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**Thursday
13 March 2025**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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[I] indicates that the member concerned has a relevant registered interest. The full register of interests can be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/register-of-lords-interests/>

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| Lord Leong | Whip |
| Lord Livermore | Financial Secretary, HM Treasury |
| Baroness Merron | Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care |
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| 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 |
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Written Statements

Thursday, 13 March 2025

Board of Trade: Appointments

[HLWS514]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Business and Trade (Jonathan Reynolds MP) has today made the following statement.

I am delighted to announce that I have appointed a new Board of Trade.

The newly formed Board will be an advocate for UK businesses at home and abroad, championing the country's 5.5 million SMEs and realising their export potential. This will help super-charge growth for the economy as part of the Plan for Change.

The newly appointed advisers have been handpicked for their deep sector expertise and knowledge, representing some of the UK's most successful businesses. They will play a crucial role in supporting the department's growth priorities, focusing on supporting small businesses and boosting exports.

The Secretary of State is pleased to appoint:

- Omar Ali
- Mike Hawes OBE
- Dame Vivian Hunt DBE
- Allison Kirkby
- Paul Lindley OBE
- Catherine McGuinness CBE
- Michelle Ovens CBE
- Mike Soutar
- Sarah Walker
- Dr Charles Woodburn CBE

In addition to the following *ex officio* advisers:

- Secretary of State for Scotland, The Rt Hon Ian Murray MP
- Secretary of State for Wales, The Rt Hon Jo Stevens MP
- Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, The Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP
- The Lord Mayor of London, Alastair King
- Minister of State for Investment, Baroness Gustafsson of Chesterton CBE
- Minister of State for Industry, Sarah Jones MP
- Minister of State for Trade Policy and Economic Security, The Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP
- Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment Rights, Competition and Markets, Justin Madders MP

- Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Services, Small Business and Exports, Gareth Thomas MP

- Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Future Digital Economy and Online Safety, Baroness in Waiting (Government Whip), and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Legislation), Baroness Jones of Whitchurch

The role as a Board of Trade adviser is unpaid and voluntary.

Correction of Written Parliamentary Question HL3750

[HLWS513]

Baroness Merron: On the 14 May 2024 written Parliamentary Question HL3750, tabled by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath, was answered by Lord Markham.

It has been brought to my attention by officials that this answer contains an error in the narrative which accompanied the table of figures. NHS Resolution (NHSR) provided the figures in the table but the accompanying narrative mislabelled the figures as relating to Clinical Negligence Scheme for Trusts only when in fact they cover all of NHSR's indemnity schemes.

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

Through this Written Ministerial Statement, I would like to apologise on behalf of the Department and NHSR and clarify the situation with regards to the narrative accompanying the table in this response. The department takes its responsibility for parliamentary accountability very seriously.

The answer to the question should be:

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

NHS Resolution manages clinical negligence and other claims against the National Health Service in England. The table shows the amounts paid in accordance with scheme rules, under all indemnity schemes administered by NHS Resolution, to support trusts at inquests and for associated costs to investigate entitlement to compensation during the last five years.

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

Flood Recovery Framework

[HLWS515]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: My Honourable Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Local Growth and Building Safety (Alex Norris MP) has today made the following statement:

I would first like to thank all of those who supported local communities in the wake of severe flooding following Storm Babet in October 2023 and Storm Henk in January 2024 and who have done so again after more recent flooding. My thoughts remain with householders and business owners impacted by flooding, which is a devastating experience for all those affected. It is important that we recognise the enormous amount of effort that has gone into supporting households, businesses, farms and communities to repair and recover from these floods.

In the days that followed Storms Babet and Henk, government activated the Flood Recovery Framework to provide funding support to households, businesses and farms in the worst affected areas of England.

To date, across all of the Framework's schemes (Community Recovery Grant, Business Recovery Grant, council tax discount, business rates relief and the Property Flood Resilience Scheme) the government has supported over 8,500 homes and businesses across 130 local authorities, re-imbursed over £8.2m and committed a further estimated £18m in future payments. In addition, the Farming Recovery Fund has provided £57.5m to 13,000 farmers via a one-off recovery payment to support recultivating productive agricultural land, following Storms Babet and Henk and the exceptional winter weather in late 2023 and early 2024.

As is normal practice following events of this scale, a post activation review has been undertaken which has identified a number of administration process changes and policy questions for further consideration.

In response to feedback from local authorities and Honourable Members, we have acted swiftly, agreeing measures to enable faster identification of eligible areas by allowing local authorities to provide verified flooded property data directly to government, extending the time to claim business and community recovery grants by one month so that support can be provided to all those in need, reducing the administrative burden on local authorities by reducing the frequency of reporting, and improving communications with councils through targeted, regular engagement and direct links into Departments.

We will keep under review our support for those who have had their homes and businesses devastated by flooding. Climate change means we are likely to see more frequent severe weather and flooding and it is vital that we have the right measures in place to support communities.

Horizon Shortfall Scheme

[HLWS516]

Lord Livermore: My honourable friend the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (James Murray), has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

As the Minister for Services, Small Business and Exports (Gareth Thomas) has previously announced, the Department for Business and Trade is introducing an independent Horizon Shortfall Scheme Appeals (HSSA) process to ensure all claimants have a fair opportunity to receive full compensation, in line with the recommendations of the Horizon Compensation Advisory Board.

The Government is committed to taking swift action to ensure affected postmasters receive the financial redress they are owed, with minimal administrative burden. To this end, the Government will ensure that no income tax, Capital Gains Tax, National Insurance contributions, corporation tax, or inheritance tax will be payable on any compensation received through the appeals process.

The Government will legislate via secondary legislation to formalise this tax exemption shortly.

Terrorism Legislation Review

[HLWS518]

Lord Hanson of Flint: My hon Friend the Minister of State for Security (Dan Jarvis) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I would like to update the House on the report commissioned by the Home Secretary and published today by the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation into law in the wake of the Southport attack.

The barbaric murder of three young girls in Southport last Summer is a scarring moment in our history. We think of those little girls, Elsie Dot Stancombe, Bebe King and Alice da Silva Aguiar, whose lives were devastatingly cut short. We think of their families' agony. And we think of those who survived the attack but live with physical and emotional scars.

