Bombing Inquiry has every chance of success. The Irish Government's commitment to cooperate with the Inquiry is crucial to that endeavour, and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has made this point directly in engagement with his counterparts.

Whether the establishment of a separate inquiry in Ireland is required to ensure that the families obtain the information they require is a matter for the Irish Government.

Botswana: Equality

Asked by Baroness Anelay of St Johns

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions the Minister for Africa held during his recent visit to Botswana regarding their policies on promoting gender equality, progress on LGBT+ rights and their priorities

in formulating policies on sexual and reproductive rights. [HL4729]

Lord Collins of Highbury: I met with a wide range of civil society groups on my visit to Botswana in January, including Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals of Botswana, Botswana Council of Non-Governmental Organisations, and Feminist Alliance Botswana. Discussions included the challenges that LGBT+ groups and women face living in Botswana, as well as the political space they have to promote further equality. We also discussed the challenges of gender-based violence and women's representation in politics. I set out UK thinking on these issues, and where we feel we can support Botswana's policy goals to address them.

Cervical Cancer: Health Education

Asked by Baroness Northover

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have been raising awareness of cervical cancer globally during Cervical Cancer Awareness Month, and if so, how; and whether they have been collaborating with Unitaid on this and on wider programmes to improve women's health. [HL4543]

Lord Collins of Highbury: Unitaid are a leading funder of innovative tools to find and treat cervical cancer in low- and middle-income countries. We highly value our Unitaid partnership and have contributed more than half a billion pounds in funding.

The UK remains a major donor and champion of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights to improve women's health. This includes continuing to support the Global Financing Facility (GFF), the Reproductive Health Supplies programme, UNFPA, and the Women's Integrated Sexual Health (WISH) and WISH Dividend programmes. The UK is one of the largest donors to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance who have immunised 16 million girls and averted 387,000 cervical cancer deaths over the last decade through HPV vaccination programmes.

Childcare and Pre-school Education

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the DFE Government Major Projects Portfolio Data March 2024, published on 16 January, what assessment they have made of the expected monetised benefits of the Early Years Childcare Reform Programme, given its reported whole life cost of £15.1 billion; why these benefits are currently recorded as "£0 million"; and by what date they expect to finalise and publish a full benefits realisation plan. [HL4474]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The data published on 16 January 2025 reflects the status and delivery stage of the early years and childcare programme, as of 31 March 2024. Since then, central estimates for the financial benefits of extending early years education and childcare

entitlements were published in April 2024 by the National Audit Office. These estimates indicate, as of March 2024, a benefit-to-cost ratio of £1.26:£1.00, and a total benefit of £15.972 billion.

The Office for Budget Responsibility also estimated that 60,000 additional parents will enter work, and 1.5 million will increase their working hours by 2027/28 as a result of the policy.

As expected of all Major Projects that form part of the Government Major Projects Portfolio, we will continue to provide regular data to the Infrastructure and Projects Authority on the progress of programme delivery. Now the programme is in live delivery, we will continue to monitor how these estimated benefits develop throughout the programme lifecycle and at the appropriate points provide an update on our position, reflecting the latest delivery data.

Chiropractic

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to adding chiropractors to the list of allied health professions. [[HL4655](#)]

Baroness Merron: NHS England does not currently support or commission chiropractic care in the National Health Service. There are no plans in the Department or NHS England to review the health and care professions not currently aligned to a Chief Professional Officer.

Community Relations: Muslims

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to engage positively with Muslim communities, including the Muslim Council of Britain. [[HL4510](#)]

Lord Khan of Burnley: The Government recognises the importance of engaging meaningfully with faith and belief groups. HMG does not engage with the Muslim Council of Britain. There has been no change to this policy. This has been set out consistently in Parliament.

Since being appointed Faith Minister, I have been engaging with Muslim communities nationwide, connecting with women, young people, and community leaders through extensive outreach efforts. This has included engagement with numerous Muslim leaders in the aftermath of the Southport incident and subsequent riots, hosting a Muslim women's roundtable, and supporting a number of community-led initiatives including interfaith youth forums. Looking ahead, I am planning further engagement in preparation for Ramadan to continue fostering dialogue and strengthening collaboration.

Cybersecurity

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the UK is protected from severe cyberattacks. [[HL4566](#)]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The cyber security of the UK is a key priority for the government, which is why we are taking robust action to improve the nation's cyber defences. We have announced a Cyber Security and Resilience Bill to better protect our critical national infrastructure from cyber attacks. On 14 January the government published a consultation on proposals to further protect businesses and public services from ransomware attacks. We are also taking action within government by merging digital teams into one central Government Digital Service led by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology.

Defence and Shipbuilding: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to showcase the opportunities for investment in Northern Ireland's defence and shipbuilding industries. [[HL4495](#)]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The Government recognises the vital and unique contribution made by Northern Ireland's defence and shipbuilding industries to UK national security. We are committed, as set out in Safeguarding the Union, to further including Northern Ireland companies in the UK defence network.

The Government recently announced a successful outcome in the negotiations over the future of Harland and Wolff. The commercial deal by Navantia is a significant investment in the UK's industrial base and will ensure delivery of the Ministry of Defence's Fleet Solid Support programme.

We intend to showcase Northern Ireland's thriving defence sector's skills, industry, expertise and infrastructure through the ongoing Industrial Defence Strategy led by the Ministry of Defence. This will include sending signals that enhance the incentives for long-term investment in the UK in order to encourage private investment alongside public money.

Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda: Politics and Government

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Leeds

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the recent occupation of the city of Goma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by the rebel group M23. [[HL4499](#)]

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Leeds

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Rwanda regarding their support for the rebel group M23 and the possibility of the group's withdrawal from Goma and other territories it has occupied. [HL4500]

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Leeds

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to facilitate dialogue and to explore options for a political settlement between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda. [HL4501]

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the M23 rebel group taking control of Goma; and whether they intend to call on Rwanda to withdraw support to the M23 rebels and withdraw from the Democratic Republic of Congo. [HL4508]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK condemns the occupation of Goma and other territories in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) by M23 and Rwandan Defence Forces as an unacceptable breach of DRC's sovereignty and the UN Charter, which poses a fundamental risk to regional stability. The humanitarian situation is now critical, with hundreds of thousands of people re-displaced, acute food insecurity and an increased risk of violence against civilians, especially women and girls.

The Foreign Secretary has spoken with President Kagame and President Tshisekedi to call for immediate de-escalation and a return to diplomatic talks. The UK has been at the forefront of encouraging regionally-led peace efforts, including the Luanda and Nairobi Processes. The joint Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the East Africa Community (EAC) Summit in Dar es Salaam 7-8 February committed to resuming dialogue and negotiations with all state and non-state parties and supporting this with AU-appointed facilitators, as well as calling for improved humanitarian access.

In the UK's statement on the situation in eastern DRC, we called for the immediate withdrawal of all Rwandan Defence Forces from Congolese territory. We have been clear with Rwanda that an attack on Goma would provoke a strong response from the international community.

Democratic Republic of Congo: Armed Conflict

Asked by Lord Boateng

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to (1) the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and (2) the African Union, to promote an end to the conflict in eastern DRC. [HL4735]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Foreign Secretary spoke with President Tshisekedi to express his deep concern about M23 and Rwandan Defence Forces'

advances and urge a return to peaceful negotiations. I spoke to the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) Foreign Minister to emphasise the importance of engaging in African-led processes in good faith. The UK is engaging with the African Union and partners across Africa on how to promote immediate de-escalation in eastern DRC. I also spoke with the Angolan Foreign Minister to offer continued UK support for their efforts under the Luanda process throughout their upcoming chairing of the African Union.

Democratic Republic of Congo: Internally Displaced People

Asked by Lord Boateng

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the number of internally displaced people in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, and what steps they have taken to support the provision of urgent humanitarian relief in that region. [HL4734]

Lord Collins of Highbury: An estimated 2.7 million people were considered displaced in North Kivu in December 2024, though since then over 700,000 people have been re-displaced throughout M23 advances. The UK is deeply concerned by this critical humanitarian situation. At the UN Security Council, the UK called on all parties not to obstruct the vital services that humanitarians are providing, and to cease hostilities and uphold the protection of humanitarian workers, as outlined in international humanitarian law. We've urged all parties to ensure humanitarian corridors to restore essential services and enable the safe passage of civilians and aid. The UK remains committed to supporting those most in need, providing over £62 million this year in lifesaving humanitarian assistance.

Development Aid: Disability

Asked by Baroness Sugg

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to implement the FCDO disability inclusion and rights strategy 2022 to 2030, published on 16 February 2022, consistently across UK Official Development Assistance programmes. [HL4560]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The FCDO continues to take a 'twin track approach' including mainstreaming a disability inclusive and human rights perspective across all the department's work. For example, we will shortly launch new e-learning on how to use the disability inclusion and gender equality policy markers to make FCDO programmes more inclusive across the organisation. Our progress against the strategy is regularly reviewed by a board of independent experts from civil society and academia.

At the Global Disability Summit in April 2025, the FCDO will reinforce our commitment to galvanising international efforts on disability inclusion and launch the

refresh of our FCDO Disability Inclusion and Rights strategy. Setting out new priorities, we will continue to provide targeted support to people with disabilities through high quality, targeted programmes to test new innovation and strengthen national systems that better reach people with disabilities. For example, this will include supporting inclusive approaches to education, health, and employment through our Disability Inclusive Development programme.

Development Aid: Education

Asked by Baroness Sugg

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Humanity and Inclusion report *Beyond Access: Ensuring the Continuity of Education for Adolescent Girls with Disabilities*, published on 24 January, what steps they are taking to promote continuity of education for adolescent girls with disabilities through development assistance. [HL4559]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK is working to tackle the barriers to accessing quality education that are faced by adolescent girls with disabilities, through our education policy and programmes.

In countries like Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, UK development assistance has supported the implementation of disability-inclusive pedagogy in classrooms, funded assistive devices, and provided technical assistance to ministries of education, to develop and implement inclusive education policies. We are growing our understanding of what works to support learners with disabilities through our Disability Inclusive Development Programme.

At the Global Disability Summit in April 2025, the UK will reinforce its commitment to galvanising international efforts on disability inclusion, including specific actions on inclusive education, and will launch the refresh of our Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Disability Inclusion and Rights strategy.

Doctors: Apprentices

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the future of funding for the Medical Doctor Degree Apprenticeship programme in England. [HL4009]

Baroness Merron: It is for individual National Health Service employers to decide on their approach to apprenticeships. The Department for Education is currently reviewing access to the Apprenticeship Levy for Level Seven apprenticeships, which Medical Doctor Degree Apprenticeships fall under. The Government is committed to widening participation in medicine and creating a medical workforce that is representative of the society around us.

We will work with partners including NHS England, the Department for Education, and the university sector to

ensure that everyone has an opportunity to study medicine, regardless of their background. This summer we will also publish a refreshed workforce plan to provide the health service with much-needed stability and certainty.

Education: Artificial Intelligence

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of how artificial intelligence technologies will benefit education, particularly regarding how it can benefit the teaching of pupils. [HL4228]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: Artificial intelligence (AI), when made safe and reliable, represents an exciting opportunity to give our schools leaders and teachers a helping hand with classroom life. The government is working closely with our regulators to understand their readiness to respond to the opportunities and risks relating to AI. Ofsted and Ofqual both published policy papers in April 2024 outlining their approach to AI.

Research shows parents want teachers to use generative AI, allowing them to focus on helping children in the classroom with face-to-face teaching. This supports the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity.

Widespread use of generative AI tools is only possible once the basics of connectivity, devices, and capability are in place. The department continues to support the sector to build these fundamentals of technology.

It is important that the department gathers evidence to understand how AI technologies can benefit education. To support with this, the department launched a call for evidence on generative AI in education on 14 June 2023. It closed on 23 August 2023 and we published the report on 28 November 2023. The call for evidence sought views and experiences from practitioners across all stages of education as well as the EdTech sector and AI experts.

The department also commissioned a 'Use cases for generative AI' or 'Hackathons' project, working with Faculty Science Ltd in partnership with the National Institute of Teaching to further understand possible uses for generative AI in education.

The department is continuing to assess how AI will benefit education and benefit the teaching of pupils and will share more in due course.

The department needs to ensure that AI is safe and effective. In August 2024, we announced the Education Content Store, a joint pilot with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, which aims to make the underpinning content and data that are needed for great AI tools available to developers, including tools for teachers to support their teaching. In parallel, the department has launched innovation funding to encourage developers to make use of the content store and stimulate the market to create high-quality marking and feedback tools for teachers.

The department has committed to publishing a safety framework on AI products for education, due later this year. My hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Early Education will meet education technology companies before setting out clear expectations for the safety of AI products for education.

Firearms: Licensing

Asked by Lord Swire

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the framework for granting firearms licences. [HL4562]

Asked by Lord Swire

To ask His Majesty's Government which bodies they consulted before increasing the fees for licensing firearms. [HL4563]

Lord Hanson of Flint: On 15 January 2025, the Government laid a statutory instrument before Parliament that will increase fees charged by police forces to provide full-cost recovery for firearms licensing applications, in line with the Government's manifesto commitment on firearms fees. The fees were last increased in 2015 and they are now considerably below the cost of the service provided. It is essential for both public safety and police efficiency that increased fees are introduced so that service improvements can be made. The new fees will come into effect on 5 February.

The new fees are based on data produced by a review of firearms licensing costs in 31 police forces in January 2023. This data has since been updated to reflect increases in costs since then. The review was discussed at the Firearms Fees Working Group, chaired by the Home Office, which met in 2022 and 2023 with representation from:

- National Police Chiefs' Council
- Association of Police and Crime Commissioners
- Police Scotland
- Scottish Government
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- British Shooting Sports Council
- British Association for Shooting and Conservation
- Gun Trade Association
- National Rifle Association
- Countryside Alliance
- National Gamekeepers Organisation
- Scottish Association for Country Sports.

We keep the framework of firearms licensing controls under constant review as it is important that we maintain strong controls on firearms to safeguard the public.

Fractures: Health Services

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their latest cost-benefit analysis of rolling out fracture liaison services across the country, including (1) how many people are likely to avoid fractures and how many fractures could be avoided per year as a result of early detection, (2) how much NHS resource could be saved, and (3) how many days of work absence or years of early retirement could be avoided. [HL4522]

Baroness Merron: We remain committed to rolling out Fracture Liaison Services (FLS) across every part of the country by 2030. That is what my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care promised before the election, and what he is delivering.

In the meantime, we are investing in 14 high-tech bone density DEXA scanners, which are expected to provide an extra 29,000 scans, to ensure that people with bone conditions get diagnosed earlier

FLS are a globally recognised care model and can reduce the risk of refracture for people at risk of osteoporosis by up to 40%. They can play a vital role in improving quality of life and increasing the number of years that can be lived in good health.

The Government and NHS England support the clinical case for services which help to prevent fragility fractures and support the patients who sustain them. Officials continue to work closely with NHS England to explore a range of options to provide better quality and access to these important preventative services. Impacts will be assessed, as these options are considered, taking into consideration the evidence gathered from the 60 services already in operation in England.

Gender

Asked by Lord Reay

To ask His Majesty's Government, with reference to the Scottish Government Chief Statistician's publication, Data collection and publication guidance: Sex, Gender Identity, Trans Status, published on 16 October 2024, what discussions has the Office for Equality and Opportunity had with the Office for National Statistics on produced an equivalent version of recognised genders for statistics in England and Wales; and whether the (1) Office for Equality and Opportunity, and (2) Office for National Statistics, have produced any other internal or external guidance on the categorisation of different gender identities. [HL4654]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Office for Equality and Opportunity (OEO) has not had any discussions with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) about the Scottish Government's publication 'Sex, gender identity, trans status - data collection and publication: guidance' or on producing an equivalent version of recognised genders for statistics in England and Wales.

The OEO has not produced any internal or external guidance on the categorisation of different gender identities.

Health Services: Women

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to deliver the Women's Health Strategy for England published on 30 August 2022, in particular with regard to recognising biological women. [HL4804]

Baroness Merron: The Government is committed to prioritising women's health as we build a National Health Service fit for the future. We continue to implement the Women's Health Strategy, for example providing support for pregnancy loss through a full rollout of baby loss certificates, menopause support in the workplace, and boosting women's participation in research and clinical trials.

In the longer term, our priorities for delivering the strategy will be aligned with the 10-Year Health Plan and the Government's Missions. The 10-Year Health Plan will set out how we tackle the inequities that lead to poor health, including those for women.

The Government understands the need for health information to be as clear as possible and to use language that appropriately reflects sex, as defined as a protected characteristic in the Equality Act 2010. We expect the NHS to deliver health services in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, having appropriate regard to protected characteristics as defined in the Act where relevant.

High Speed 2 Line: Costs

Asked by Lord Wigley

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their latest estimate of the out-turn cost of HS2 on the basis of their latest proposals for the completion of the project. [HL4572]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: Our latest position on cost is noted in our December 2024 report to parliament. We are undertaking a full reset of the programme, led by the new CEO Mark Wild. Until that work is concluded we are unable to provide a robust assessment of outturn cost but will be reporting to parliament in due course.