In January, the perpetrator was sentenced to 52 years in prison for his horrifying crimes. It is highly likely he will never be released.

As the Prime Minister said, the responsibility for this barbaric act lies with the vile individual who carried it out, but that provides no comfort.

When the Home Secretary addressed the House on this matter in January, she set out the next steps the Government would take – including on establishing a public inquiry, on reforms to Prevent and on the legislative framework.

The inquiry will examine the issues raised in this case but also wider challenges around the rising levels of predominantly young men and boys fixated with extreme

violence who may pose a risk to society. We are moving swiftly to set up the inquiry. It is expected to begin within weeks, once we have completed the important consultation with the families and victims. We intend to announce further details by the end of this month.

Within the wider Prevent system, we are learning lessons to get ahead of this changing threat, and to ensure we have the early intervention capabilities we need to keep the public safe. The Home Secretary has previously announced new measures to strengthen Prevent decision-making.

Since then, we have extended Channel multi-agency support to new cohorts, launched new pilots to ensure those below Prevent thresholds get the support they need, and appointed an interim Prevent Commissioner to bring robust independent oversight.

The appalling attack in Southport terrorised an entire community. The police and CPS determined that it was not an act of terrorism under the legal definition of terrorism set out in the Terrorism Act 2000, because there is no evidence that the perpetrator's purpose was to advance a political, religious, racial, or ideological cause. The court accepted that conclusion.

However, we should be in no doubt about its seriousness. The judge described the attack as 'equivalent in its seriousness to terrorist murders'. And as the Prime Minister and Home Secretary have set out, this case comes against a backdrop of growing numbers of cases of violence-fixated individuals and young people being drawn into extreme violence and radicalisation.

The Met Commissioner has warned of "young men who are fixated on violence... grazing across extremist and terrorist content", whilst Five Eyes counter-terror partners have also warned about growing radicalisation of minors.

The most significant terror threat remains from Islamist extremism, followed by extreme right-wing activity, and we must be continually vigilant against these ideological threats.

But we also need to ensure that the legal framework is strong enough to respond to extreme violence where ideology is not apparent or is less clear.

In the light of this serious and growing problem, the Home Secretary announced to Parliament in January that she had asked the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation to examine the legal framework around terrorism and the powers available to tackle this kind of extreme violent attack. The Reviewer has published that report today.

Firstly, we are grateful to the Independent Reviewer for his thorough analysis of the terrorism framework in response to this horrific attack and his important conclusion which the Government accepts that the law does need to change to respond to the rise in extreme violence in cases where ideology is unclear or cannot be proven.

Jonathan Hall KC concludes that the legal definition of terrorism is already wide and should not be changed any further. The Government accepts his conclusion.

However, the Independent Reviewer considers there is a gap in the wider criminal law. The Prime Minister has been clear that if the law needs to change to recognise this new and dangerous threat, then we will change it – and quickly.

The Reviewer notes there is no offence currently for possession of an article in private with intent to carry out a mass casualty attack, or other offence of extreme violence.

We are grateful for his consideration of this point and his conclusion that this point is already being addressed by a new measure, currently before Parliament in the Crime and Policing Bill. This will make it an offence to possess a bladed article with intent to cause unlawful violence and applies whether the possession is in public or private.

The Reviewer also concludes that within existing criminal law, "there is a real and not theoretical gap for lone individuals who plan mass killings". On that basis, he recommends that Government consider creating a new offence where an individual intends to kill two or more persons and prepares for such an attack. We accept and strongly support this recommendation. I can confirm we will fix the legislation to close the gaps identified.

Finally, the Independent Reviewer draws attention to the challenges of communicating transparently and effectively following an act of extreme violence in the digital age.

It is a cornerstone of our democracy and our tradition of trial by jury that trials are fair, and justice is served. For that reason there have long been restrictions on what can be said before and during a trial.

However, the tragic events in Southport in July last year showed how social media is putting those long-established rules under strain, especially where partial or inaccurate information appears online.

That's why the Home Secretary, the Lord Chancellor and the Attorney General have asked the Law Commission to expedite elements of their ongoing review into Contempt of Court, and why Counter Terrorism Policing are also already considering what information can be released in the aftermath of major incidents.

The Government has been clear that we wish to maximise transparency and ensure that public authorities are able to take into account the wider risks to public safety to counter misinformation and disinformation. We are grateful to the Law Commission for agreeing to accelerate their consideration of this important issue and will carefully consider their findings when they are published later this year.

I would like to reiterate our thanks again to the Independent Reviewer for his comprehensive report and contribution to our efforts to fully learn the lessons of this terrible case. As the Home Secretary has already set out, today's report is an important step in the search for answers, and to tackle horrific acts driven by a fixation on extreme violence.

Victory in Europe and Japan: 80th Anniversaries

[HLWS517]

Baroness Twycross: I am repeating the following Written Ministerial Statement made today in the other place by my Honourable Friend, the Minister for Sport, Media, Civil Society and Youth, Stephanie Peacock MP:

The Government has announced plans to mark the 80th anniversaries of VE and VJ Day with a series of events and celebrations. It is my intention that we, as a nation, come together to mark this pivotal moment in our shared history.

Victory in Europe (VE Day), which takes place on Thursday 8 May 2025, marks the Allied Victory in Europe. The news resulted in millions celebrating the end of the war, with street parties, dancing and singing across the country. The war in the Far East did not end until 15 August 1945 with Victory over Japan (VJ) Day.

The Second World War touched every aspect of life and had a devastating impact on those who experienced it, and for the generations after. From the sailors, soldiers and aviators who fought, to children who were evacuated, and all those who stepped into essential roles on the home front, we owe it to the Second World War generation who 80 years ago fought for our freedom and paid the ultimate sacrifice in giving generations lasting peace.

Through a series of national and local events, we will unite to pay tribute to the millions of people across the UK and Commonwealth who served in the Second World War. VE and VJ Day 80 will be an opportunity for celebration, as it was across the streets of Britain in 1945, but also of commemoration as it will be one of the last opportunities to honour our living Second World War veterans. There is also a younger generation for whom the events of the Second World War - the sacrifices made, and the reasons for them - seem like distant history. It will be a time for us to come together to listen to their stories and reflect on their values that ensured the Allied victory - service and selflessness across our nation.