Holocaust: Education

Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the current level of funding for Holocaust education and whether they plan to increase that funding. [HL4341]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines information for England only.

The government supports the teaching of Holocaust education by funding teachers' professional development

in this subject through University College London's Centre for Holocaust Education (CfHE), and the Holocaust Educational Trust's (HET) Lessons from Auschwitz project, which gives students aged 16 to 18 the opportunity to visit Auschwitz-Birkenau. In the 2024/25 financial year, CfHE will receive £500,000 in government funding, match funded by the Pears Foundation, and HET will receive £2.3 million. Funding for 2025/26 has been committed at broadly the same level.

In addition, a further £2 million funding for Holocaust remembrance and education was committed in the Autumn Budget on 30 October 2024. This will be used to support the ambition set by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, for all students to have the opportunity to hear a recorded survivor testimony. The department is currently exploring how we can support schools to fulfil this ambition.

The government has also committed £7 million to tackle antisemitism in education. £500,000 has already been awarded to the University Jewish Chaplaincy and a £4.15 million procurement is currently being evaluated with delivery commencing from spring 2025. The remaining funding will go towards a future Tackling Antisemitism in Education innovation fund.

As with all programmes, funding for the 2026/27 financial year onwards is subject to the spending review.

Asked by Baroness Whitaker

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to disseminate the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's Recommendations for Teaching and Learning about the Persecution and Genocide of the Roma during the Nazi Era, published in December 2024, to schools and to incorporate it into teacher training. [HL4345]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The Holocaust is the only historic event which is compulsory within the current national curriculum for history at key stage 3. The government has made a commitment that the Holocaust will remain a compulsory topic in the reformed national curriculum, which will also be required teaching in academy schools when it is implemented.

The history curriculum gives teachers and schools the freedom to decide how to teach the subject and what resources to use to support an understanding of the Holocaust and the Nazi's persecution of non-Jewish groups including the genocide of the Roma. This can already include the work of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

The government supports the teaching of Holocaust education by funding teachers' professional development in this subject through University College London's Centre for Holocaust Education (CfHE), and the Holocaust Educational Trust's (HET) Lessons from Auschwitz project, which gives students aged 16 to 18 the opportunity to visit Auschwitz-Birkenau. CfHE will receive £500,000 in government funding in the 2024/25 financial year, match funded by the Pears Foundation, and

HET will receive £2.3 million. Both Lessons from Auschwitz and the knowledge and training provided by the CfHE include information and resources to support an understanding of the Holocaust and the Nazi's persecution of other non-Jewish groups, including the genocide of the Roma.

In addition, a further £2 million funding for Holocaust remembrance and education was committed in the Autumn Budget on 30 October 2024. This will be used to support the ambition set by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister for all students to have the opportunity to hear a recorded survivor testimony. The department is currently exploring how it can support schools to fulfil this ambition.

Immigration: ICT

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Chelmsford

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their timeline for the full implementation of the ATLAS caseworking system; and whether they expect it to be fully operational in 2025. [HL4530]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Atlas caseworking system is replacing the legacy CID (Case Information Database) system and we expect to decommission CID in the first half of 2025. Atlas is already fully operational in practice, with almost all in-country caseworking across Migration & Borders being processed on it since mid-2024. A small handful of exceptional immigration routes remain to transition over from CID to Atlas in the next few months.

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Chelmsford

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the ATLAS caseworking system will include functionality to track and report on the (1) number, and (2) demographics, of individuals granted leave to remain with a 'no recourse to public funds' condition; and if so, when this functionality will be fully operational. [HL4531]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Atlas system records, as part of a leave to remain decision, whether an individual has been given a 'no recourse to public funds' (NRPF) condition, and every individual who has an immigration application record on Atlas has their nationality, gender and date of birth recorded as standard. Management Information related to the NRPF condition is expected to be available by late summer 2025, following the transition of caseworking for a small number of remaining immigration routes onto Atlas.

Iran: Capital Punishment

Asked by Baroness O'Loan

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Iran concerning ending executions in that country. [HL4547]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK opposes the death penalty in all circumstances as a matter of principle. We have repeatedly called on the Iranian government to establish a moratorium on executions, including at the UN Human Rights Council and UN Third Committee last year. We are committed to working with international partners to hold Iran accountable for its egregious use of the death penalty.

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they intend to make to the government of Iran concerning the execution sentences of Behrouz Ehsani and Mehdi Hassani. [HL4555]

Lord Collins of Highbury: We are aware of the reports relating to the death sentences of Behrouz Ehsani and Mehdi Hassani. We have repeatedly called on Iran to establish a moratorium on executions, including at the UN Human Rights Council and UN Third Committee last year. We continue to raise human rights issues directly with the Iranian government, including through our Ambassador in Tehran, and are committed to working with international partners to expose Iran's application of the death penalty in multilateral fora.

Iran: Crimes against Humanity

Asked by Baroness O'Loan

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to bring a case against Iran before the International Court of Justice for crimes against the people of Iran. [HL4545]

Lord Collins of Highbury: We are not currently bringing a case against Iran at the International Court of Justice relating to its human rights record. We continue to engage international partners on the best approach for holding Iran accountable for its continued violations; we were instrumental in delivering the Iran resolution, adopted by the UN Third Committee in November 2024, which spotlighted and condemned Iran's repression of fundamental rights, including in relation to the death penalty, women and girls, and religious and ethnic minorities. We continue to support the UN Fact-Finding Mission on Iran, which is essential for investigating alleged crimes by the Islamic Republic against protesters during nationwide protests in 2022-23, and we look forward to its next report in March 2025.