The Government has announced a programme of events and activities that will mark these anniversaries and reach into and connect communities across the country through educational outreach, and cultural and creative activity. This will include a military procession and flypast on Monday 5 May, Westminster Abbey Service and VE Day Concert on Thursday 8 May, and a service at the National Arboretum in partnership with the Royal British Legion, to commemorate VJ Day on 15 August. I am pleased today to announce further details of a truly inclusive National Engagement Programme that will complement this series of events; and I am delighted to be working with the Devolved Governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to ensure the commemorations are UK-wide. There are many exciting ways that Members of both Houses of Parliament, and members of the public, can get involved.

To ensure that all communities across the UK feel engaged in the stories of VE and VJ Day, the Government

has already announced plans for UK-wide street parties on Monday 5 May through the Great British Food Festival, supported by The Big Lunch and Together Coalition. Street parties, BBQs and community get togethers will be held across the UK, made easy with the launch of The Big Lunch Guide to Bringing People Together, full of event planning resources and tips, craft activities and conversation prompts for communities hosting local celebrations. Funding has been made available through the National Lottery Community Fund Awards for All programme for organisations to bid for grants to host events, activities and projects this year for communities to come together.

In order to prepare for those events I am delighted to announce the introduction of Tip Top Towns, where we are inviting communities across the UK - whether town, village or city - to share how they are coming together for VE Day 80. We want the public, volunteer networks and community groups to take part in activities that will get them in the community spirit ready for 5th May, whether that be preparing community gardens, hosting craft events to create street party decorations, sprucing up their local areas or encouraging children to draw pictures to put in their windows. The public are invited to share their pictures of activity on our webpage and across social media using the #VE80 hashtag, with VE Day certificates available to all who participate. Young people will be at the heart of this, including Uniformed Youth groups with a special VE Day commemorative badge being introduced by the Scouts.

The value of these commemorations lies in their ability to connect generations. It is vital that our young people understand the impact of the Second World War, and that they have the opportunity to hear the stories of our living Second World War veterans first hand before it is too late. This is an opportunity for us to come together, to listen to the stories of those who lived through this period and to reflect on the values that secured the Allied victory.

The government has announced a number of new ways young people will be able to engage with veterans' stories as part of the VEVJ Day 80 commemorations. It is my strong commitment that every young person has the opportunity to learn about and connect with the stories of their forebears, ensuring that the sacrifices and experiences of those who served are remembered and passed on to future generations through VE Day 80: Our Shared Story.

As part of the government's national engagement programme, The National Theatre is developing a new production and film titled *The Next Morning*, which will focus on the hopes, dreams and ambitions of young people after the war and what that means for young people today. Written by James Graham, the fantastic writer of *Dear England*, it will offer a poignant opportunity for young people to really consider what the end of the Second World War means for their own lives, and their own ambitions.

The Imperial War Museums is also launching today a new initiative, *Letters to Loved Ones*, which will invite

school children to explore their own family histories to find stories from the war and share them. This will culminate in a joint event at Imperial War Museum North on Wednesday 7 May alongside the National Theatre.

To supplement this activity, a brand-new collection of educational resources to support young people's engagement with VE and VJ Day 80 both inside and outside the classroom will be developed. VE Day 80: Our Shared Story will include a range of resources, including the Royal British Legion's I'll Remember - Discovering the Stories of VE and VJ Day 80, the Imperial War Museum's Learning from Letters, and Atlantic Productions' new web-based augmented reality experience that brings moments from VE day to life, VE Day 80: Immersive.

In this 80th anniversary year, we must remember that whilst VE Day brought an end to the European war, the war continued to play out in Asia until Victory over Japan Day on 15 August.

It is vital we remember and honour those soldiers who continued to fight and to sacrifice, and within this we must not forget the hugely significant role played by the Commonwealth in Allied victory. I am hugely grateful to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the Imperial War Museums for all they are doing to work with us to ensure the stories of VJ Day are preserved and honoured for future generations.

I am pleased to announce that the Commonwealth War Graves will be undertaking a brand-new UK and international tour, "For Evermore". A mobile exhibition,

it will travel across the UK and the globe to the Pacific, bringing the stories of the Second World War to life. Their brand-new app "For Evermore" will be updated to offer interactive tours of key Commonwealth War Graves sites, allowing the public to explore history and connect with personal stories. At the heart of the tour will be the Torch of Peace - an enduring symbol which honours those who gave their lives, the importance of preserving their legacy, and a baton to share and pass stories to future generations.

In an increasingly uncertain and fragmented world, this anniversary has never been more important. It is only by learning from conflicts such as the Second World War and listening to their devastating effects from those who experienced them that we bring the realities of conflict to life. We must ensure that their stories live on not just in books, or paper, but in the hearts and minds of future generations. On this anniversary, we reaffirm our shared commitment to preserving the memory of the men and women across the UK and Commonwealth who served and sacrificed.

I look forward to seeing the exciting and creative ways in which communities choose to mark the 80th anniversaries of VE and VJ Day this year. Together, we will be able to make sure the stories and legacies of those who gave their lives will always have the same profound impact, as we continue to tell them to the generations to come.

The Department would welcome the support of colleagues across both Houses.

Written Answers

Thursday, 13 March 2025

Antidepressants: Suicide

Asked by **Lord Kamall**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many 'yellow card' reports of suicide after taking antidepressants were received by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency in 2015 and each subsequent year; and how many have been assessed for causation each year over the same time period. [HL5122]

Baroness Merron: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is responsible for ensuring medicines, medical devices and blood components for transfusion meet applicable standards of safety, quality and efficacy. The MHRA rigorously assesses available data, including from the Yellow Card scheme, and seeks advice from the Commission on Human Medicines, the MHRA's independent advisory committee, where appropriate, to inform regulatory decisions including amending the product information.