Iran: Human Rights

Asked by Baroness O'Loan

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Iran to desist from human rights abuses in that country. [HL4546]

Lord Collins of Highbury: We continue to take significant action in multilateral fora to urge the Islamic Republic to cease its human rights violations, including at

the UN Human Rights Council and UN Third Committee. We were instrumental in delivering the Iran Resolution, adopted by the Third Committee in November 2024, which spotlighted and condemned Iran's continued violations, including in relation to the death penalty, women and girls, and religious and ethnic minorities. In January 2025, the Foreign Secretary raised human rights directly with his Iranian counterpart. We will continue to raise rights issues directly with the regime, including through our Ambassador in Tehran.

Iran: Political Prisoners

Asked by *Baroness O'Loan*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to co-ordinate international efforts to secure the release of human rights defenders in prisons in Iran. [HL4544]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK was instrumental in delivering the Iran Human Rights Resolution, adopted by the UN Third Committee in November 2024, which called on Iran to immediately and unconditionally release persons arbitrarily detained for the exercise of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, including human rights defenders. In September 2024, we issued a joint statement alongside international partners, which underlined our commitment to human rights defenders in Iran fighting for fundamental freedoms. We will continue to work with international partners to hold Iran to account for its repression of human rights defenders.

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

Asked by *Baroness O'Loan*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they are planning to proscribe the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organisation. [HL4548]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Government keeps the list of proscribed organisations under close review, as we seek to protect the UK from the threats that we face. However, we will not routinely comment on whether an organisation is or is not being considered for proscription.

Iran's malign activities, including the activities of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. The UK already maintains sanctions on over 450 Iranian individuals and entities covering human rights abuses, nuclear proliferation, malign influence internationally and state threats, including sanctioning the IRGC in its entirety. The Government will continue to consider what further steps may be taken to deter Iran's malign activity.

The National Security Act 2023 provides another significant toolkit in the fight against individuals working for state entities like the IRGC. The UK is now a harder target for those states which seek to conduct hostile acts against the UK, including espionage, interference in our political system, sabotage, and assassination.

Jobcentre Plus

Asked by *Baroness Stedman-Scott*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will publish the job entry and sustainability rates for Jobcentre Plus and its contractors. [HL4556]

Asked by *Baroness Stedman-Scott*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the review of devolution and local government will impact any plans to (1) publish the job entry and sustainability rates for Jobcentre Plus and its contractors, and (2) merge Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service. [HL4558]

Baroness Sherlock: DWP is always exploring ways to publish more information to enrich the public discourse.

DWP published new analysis of Universal Credit (UC) into-work rates and flows between conditionality groups - including what proportion did not flow out of the UC "Searching for work" labour market regime, over a six month period, as part of the recent Get Britain Working White Paper [here](#).

Plans are being developed for regular and proportional update to this analysis.

Additionally, statistics and management information on contracted employment provisions such as Restart and the Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs) interventions are published on Gov.UK ([Restart Scheme statistics to October 2024 - GOV.UK](#), [Sector-based Work Academy Programmes \(SWAPs\) Management Information, April 2021 to March 2024 - GOV.UK](#)).

Jobcentre Plus: National Careers Service

Asked by *Baroness Stedman-Scott*

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress has been made in the merger of Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service. [HL4557]

Baroness Sherlock: We are reforming Jobcentre Plus and creating a new service across Great Britain that will enable everyone to access support to find good, meaningful work, and support to help them to progress in work, including through an enhanced focus on skills and careers. We will design, develop, and test options for the new service in partnership with key stakeholders as we move into policy design and delivery.

As a first step to better integrate employment support and careers advice in England, we will launch a pathfinder in early 2025 to test more enhanced collaboration between Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service. The department has also worked with the Department for Education to put in place a new agreement on data sharing between the National Careers Service and Jobcentre Plus in England. This will be used to encourage closer co-operation in the collective delivery of jobs and careers guidance for adults and promote a simpler and more streamlined process for our customers. Joining up the support a customer receives from both a

work coach and national careers advisor can remove unnecessary repetition, link up advice and ensure holistic support for the customer to help improve outcomes.

We currently have two large scale trials in progress contributing towards our vision for the new jobs and careers service. The first, to test providing support for people by telephone and video as well as face to face appointments. The second, to test whether meeting unemployed people less frequently in a Jobcentre would have an impact on their work outcomes and whether this approach is more beneficial for particular groups.

Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme

Asked by Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay

To ask His Majesty's Government on what date the new annual limit of £25,000 per institution on claims from the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme will commence; and whether it will apply to works begun before that date. [HL4549]

Baroness Twycross: We will provide updated information on scheme applications and eligibility in due course, before April.

Local Government: Reorganisation

Asked by Baroness Eaton

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the publication on 16 December 2024 of the English Devolution White Paper, whether a degree of flexibility will be applied when considering proposals for new authorities which fall below a population of 500,000. [HL4622]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: On 5 February the Minister for English Devolution and Local Government wrote to all councils in two-tier areas and small neighbouring unitaries to invite them to prepare proposals for reorganisation. This invitation set out guidance from the Secretary of State for proposals including that new unitaries must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks. As a guiding principle, new councils should aim for a population of 500,000 or more. There may be certain scenarios in which this 500,000 figure does not make sense for an area, including on devolution, and this rationale should be set out in a proposal.

Medical Equipment: Procurement

Asked by Baroness Golding

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to replace or update (1) medical diagnostic equipment that will become obsolete during the 2026–27 financial year, and (2) medical diagnostic equipment that is falling behind current technology. [HL4636]

Baroness Merron: The Darzi Report highlights the significant underinvestment of capital in the National Health Service, with outdated scanners, too little

automation, and a failure to enter the digital era. Patients have been let down for too long whilst they wait for the care they need, including diagnostic testing, which is key to the majority of elective and cancer pathways.