The MHRA has received a total of 112 reports through the Yellow Card scheme for all antidepressant medications of reports of completed suicide which have been received between 1 January 2015 and 25 February 2025. The following table shows a yearly breakdown thereof:

| <i>Year received</i> | <i>Number of reports received</i> |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2015 | 11 |
| 2016 | 14 |
| 2017 | 17 |
| 2018 | 14 |
| 2019 | 7 |
| 2020 | 10 |
| 2021 | 7 |
| 2022 | 11 |
| 2023 | 6 |
| 2024 | 11 |
| 2025 | 4 |

Source: MHRA

Note: List of antidepressant medications included in the search were: escitalopram, citalopram, paroxetine, fluoxetine, fluvoxamine, sertraline, venlafaxine, duloxetine, reboxetine, amitriptyline, clomipramine, dosulepin, dothiepin, doxepin, imipramine, lofepramine, nortriptyline, trimipramine, trazodone, Isocarboxazid, tranlycypromine, moclobemide, phenelzine, agomelatine,

vortioxetine, L-tryptophan, esketamine, mianserin, mirtazapine.

It is important to note that anyone can report to the MHRA's Yellow Card scheme and the recording of these reports in the Yellow Card database does not necessarily mean that the adverse reactions have been caused by the suspect drug. Many factors must be considered in assessing causal relationships, including temporal association, the possible contribution of concomitant medication, and the underlying disease. We encourage reporters to report suspected adverse reaction reports, the reporter does not have to be sure of a causal association between the drug and the reactions; a suspicion will suffice.

The number of reports received cannot be used as a basis for determining the incidence of a reaction, as neither the total number of reactions occurring, nor the number of patients using the drug, is known. All fatal reports including those reporting completed suicide are assessed by the MHRA and cumulative information is reviewed at regular intervals. Warnings about the risk of suicidal behaviours are contained in the product information for all licensed antidepressants and these warnings are based on causality assessments of individual case reports and the totality of evidence from clinical trials and the scientific literature.

Asylum: Age Assurance

Asked by **Baroness Lister of Burtersett**

To ask His Majesty's Government when they expect to receive the report about the use of age assessments from the Independent Chief Inspector or Borders and Immigration. [HL5312]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The ICIBI inspection on the Home Office's use of age assessments began on 10 September 2024 and is still ongoing.

Asylum: Hotels

Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of asylum seeker hotels; and whether there is a need to review the funding behind the scheme. [HL5379]

Lord Hanson of Flint: This government inherited an asylum system under exceptional strain, with tens of thousands of people stuck in limbo without any prospect of having their claims processed. At their peak use under the previous government, in the autumn of 2023, more than 400 asylum hotels were being leased by the Home Office, at a cost of almost £9 million a day.

We took immediate action to resolve that exceptional strain by restarting asylum processing, establishing the new Border Security Command to tackle the people-smuggling gangs, cracking down on illegal working across the country, and increasing the return and removal of people with no right to be here. Inevitably, due to the

size of the backlog we inherited, the Home Office has been forced to continue with the use of hotels for the time being.

It remains our absolute commitment to end the use of hotels over time, as part of our reduction in overall asylum accommodation costs. In the interim, we are also continuing to increase our operational activity against smuggling gangs and illegal working, and we have increased returns to their highest level since 2018, with almost 17,00 people removed between 5 July and 31 January 2025.

Ceramics: Stoke on Trent

Asked by Lord Freyberg

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential economic benefits of establishing a dedicated Cultural Heritage Zone in Stoke-on-Trent, similar to models employed in Jingdezhen, China, that might integrate pottery production with cultural tourism and educational opportunities. [HL5354]

Asked by Lord Freyberg

To ask His Majesty's Government what interdepartmental collaboration exists between the Department for Business and Trade and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to develop a comprehensive strategy for the sustainable growth of Stoke-on-Trent's pottery industry as both a manufacturing sector and a cultural asset. [HL5358]

Baroness Twycross: The Government recognises Stoke-on-Trent's rich ceramics heritage and its potential for economic growth. While no formal assessment has been made of the potential economic benefits of a dedicated Cultural Heritage Zone, we are continuing to support the city's creative and heritage sectors through a range of initiatives. Our support includes £370,000 to boost creative industry skills in Stoke-on-Trent College, alongside the Small Community and Heritage Assets Grants Programme which has supported creative businesses in the region.

Asked by Lord Freyberg

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to facilitate export opportunities for Stoke-on-Trent's pottery manufacturers, particularly to high-value international markets; and whether they have considered implementing targeted export assistance programs specifically for the sector. [HL5355]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) is committed to supporting businesses, including Stoke-on-Trent's pottery manufacturers, grow and export. Under the umbrella of the recently announced Business Growth Service, UK businesses can access DBT's wealth of export support via Great.gov.uk. This comprises an online support offer and a wider network of support including the Export

Academy, UK Export Finance, the International Markets network and one-to-one support from International Trade Advisers.

This support is available to all UK businesses including those that manufacture and wish to export pottery. DBT's International Trade Advisers will also continue to work closely with Ceramics UK to ensure businesses in the sector access this support.

Asked by Lord Freyberg

To ask His Majesty's Government what research they have commissioned or reviewed regarding the successful revitalisation strategies employed in Jingdezhen, China's pottery industry; and how these insights might be adapted to strengthen Stoke-on-Trent's ceramics sector while respecting its unique heritage and market position. [HL5356]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The Department of Business and Trade works closely with the sector to understand its challenges and provide support to help its global competitiveness.

Through our continued engagement with Ceramics UK and its membership, we will inquire whether the sector has any thoughts on revitalisation strategies deployed in China.

Childcare

Asked by Baroness Coffey

To ask His Majesty's Government which local authorities have shortages of available childcare places. [HL5346]

Asked by Baroness Coffey

To ask His Majesty's Government how many childcare places are provided by (1) public sector providers, and (2) private sector providers, for each local authority; and how many childcare places are provided by (a) public sector providers, and (b) private sector providers, nationally. [HL5348]

Asked by Baroness Coffey

To ask His Majesty's Government how many childcare places are provided in each local authority. [HL5350]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The department does not hold the data for public sector providers of childcare places in the format requested. The 2024 childcare and early years providers survey estimated there to be 54,700 Early Years providers in total, made up of 21,200 group-based providers, 9,700 school-based providers and 23,800 childminders. The survey estimated there to be 1,602,500 registered places, made up of 1,100,100 group-based provider places, 359,200 school-based provider places and 143,200 childminder places. The survey can be found here:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/childcare-and-early-years-provider-survey/2024>.

For private providers, Ofsted publishes information in 'Childcare providers and inspections: management information', which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/childcare-providers-and-inspections-management-information>, with reference to Table 2, column J which provides a detailed breakdown of places by private providers in each local authority. Table 2 is also provided in the attached excel document.

Under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities are responsible for ensuring that the provision of childcare is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area. Part B of the early education and childcare statutory guidance for local authorities highlights that local authorities are required to report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare, and to make this report available and accessible to parents. The department has regular contact with each local authority in England about their sufficiency of childcare and any issues they are facing. Where local authorities report sufficiency challenges, we discuss what action the local authority is taking to address those issues and, where needed, support the local authority with any specific requirements through our childcare sufficiency support contract. We do not currently have any reports of sufficiency issues in any local authority.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL5346_HL5348_HL5350_Childcare_providers_and_place
[HL5346_HL5348_HL5350_Childcare_providers_and_places_as_
at_31_December_2024.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-02-27/HL5346>

Childcare: Employers' Contributions

Asked by *Baroness Coffey*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether an impact assessment has been made of the impact of the planned rise in national insurance contributions on the number of childcare places to be provided (1) in total, and (2) by private sector providers. [HL5349]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government has agreed that public sector employers will receive compensation in recognition of their increased National Insurance contributions from April 2025. For early years, public sector employers are school-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools. For the early years sector, the department is providing £25 million of additional funding. This does not include support for the private sector, including private sector firms contracted by public sector entities.

All providers will benefit from the £75 million expansion grant to support the early years sector to deliver the final phase of the expanded childcare entitlements from September 2025. This funding is being provided in recognition of the significant level of

expansion required to support early years settings provide sufficient places for the new childcare entitlements.

This additional funding is on top of the over £8 billion the government expects to spend on early years entitlements in the 2025/26 financial year and the additional £25 million being provided to the sector as a result of the largest ever uplift to the early years pupil premium. The early years pupil premium rate will increase by over 45% in the 2025/26 financial year.

Community Energy Fund

Asked by *Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they plan to make an announcement on the future of the Community Energy Fund. [HL5362]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The Government recognises the important role community groups play in our efforts to tackle climate change and the sector's asks around future funding. Great British Energy will build on existing support for community energy by partnering with, and providing funding and support to community energy groups, to roll out up to 8GW of cleaner power. Further details will be set out in due course.

Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Artificial Intelligence and Arts

Asked by *Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay*

To ask His Majesty's Government to set out which meetings (1) the Secretary of State, and (2) other ministers at the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology have had with (a) artificial intelligence companies and advocacy groups, and (b) creative industry companies and advocacy groups, since July 2024. [HL5366]

Lord Vallance of Balham: The Government is committed to hearing a broad range of views to help inform its approach to copyright and AI.

Ministerial meetings are published according to normal transparency requirements on the gov.uk website.

The current best estimate of the number of meetings involving officials at the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (including the Intellectual Property Office) since July 2024 is in the table below.

| Month | Creative Industries | AI technology companies | Meetings with both sectors represented |
|---------------|---------------------|-------------------------|--|
| July '24 | 3 | 1 | |
| August '24 | 2 | 2 | |
| September '24 | 6 | 2 | |
| October '24 | 12 | 3 | 3 |
| November '24 | 8 | 6 | 1 |
| December '24 | 4 | 5 | 2 |

| Month | Creative Industries | AI technology companies | Meetings with both sectors represented |
|--------------|---------------------|-------------------------|--|
| January '25 | 9 | 12 | 5 |
| February '25 | 8 | 8 | 6 |

This includes meetings where officials from both departments attended.

Drugs: Crime

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to tackle drug-related crime in rural communities. [HL5375]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Government recognises the considerable impact of drug use and dealing on individuals, families and communities in rural and urban constituencies. Tackling this is a vital part of our missions to deliver safer streets and improve health outcomes, and that is why we are taking a collaborative, cross-government approach to drugs at a national level.

We expect the police to intervene to tackle illicit drug use, recognising the significant harms it causes. We are dedicated to reducing these drug-related harms through prevention and treatment, while acting quickly and decisively to stop the criminals peddling these harmful substances.

County Lines are the most violent model of drug supply and a harmful form of child criminal exploitation. Through the County Lines Programme, we will continue to target exploitative drug dealing gangs and break the organised crime groups behind the trade.

Since July 2024, policing activity delivered through the County Lines Programme has resulted in over 400 deal lines being closed, the arrest and charge of over 200 deal line holders, 500 arrests and 800 safeguarding referrals of children and vulnerable people.

As part of the Programme, the National County Lines Coordination Centre (NCLCC) regularly coordinates weeks of intensive action against county lines gangs, which all police forces take part in. The most recent of these took place 25 November to 1 December 2024 and resulted in 261 lines closed, as well as 1,660 arrests, 1,434 individuals safeguarded and 557 weapons seized.

Eating Disorders: Hospital Beds

Asked by *Baroness Parminter*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Baroness Merron on 25 February (HL4946), Lord Markham on 20 July 2023 (HL9293), Lord Bethell on 3 November 2020 (HL9309) and Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford on 25 July 2019 (HL17359), why they are not able to provide the requested information on inpatient beds for eating disorder patients from NHS England when it has been provided in previous years. [HL5317]

Baroness Merron: The following table shows the number of inpatient beds for eating disorder patients:

| Specialised MH Inpatient Services | Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Eating Disorder | Adult Eating Disorder |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| Northwest | 19 | 63 |
| Northeast & Cumbria | 9 | 66 |
| Midlands | 85 | 63 |
| East of England | 37 | 34 |
| London | 50 | 99 |
| Southeast | 28 | 31 |
| Southwest | N/A | 44 |
| ENGLAND TOTAL | 228 | 400 |

Source: NHS England

Notes: The data provided represents the total number of commissioned beds for CAMHS Eating Disorder and Adult Eating Disorder services. The figures are broken down by region and include any beds commissioned outside of England.