£1.65 billion of additional capital funding has been allocated in the budget for 2025/26 to support NHS performance across secondary and emergency care. This investment includes funding for new surgical hubs and diagnostic scanners, to build capacity for over 30,000 additional procedures and over 1.25 million diagnostic tests as they come online, new beds across the estate to create more treatment space in emergency departments, reduce waiting times, and help shift more care into the community, and £70 million to invest in new radiotherapy machines to improve cancer treatment.

As detailed in the 2025/26 capital guidance, published on 30 January 2025, NHS England has provided systems with their operational capital envelopes, which include funding for the replacement of diagnostic scanners, such as computed tomography and magnetic resonance imaging machines, and radiotherapy equipment, outside of national programme funding. These allocations are managed locally, with systems prioritising investments in line with their clinical and operational needs. Some targeted national programme funding is also available for strategic priorities, such as the expansion of Community Diagnostic Centres and the improvement of cancer treatment capacity.

Future capital investment beyond 2025/26, including funding for the replacement of medical diagnostic equipment from 2026/27 onwards, will be considered as part of the next Spending Review.

The Elective Reform Plan, published in January 2025, sets out the reforms needed to return to the 18-week Referral to Treatment (RTT) constitutional standard by March 2029, a standard which has not been met consistently since September 2015. The plan commits to transforming and expanding diagnostic services, and speeding up waiting times for tests, a crucial part of reducing overall waiting times and returning to the RTT standard.

Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency

Asked by Lord Kamall

To ask His Majesty's Government what metrics the Medicines and Healthcare products and Regulatory Agency use to monitor and improve their management of the safety of (1) medicine products, (2) medical devices, (3) blood and blood products; and how regularly are these metrics reviewed. [HL4642]

Baroness Merron: Patient safety is the highest priority for the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). The MHRA uses a range of metrics to monitor and improve its management of safety.

Specific safety metrics include the total number of safety signals identified for further assessment, the

percentage of adverse drug reaction reports processed within agreed timescales, the percentage of potential signals evaluated within five working days, the number of defective medicinal product recalls, and the number of interventions conducted by the Criminal Enforcement Unit that are assessed to have disrupted or degraded an identified criminal threat. Performance against these metrics is outlined in the MHRA's Annual Report and Accounts. Further metrics are used internally within the MHRA to monitor performance for all types of medicinal products, including medical devices.

For blood components, the MHRA works with the Serious Hazards of Transfusion Steering Group, to measure safety outcomes associated with transfusion and make recommendations to the system to reduce safety incidents through an annual report.

In 2024, the MHRA updated their reporting processes and established a new set of eight key performance indicators. These were outlined in its 2024/25 Business Plan.

NHS: Capital Investment

Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Merron on 30 January (HL3973), what was the total cumulative impairment of public dividend capital for each NHS provider listed in that answer in each of the past 10 financial years, broken down by financial year. [HL4610]

Baroness Merron: The attached table shows the cumulative Public Dividend Capital impairment for each of the listed NHS Providers in HL3973, per year, for the past seven financial years.

Please note that as detailed on page 187 of the document, *Department of Health and Social Care Annual Report and Accounts 2019-20*, Public Dividend Capital impairments have only been recognised on an individual provider basis by the Department since the 2019/20 Annual Report and Accounts, which included a prior period adjustment to apply the same across 2017/18 and 2018/19. Due to the size of the document, a copy has been placed in the Library.

For this reason, the Department has been unable to provide data for the past 10 financial years, although the Department has provided the full information held.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Table for HL4610 [HL4610 Table.docx]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-02-03/HL4610>

Nigeria: Abduction

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have had with Nigerian

authorities about the continued captivity of Leah Sharibu and the remaining Chibok girls; and what assistance they are offering to secure their safe return. [HL4613]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK Government strongly condemns the abduction and continued captivity of children by Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa (ISWA) in North East Nigeria, and has repeatedly called for their release. This includes the 2014 kidnapping of the Chibok schoolgirls, around 90 of whom are understood still to be missing, as well as Leah Sharibu, who has remained in Islamic State West Africa captivity since 2018. The UK Government has raised Leah's case with the Government of Nigeria, and I will continue to raise this important issue in my future engagements with them. More broadly, we continue to support the Government of Nigeria to tackle insecurity and prevent further kidnappings, which includes support to Nigeria's anti-kidnap cell, through the UK-Nigeria Security and Defence Partnership.

Nigeria: Blasphemy

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government when they last held discussions with the Nigerian authorities on the need to address the impunity surrounding blasphemy-related violence, including by ensuring justice in the cases of Deborah Emmanuel, Usman Buda and other victims. [HL4614]

Lord Collins of Highbury: Dialogue on human rights, including Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), is a vital part of the UK's partnership with Nigeria. The UK Government was an active participant in Nigeria's Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council in January 2024 and recommended that the Nigerian Government ensures that the human rights of those accused of blasphemy are protected and that those responsible for blasphemy related mob-killings are held accountable. The UK Government proactively raises cases where blasphemy legislation has been used to restrict human rights with the Nigerian authorities. More broadly, the UK Government funds the provision of legal and judicial expertise to make legislative changes to protect FoRB, including addressing blasphemy laws. The right of individuals to express their beliefs or non-belief is essential to a free and open society.

Nigeria: Internally Displaced People

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Winchester

To ask His Majesty's Government what measures they are taking to ensure that aid distributed to displaced people in Nigeria reaches those displaced by violence in central states committed by armed non-state actors. [HL4676]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK funds civil society organisations to provide assistance to people displaced by

conflict and violence across Nigeria, so they have access to food, healthcare and nutrition, and protection and water. The UK is a donor to the Start Fund which provides rapid financing in response to small to medium scale crises including helping people affected by conflict, flooding and cholera outbreaks in Nigeria. Additionally, the UK's Strengthening Peace and Resilience programme ('SPRING') is working to reduce rural violence in northwest and north-central Nigeria, including supporting collaboration and productive livelihoods for both farmers and pastoralists.

Nigeria: Terrorism

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the threat posed by emerging jihadist groups in Nigeria following the resurgence of the Lakurawa terrorist faction. [HL4615]

Lord Collins of Highbury: Nigeria is witnessing rising conflict and insecurity, including violent extremism. This Government continues to monitor events in northern Nigeria closely and believes there remains a severe threat posed by terrorist groups including Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa who target all those who do not subscribe to their extremist views.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking, as part of their Security and Defence Partnership with Nigeria, to assist in protecting farming communities in central Nigeria from ongoing violent attacks by armed non-state actors. [HL4616]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK Government is committed to supporting Nigeria to address security challenges, including intercommunal violence, through the UK-Nigeria Security and Defence Partnership (SDP). The UK-Nigeria SDP works with Nigeria's security forces to tackle violence against civilian communities. Additionally, our Strengthening Peace and Resilience programme ('SPRING') is working to reduce rural violence in northwest and north-central Nigeria, including by supporting collaboration and productive livelihoods for both farmers and pastoralists, and strengthening conflict early warning, management and response.

North Korea: Nuclear Power

Asked by Lord Swire

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the new administration in the USA about recognising the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a nuclear power. [HL4387]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK remains committed to the international non-proliferation regime and strongly encourages all UN Member States including our G7 partners to employ strict vigilance over potential proliferation efforts conducted by the Democratic

People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). We continue to encourage the DPRK to return to full compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to honour its international obligations in accordance with existing United Nations Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs). We regularly discuss a range of issues related to international peace and security with our close ally the United States of America.

Oak National Academy

Asked by Lord Tope

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will publish the findings of the Oak National Academy independent review when it is concluded. [HL4458]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The findings of the independent review of Oak National Academy will be published in due course.

Ofcom

Asked by Lord Inglewood

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the adequacy of the current framework for Ofcom in promoting economic growth under (1) the general duties of Ofcom under section 3 of the Communications Act 2003, (2) its interpretation through the Government's statements of strategic priorities, and (3) the growth duty extended to Ofcom. [HL4538]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: Ofcom's central duty is to further the interests of citizens and consumers, where appropriate by promoting competition, and having regard, amongst other things, to encouraging investment and innovation. Resultantly, Ofcom's regulatory regime supports the drivers of economic growth in the markets they regulate, and the impact of this on these sectors can be seen, for example, in how the telecoms market has grown 25% in the last ten years.

The current statement of Strategic Priorities for Telecommunications, Spectrum Management and Postal Services was designated in 2019. The digital landscape and market conditions have changed significantly since then, and we are currently updating the Statement to respond to these changes and set out the Government's key priorities for these sectors that support Government's mission to kickstart economic growth.

Orphan Drugs

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the "cliff edge" in incremental cost-effectiveness ratios on orphan medicines that narrowly miss the criteria to be appraised by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's highly specialised technologies programme, and the resulting impact on access to

treatments for people living with rare diseases. [HL4656]

Baroness Merron: The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) highly specialised technologies programme makes recommendations for the National Health Service on the use of medicines for the treatment of patients with very rare diseases with a high unmet need. The NICE's methods and processes for the evaluation of highly specialised technologies represents a deliberate departure from its standard technology appraisal methods, as it recognises the challenges of bringing treatment for very rare diseases to market.

Decisions on whether medicines are routed to the highly specialised technologies programme are taken on the basis of a set of criteria that have been carefully developed through public and stakeholder engagement, and which have recently been subject to a public consultation. The NICE is currently considering responses to the consultation and expects to implement the final updated criteria in April 2025. The NICE is able to recommend most orphan medicines evaluated through its standard technology appraisal programme for use in the NHS.

Overseas Students: Cyprus

Asked by Lord Wharton of Yarm

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to introduce new scholarships for students from Northern Cyprus to study in the UK. [HL4467]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The department does not have any plans to introduce scholarships for students from Cyprus to study in the UK.

There are a range of resources and support for international students looking for scholarships, which can be found on the UK Council for International Student Affairs website and the British Council's Study UK page.

Higher education (HE) providers in the UK offer a range of bursaries and scholarships to international students. We encourage students to ask their HE provider for information on support that may be available.

Physician Associates: Recruitment

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what advice they are giving to GP surgeries on the recruitment of new physician associates in the light of the recommendations of the Royal College of Physicians' guidance Physician Associates in general practice: Scope of practice (9 October 2024); and what estimate have they made of the number of physician associates recruited by GP surgeries since that advice was issued. [HL4685]

Baroness Merron: NHS England does not hold data on the number of Physician Associates (PAs) recruited by general practices (GPs) since 9 October 2024.

On 20 November 2024, the Government announced it had commissioned an independent review of PAs and Anaesthesia Associates (AAs), led by Professor Gillian Leng CBE. The review will consider the safety of the roles and their contribution to multidisciplinary healthcare teams. The review will report in spring 2025.

While the review is ongoing, it is up to trusts, Primary Care Networks, and GPs to make recruitment decisions about PAs.

NHS England has issued guidance on the deployment of PAs and AAs in the National Health Service which describes the expectations of how organisations providing NHS care should deploy them so that they can contribute to the delivery of safe and effective healthcare in a supportive environment. This guidance remains in place whilst the review is ongoing, and is available at the NHS.UK website, in an online only format.

Primary Education: School Libraries

Asked by Baroness Redfern

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the level of library provision in primary schools. [HL4552]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: I refer the noble Lady to the answer of 28 January 2025 to Question 25143.

Pupils: Carers

Asked by Lord Hampton

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve the recording of young carers in the school census. [HL4536]

Asked by Lord Hampton

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to add young carers to the daily attendance reporting to help improve their attendance. [HL4537]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The department wants to ensure that young carers have the best life chances by supporting them in their education. They were first added to the School Census in the 2022/23 academic year. This change has raised both awareness and the profile of young carers in schools. It has, for the first time, provided hard data on both the numbers of young carers in schools and their education.