Elections: Artificial Intelligence

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that UK elections remain free and fair amid the rising potential for AI interference. [HL5380]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The Government is well prepared to ensure the integrity and security of UK electoral processes. The Defending Democracy Taskforce and broader cross-government election structures have robust processes in place to respond to threats, including novel threats from AI.

Further bolstering our response to this risk, the Central AI Risk Function works to continuously identify, assess and prepare for risks associated with AI, including to the online information environment.

Where such content amounts to a criminal offence, the Online Safety Act requires platforms to remove disinformation aimed at disrupting elections, including where it is AI-generated, as soon as they become aware of it.

Fire and Rescue Services: Equipment

Asked by *Lord Roborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether fire and rescue services are adequately supplied with the specialised equipment needed to tackle the increasing incidence of wildfires. [HL5372]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Each fire and rescue authority (FRA) is required to plan for the foreseeable risks in their area (including wildfire), through their Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) while having regard to the views of other key local responders.

Standalone FRAs will see an increase in core spending power of up to £65.5 million in 2025/26. Including the National Insurance Contribution Grant, this is an increase of 3.6 per cent in cash terms compared to 2024/25. Decisions on how their resources are best deployed to meet their core functions – which may include specialist equipment to tackle wildfires where this is a local risk – are a matter for each FRA.

In addition, the Home Office supports FRAs by providing over £17.9m in funding for specialist capabilities, such as High-Volume Pumps (HVPs), which have been used to help combat wildfires over recent summers.

In 2024/25 the Home Office is funding a National Resilience Wildfire Advisor to assess what additional wildfire national capabilities might be needed to increase resilience to the wildfire risk and to ensure coordination of approaches across the sector.

Forests: Cambodia

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by Simon Counsell and Survival International *Blood Carbon: how carbon offset schemes are devastating Indigenous peoples and their forests in Cambodia*, published October 2024, in particular the adequacy and effectiveness of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation+ projects in reducing carbon emissions. [HL5373]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The report highlights the importance of getting forest carbon projects right. Carbon markets could provide billions of dollars of much needed finance to protect the forests in the UK and internationally but we will only be able to build these markets if they have environmental and social integrity. That is why the UK government has been supporting tropical forest countries to develop high integrity forest carbon credits. It is also why the Government will soon be launching a consultation on how it could support higher integrity in voluntary carbon and nature markets. While the evidence for the effectiveness of forest carbon projects has been mixed, the UK focuses its efforts on scaling Jurisdictional REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), which covers entire countries or states. This approach helps to address the challenges linked with more traditional 'project-based' REDD+, for example, the 'leakage' of carbon emissions.

The Government will continue to work through international fora to ensure that the voices of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities are heard and respected. To this end, the UK welcomes the agreement of the Appeals and Grievances Procedure for the Paris

Agreement Crediting Mechanism, which provides an important route for safeguarding.

Gambling: Crime

Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they propose to take to stop illegal gambling on the black market (1) domestically, and (2) from offshore sites. [HL5464]

Baroness Twycross: We are committed to working closely with the Gambling Commission to ensure that illegal gambling, in all its forms, is addressed. The Gambling Commission assesses information gathered from multiple sources and works closely with partner agencies to prevent access to illegal websites by consumers in Great Britain, regardless of where the website itself is based.

In the past year, the Commission has significantly increased its disruption activity and has a renewed focus on finding innovative ways to tackle the illegal market. The Crime and Policing Bill, introduced in Parliament on 25 February 2025, will also grant the Gambling Commission with new powers to more quickly and effectively take down illegal gambling websites.

Internet: Safety

Asked by Baroness Morgan of Cotes

To ask His Majesty's Government what conversations they have had with Ofcom regarding its 'small but risky' taskforce and in particular its understanding of (1) the number of full-time posts assigned to this taskforce, and (2) where this taskforce sits in Ofcom's management structure. [HL5363]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The Government has regular meetings with Ofcom on matters relating to the Online Safety Act (OSA), including about how it will enforce against non-compliant providers. The 'Small but Risky' taskforce is part of Ofcom's supervision team. It sits in the Online Safety Group. The Government understands there are 189 full-time equivalent posts in the Online Safety Group. Ofcom established the Small but Risky task force in recognition of their unique risks posed by these services. It will identify, manage and enforce against such services where they fail to comply with their duties. Ofcom officially started enforcing the OSA regime this week.

Asked by Baroness Morgan of Cotes

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch on 10 February (HL4900), which references "hate, terror and offences against women and girls", whether Ofcom's taskforce is also seeking to address small platforms that promote or glorify suicide, self-harm and eating disorders. [HL5364]

Asked by **Baroness Morgan of Cotes**

To ask His Majesty's Government what their understanding is of the timescales of the work of Ofcom's new 'small but risky' taskforce; and specifically when they expect any platforms that are prioritised as being particularly dangerous and which do not comply with requirements under the Online Safety Act 2023 to be subject to takedown orders. [HL5365]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: Ofcom's recent enforcement update highlights its focus on scrutinising platforms that present risks of harm from illegal content, due to their size or nature. This includes smaller sites where users might encounter priority offences such as content that encourages or assists suicide. In its January industry bulletin, Ofcom detailed its approach to driving improvements under the Online Safety Act, such as requiring specific firms - including smaller services of concern - to submit illegal content risk assessments by 31 March. Ofcom also outlined the conditions for enforcement action, including takedown orders, such as in cases of ongoing non-compliance.

Israel and Palestinians: Development Aid

Asked by **The Lord Bishop of Southwark**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the likely impact of the Associations Bill (Amendment—Donation from Foreign State Entity) 2024, currently before the Knesset, on the United Kingdom's overseas development assistance to Israeli and Palestinian human rights organisations. [HL5327]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK is deeply concerned about the potential impact of this Bill on civil society and human rights organisations working in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We have raised our concerns with the Government of Israel. The UK supports civil society organisations in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on a range of issues, including those who do invaluable work promoting and defending human rights.

Madeleine McCann

Asked by **Lord Black of Brentwood**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hanson of Flint on 26 February (HL4971), by what date current funding for Operation Grange provided by the Home Office will be exhausted; and whether they intend to publish details of any subsequent requests for funding if they are made. [HL5345]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Funding from the Police Special Grant is drawn from the wider Police Funding Settlement. As such, budgets and awards are agreed annually. At the start of this financial year, previous Ministers agreed to provide the Metropolitan Police with

up to £191,800 in respect of Operation Grange for 2024-25. Funding for 2025-26 will be decided in due course.

Special Grant awards are published on the Home Office website after the end of the financial year to which they relate. [Police funding: special grant applications - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/police-funding-special-grant-applications)

Palestinians: Human Rights

Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Collins of Highbury on 17 February (HL4711), what steps they are taking develop a policy on tackling the dehumanisation of Palestinians. [HL5419]

Lord Collins of Highbury: We recognise that dehumanising language and hate speech can lay the ground for and seek to justify identity-based violence in conflict. The proliferation of harmful online narratives and its impact on conflict is an emerging challenge. Partnering with specialist organisations, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is working to identify global best practices for mitigating harmful digital behaviours in conflict - including misinformation, disinformation and hate speech - and considering how action on such digital harms can be integrated into our wider approach to conflict and atrocity prevention.

Peers: Correspondence

Asked by **Lord Lamont of Lerwick**

To ask His Majesty's Government when they will reply to Lord Lamont of Lerwick's letter about the Urology Trade Association's concerns over changes to Part 1X of the Drug Tariff, sent to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Patient Safety, Women's Health and Mental Health, Baroness Merron, on 17 December 2024. [HL5675]

Baroness Merron: We have no record of receiving the Noble Lord's correspondence. My Private Office has reached out to the Noble Lord for a copy and, when received, we will respond to that as soon as possible.

Pets

Asked by **Baroness Berridge**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will commission the Animal Sentience Committee to conduct an assessment of the treatment of pets as chattels for the purposes of section 25 of the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973. [HL5536]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Animal Sentience Committee was established by the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022 to furnish accountability to Parliament for the consideration of the welfare of sentient animals in Ministerial decisions. The Committee decide which policy decisions to select for the purpose of

producing a report. There is no power in statute for the Government to direct the work of the Committee.

There are currently no distinct statutory provisions relating specifically to the ownership or treatment of pets for the purposes of financial proceedings on divorce.

Polio: Vaccination

Asked by **Baroness Humphreys**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many charities they fund to run polio vaccination programmes. [HL5457]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK is a strong supporter of the global effort to eradicate polio and is proud to be a longstanding supporter of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI). Since 1995 we have contributed £1.4 billion in funding. Our funding to GPEI has helped to reduce case numbers by over 99% and limit the number of countries where the wild polio virus remains endemic to just two - Pakistan and Afghanistan. To date, thanks to GPEI's efforts, more than 20 million people are walking who may otherwise have been paralysed due to polio. The UK also continues to support routine immunisation against polio through Gavi, the vaccines alliance. The UK is one of the largest donors to Gavi committing £1.65 billion over the 5-year 2021-2025 period.

Prisoners: Suicide

Asked by **The Lord Bishop of Lichfield**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many deaths by suicide there have been of people in prison in England and Wales for each year in the last decade. [HL5359]

Lord Timpson: Self-inflicted deaths are any deaths of a person who has apparently taken his or her own life irrespective of intent. This not only includes suicides, but also accidental deaths as a result of the person's own actions.

| Year | Self-inflicted deaths 1,2,3,4 |
|------|-------------------------------|
| 2015 | 90 |
| 2016 | 124 |
| 2017 | 73 |
| 2018 | 93 |
| 2019 | 86 |
| 2020 | 67 |
| 2021 | 89 |
| 2022 | 77 |
| 2023 | 96 |
| 2024 | 89 |

Data Sources and Quality:

These figures are derived from the HMPPS Incident Reporting System and the HMPPS Deaths in Prison Custody database. Care is taken when processing and analysing the returns, but the detail collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system. Although the figures are shown to the last individual the figures may not be accurate to that level.

1 - Deaths in prison custody figures include all deaths of prisoners arising from incidents during prison custody. They include deaths of prisoners while released on temporary license (ROTL) for medical reasons but exclude other types of ROTL where the state has less direct responsibility.

2 - Due to the number of deaths that remain unclassified (awaiting further information) in recent years, and the latest year particularly, caution should be used when comparing with earlier periods.

3 - A proportion of the most recent two years' figures for 'other' deaths are expected to be re-classified as natural causes or self-inflicted deaths.

Privacy

Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of investigatory powers to access encrypted data on an individual's freedom and privacy. [HL5209]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The UK has a longstanding position of protecting people's privacy while ensuring action can be taken against child abusers and terrorists.

Probation

Asked by **The Lord Bishop of Lichfield**

To ask His Majesty's Government what the average caseload of probation officers in England and Wales was in each year of the last decade. [HL5360]

Lord Timpson: The average caseload of Probation Officers has been presented from the period July 2021 to February 2025. This is because the Probation Service unified in June 2021, with some Probation Officers and caseload held by Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) prior to this point. The Probation Service does not have access to data for caseload held by CRCs .

Table One: Probation Officer average annual caseload across England and Wales

| Period | Annual average caseload per Probation Officer |
|-------------------|---|
| July 21 – June 22 | 36 |
| July 22 – June 23 | 37.1 |
| July 23 – June 24 | 35.2 |
| July 24 - Feb 25* | 34.2 |

*Data presented based on an eight-month period rather than a full year.

Notes:

- The data within the Workload Measurement Tool (WMT) are manually entered by Senior Probation Officers (SPOs) for the purposes of ensuring that contracted hours and adjustments are accurate. These data are subject to inaccuracy as a result of the manual nature with which data are submitted.

- Annual average caseload per Probation Officer has been calculated by taking the average caseload on the last day of each month in that period.

- Even if staff do not have contracted hours, they can still have cases allocated to them by SPOs.

- There may be cases where staff who have left the Probation Service still appear to hold caseload on the WMT and so the data should be treated with caution. Furthermore, some staff on long-term absences (e.g. career breaks/long-term sickness) may still have a caseload allocated to them.