The department expects the quality of the data returns to continue to improve as the collection becomes established. 72% of schools did not record any young carers in 2024.

The department produces guidance, which is periodically reviewed with the sector, to ensure that our data asks are clear and that schools understand how to record all elements of the School Census, including identification of young carers. Further, the School Census has embedded validation rules to maintain the quality of the data which mean that for all pupils, schools must

respond to say whether or not the child has been identified as a young carer. We will continue to work closely with the sector, including organisations that work directly with schools in the support of young carers, to encourage better identification, recording and support for young carers in schools.

The department's expectations of local authorities and schools, as set out in the 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance, were made statutory on 19 August 2024. The guidance can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>. The 'support first' ethos of the attendance guidance is that pupils and families, including young carers, should receive holistic, whole-family support to help them overcome the barriers to attendance they are facing. This includes holding regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school, and/or local authority, consider to be vulnerable to discuss attendance and engagement at school. Schools are expected to recognise that absence is a symptom and that improving a pupil's attendance is part of supporting the pupil's overall welfare.

The daily attendance data collection has been established to ensure consistent recording and monitoring of pupil attendance, support the identification of absence patterns, and help schools and local authorities provide appropriate interventions. We will continue to monitor the quality of school census data on young carers for consideration for future inclusion in the daily collection.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Working together to improve school attendance [HL4536 HL4536 attachment - Working together to improve school attendance guidance.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-01-29/HL4536>

Pupils: Reading

*Asked by **Baroness Redfern***

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to encourage reading in schools. [HL4553]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: I refer the noble Lady to the answer of 28 January 2025 to Question 25144.

Schools: Admissions

*Asked by **Lord Weir of Ballyholme***

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the likely increase in pupil numbers in state schools in the next year arising from a reduction in the number of pupils being privately educated. [HL4466]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

As set out in HM Treasury's government response to the technical note on applying VAT to private school fees and removing the business rates charitable rate relief, the government estimates that approximately 3,000 pupils will move from private schools to state schools in the 2024/25 academic year. The response can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-on-private-school-fees-removing-the-charitable-rates-relief-for-private-schools>.

The government predicts that in the long-term steady state, 37,000 pupils will leave or never enter the UK private school sector as a result of the removal of the VAT exemption applied to school fees. This represents around 6% of the current private school population.

Of those leaving or never entering the private sector, the government estimates an increase of 35,000 pupils in the state sector in the steady state following the VAT policy taking effect, with the other 2,000 either being international pupils who do not move into the UK state system, or domestic pupils moving into homeschooling. This state sector increase represents less than 0.5% of total UK state school pupils, of which there are over 9 million. This movement is expected to take place over several years. Additionally, the government expects approximately 2,900 pupils will move into state schools in England following the business rates policy taking effect.

As such, the impact on the state education system as a whole is expected to be very small.

Local authorities, devolved governments and schools have processes in place to support pupils moving between schools. Children move between and within the private sector and the state-funded sector every year, for a range of reasons.

Schools: Finance

*Asked by **Lord Weir of Ballyholme***

To ask His Majesty's Government what additional funding a school receives for each additional pupil. [HL4465]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: Every year, the department uses the schools national funding formula (NFF) to distribute core funding for 5 to 16-year-old pupils (reception to year 11) in respect of mainstream state-funded schools in England. The NFF determines how much funding will be available for schools in each local area. The precise sum received by an individual school is then determined by the local formula set by the appropriate local authority.

In the current NFF, the vast majority of funding is distributed on the basis of pupil numbers and pupils' characteristics. In 2025/26, 74.2% (£36.0 billion) of the schools NFF has been allocated through basic entitlement funding, which every pupil attracts. A further 17.8% (£8.6 billion) of all funding has been allocated through additional needs factors based on deprivation, low prior attainment, English as an additional language and

mobility. Therefore, the amount of additional funding a school attracts through the NFF for each additional pupil depends on the characteristics of that pupil. For example, in 2025/26, every primary age pupil attracts £3,847 in basic entitlement funding but would also attract an additional £495 if they were entitled to free school meals. The factor values for 2025/26 are attached and can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-funding-formula-for-schools-and-high-needs-2025-to-2026>.

Through the dedicated schools grant, we are allocating a national average of £6,466 per pupil in 2025/26 in mainstream schools, compared to £6,330 in 2024/25 (including premises and growth funding). This represents a 2.15% increase per pupil on average in 2025/26 compared to 2024/25.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

National Funding Formula policy document
[National_Funding_Formula_Policy_document.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-01-27/HL4465>

UK East-West Council

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask His Majesty's Government how many times the East–West Council has met since its formation. [HL4494]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The East-West Council has met once since its formation on 26

March 2024. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland hopes to announce the next meeting shortly.

Women: Terminology

Asked by Lord Reay

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have an agreed single definition of “woman”. [HL4653]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Equality Act 2010 states that a woman is a female of any age. This Government is steadfast in its commitment to supporting all women including making work pay and keeping our streets safe.

Yao Aichan

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask His Majesty's Government when they last made representations to the government of China on the arrest and disappearance of Yao Aichan; and what response they received. [HL4794]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The environment for freedom of religion or belief in China is restrictive, which includes the persecution of Christians. This Government stands firm on human rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief. We raise our concerns at the highest levels: the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and Chancellor all raised human rights recently with their counterparts (President Xi, Foreign Minister Wang and Vice Premier He respectively). More broadly, this Government champions freedom of religion or belief for all abroad. We work to uphold the right to freedom of religion or belief through our position at the UN, G7 and other multilateral fora, and through bilateral engagement.

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