- Data have not been presented for the period prior to June 2021, the point at which unification of the Probation Service took place. Prior to June 2021, some Probation Officers and caseload were held by CRCs, data for which is not included in the WMT. It would not be consistent to present a time series of caseload per Probation Officer before and after unification.

Recycling

Asked by Lord Teverson

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take to encourage the uptake of reuse and repair as drivers of a circular economy. [HL5576]

Asked by Lord Teverson

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take to ensure that commonly discarded goods are instead reused to generate economic, environmental and social value. [HL5577]

Asked by Lord Teverson

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will extend 'right to repair' legislation (1) further to encourage reuse and repair practices, and (2) to ensure that manufacturers provide appropriate parts and service information. [HL5579]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: This Government is committed to transitioning to a circular economy. We have convened a Circular Economy Taskforce, comprising experts from industry, academia, and civil society, to help develop a Circular Economy Strategy for England. The Strategy will map our transition to a circular economy, supported by a series of roadmaps that detail the interventions that the government and others will make on a sector-by-sector basis.

Defra recognises that reuse and repair are fundamental tenets of any circular economy and will consider the

evidence for appropriate action right across the economy as we develop the Strategy.

Refugees: Resettlement

Asked by Lord Swire

To ask His Majesty's Government how many people have been resettled under the UK Resettlement Scheme in each of the past four years. [HL5329]

Asked by Lord Swire

To ask His Majesty's Government what action they take to promote the UK Resettlement Scheme to relevant immigrants. [HL5330]

Asked by Lord Swire

To ask His Majesty's Government how many people they employ to administer the UK Resettlement Scheme. [HL5331]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Resettlement schemes play a key role in the global response to humanitarian crises: saving lives and offering stability to refugees most in need of protection. We work closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the global refugee agency, to identify those living in formal refugee camps, informal settlements and host communities who would benefit most from resettlement to the UK. Our resettlement schemes are not selective on the basis of employability or integration potential. Apart from the criteria we set for each scheme, we do not seek to influence which cases are referred to us by UNHCR. Our approach is to resettle refugees in line with the global need identified by UNHCR, typically from countries hosting large populations of refugees such as those bordering countries with conflicts, where resettlement may be the only durable solution. This provides refugees with a safe and legal route to the UK.

Data on the number of people resettled through the UK Resettlement scheme is published in the quarterly immigration statistics release. This is viewable on gov.uk.

The table below shows the number of individuals resettled under UKRS. The data is relevant up to December 2024.

| | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|------------------------|-------|------|------|------|
| UK Resettlement Scheme | 1,121 | 887 | 485 | 678 |

It is not possible to disclose staffing numbers relating to UKRS currently due to the operational nature of the scheme.

Rivers: Environment Protection

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to scrap the Chalk Stream Recovery Pack. [HL5323]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Cleaning up our waters, including iconic sites such as chalk streams is a top government priority. That is why on 23 October 2024, the Secretary of State announced the launch of an independent commission to fundamentally transform how our water system works.

Fixing the systemic issues in the water system is essential to address the multiple pressures facing chalk streams, namely over abstraction, phosphorous pollution and physical modifications of habitats. Restoring our chalk streams to better ecological health is part of our holistic programme of reforms for the water sector.

Alongside this, we are continuing to direct investment to projects that will improve chalk streams. In 2024/2025, there are over 45 chalk stream projects receiving funding from the Government's Water Environment Improvement Fund, each leveraging private investment.

Skilled Workers: Young People

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that young skilled workers remain in the UK, particularly in the cyber industries. [HL5381]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The Government are delivering several initiatives to support young skilled workers enter and remain working in cyber industries in the UK. Alongside bootcamps and apprenticeships, we provide sector specific initiatives aimed at fostering talent and providing clear career pathways for the cyber sector.

The CyberFirst programme supports young people aged 11 to 25 with a range of educational courses, competitions and events, designed to develop tech skills and inspire interest in cyber careers. The CyberFirst bursary scheme provides a clear route to support UK talent into cyber jobs with 87% of bursary graduates now working in the cyber sector.

The UK Cyber Security Council, the professional body for the cyber workforce, is making it easier for young people to understand how to enter and navigate a career in cyber industries. The Government supports the work of the Council with grant funding.

We are also supporting young entrepreneurs and researchers to develop cyber products and companies through initiatives like CyberASAP and CyberRunway. These programmes offer resources, mentorship, and funding opportunities to help young people develop innovative ideas and contribute to the UK cyber sector.

Thailand and Vietnam: Religious Freedom

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the arrest in Thailand of Montagnard

Protestants while attending a funeral and of the dangers they will face if repatriated to Vietnam. [HL5390]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK Embassy in Bangkok is following the arrests of Montagnard Protestants in Thailand. This includes liaising with the relevant authorities to understand potential next steps, taking into account the 2024 report by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation facing Montagnard Protestants in Vietnam. We continue to urge all governments to uphold their international human rights obligations, including the non-refoulement principle.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government when they last raised Thailand's decision not to sign the 1951 Convention on the treatment of refugees with the government of Thailand; and when they last discussed the obligations regarding freedom of religion or belief under Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with the governments of Thailand and Vietnam, and what response they received. [HL5391]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK regularly engages with the Thai government on refugee and asylum issues. The UK's position regarding the 1951 Convention is well-known in Thailand, including being raised as a question publicly during Thailand's most recent Universal Periodic Review in November 2021. The Minister for the Indo-Pacific raised Vietnam's obligations regarding freedom of religion or belief with Vietnam's Deputy Foreign Minister during the UK-Vietnam Strategic Dialogue in October 2024.

Thailand: Uyghurs

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Thailand about the repatriation of Uyghur refugees to China. [HL5447]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: As the Foreign Secretary has made clear through a public statement, the UK disagrees in the strongest terms with Thailand's decision to deport 40 Uyghur Muslims to China. This is despite Thailand's international obligations in relation to non-refoulement and the well-documented ongoing human rights violations in Xinjiang. The Government has made representations to the Government of Thailand at the highest levels: the Foreign Secretary raised this issue with Thailand's Foreign Minister, and the Minister for the Indo-Pacific raised it with Thailand's Ambassador.

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