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

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# Written Statements

Monday, 17 March 2025

## New Approach to Ensure Regulations and Regulators Support Growth

[HLWS525]

**Lord Livermore:** My right honourable friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rachel Reeves) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The government is today publishing an Action Plan, setting out a new approach to ensure regulations and regulators support growth.

Improving regulation in the UK, ensuring that it enables growth and does not unduly hold back investment, is an essential part of this government's growth mission and delivering on the Plan for Change.

When used effectively, regulation provides a mechanism to address economic, societal, and environmental risks and deliver positive outcomes in our communities, for example it safeguards employees from harm at work and it can uphold vital standards in building safety.

However, under our current system, businesses tell us that regulation can be too complex and duplicative, stifling progress and innovation. Businesses endure slow processes and a lack of predictability, and our regulatory approach has become too risk averse.

These challenges manifest themselves in costs on business, which means that they have less time and money to invest and create jobs. Over the last 20 years, billions of pounds of regulatory costs have contributed to our economy being less attractive for new investment. Previous studies suggested that the impact of red tape costs could be as high as 3-4% of GDP.

The government will reform the regulatory system to make sure we ensure the UK's position of global competitive leadership and go further and faster to secure and sustain growth, supporting the objectives of our new Industrial Strategy and the wider growth mission.

This Action Plan builds on the Prime Minister's commitment last week to cut bureaucracy for business, reducing administrative costs of regulation for business by a quarter by the end of the Parliament. It sets out a vision to overhaul our regulatory system so that it:

- Supports growth. We want a regulatory system that not only protects consumers and supports competition, but also encourages new investment, innovation, and growth. When regulation is designed well, and when it is implemented well by regulators, it can protect consumers while supporting investment and growth.
- Is targeted and proportionate. We should regulate only where necessary and allow space for discretion and good behaviour. In most cases, businesses operate in a responsible and sensible manner. The current system too often focuses on regulations and regulatory

practices designed to prevent a few bad actors, or very low probability events, rather than trusting and helping most businesses that want to comply.

- Is transparent and predictable. To foster the certainty essential for investment, it is vital that our regulatory regime is stable, predictable, and consistent. Regulation will need to change where it is not fit for purpose; but we must be clear about where that is the case and give business the necessary time to adapt to new rules.

- Adapts to keep pace with innovation. Our approach to regulation must allow the UK to take advantage of new technologies and innovations, including artificial intelligence, digitalisation, decarbonisation, and increased automation. Effective regulation can create the environment and clarity for innovation to take place. Regulators attuned to the challenges facing business should also be able to adapt to new industries and to the challenges posed by new technologies and avoid disproportionate risk averse behaviour.

To reset the UK's regulatory landscape and achieve this vision, the government will implement a package of reforms over the Parliament that focus on:

- Tackling complexity and reducing the burden of regulation, including that the government will commit to reducing the administrative costs of regulation for businesses by 25% by the end of this Parliament; that the Payment Systems Regulator will be consolidated primarily within the Financial Conduct Authority; that the government will work with regulators to improve areas where regulation is most complex starting with environmental and planning regulation.

- Reducing uncertainty across our regulatory system, including that the government will simplify the duties of key regulators including through the reviews of Ofgem and Ofwat; that it will work with regulators to strengthen transparency, so that business and the public can see how regulators are performing; and that the government will bring forward packages of reform, including, if necessary, legislation to improve the effectiveness of environmental regulation.

- Challenging and shifting excessive risk aversion in the system, including that the government will overhaul accountability, formalising and strengthening performance reviews which will be conducted by all sponsoring government departments, and setting out the next stage of commitments secured by the Regulatory Innovation Office, working alongside departments and regulators.

The reforms in the Action Plan are relevant to regulators across sectors such as business, finance, energy, and the environment. Though there is not currently a legal definition of a regulator, the reforms will apply to all bodies exercising regulatory powers and functions.

The government has worked with a set of key regulators over the past few months to develop measures which will have a tangible effect on driving growth and investment and are implementable within the next 12 months, listed

in the Action Plan. Some of them, such as the Competition and Markets Authority, have already taken substantial action such as taking forward applying the 4Ps across its digital markets works.

The government will continue working with industry, regulators, and Parliament to ensure that the regulatory system protects consumers and supports competition, but also encourages new investment, innovation, and growth.

The full Action Plan is available on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-new-approach-to-ensure-regulators-and-regulation-support-growth/new-approach-to-ensure-regulators-and-regulation-support-growth.html>

A copy will also be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

### Spelthorne Borough Council: Best Value Duty

[HLWS524]

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage:** My Honourable Friend the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution (Jim McMahon OBE MP) has today made the following statement:

All Honourable Members will recognise the importance of having well-functioning local councils which provide essential statutory services local residents rely upon. Local councils must be fit, legal and decent and this Government is aiming to fix the foundations of local government. Today I am updating the House on the statutory inspection of Spelthorne Borough Council and the steps I am proposing to ensure a focus on reform and recovery, alongside and within the wider context of having invited proposals for unitary local government in Surrey.

#### *Best Value Inspection Report*

It is a matter of public record that Spelthorne Borough Council has significant debt leverage. Spelthorne's debt stands at nearly £1.069 billion (as of Jan 2025), which is 62.2 times its total service expenditure and is the second highest level of debt for a district authority in England, after Woking.

A Capital Review by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) highlighted concerns around governance and decision making. Following this, on 8 May 2024 the then Secretary of State (the Rt Hon. Michael Gove), commissioned an inspection of the Council and their compliance with their Best Value Duty. He appointed Lesley Seary as Lead Inspector, alongside Mervyn Greer, who were later joined by Peter Robinson and Deborah McLaughlin. Inspectors were asked to report their findings by 31 July 2024. The deadline was subsequently extended to 31 January 2025. The Inspectors completed their inspection and submitted their Report to the Secretary of State and, as statute requires, provided a copy to the Council. I am grateful to the Inspection team for their thorough work, and to the Council and all participants for their cooperation.

The Report identifies some positive features at the Council, such as strong resident engagement and positive local partnerships. The Report also notes that the Council has already taken positive steps to make improvements, including against recommendations made in the CIPFA review, such as the suspension of the planned housing developments and cessation of further borrowing for this initiative after determining it was no longer viable. However, the Report documents serious concerns across a number of areas which I consider to be against its Best Value Duty:

- On Continuous Improvement: The Report describes the Council as having a "poor record" of adequately addressing recommendations from external reviews and the inspectors have no confidence in the Council's ability to make the changes "without significant external support".
- On Leadership: The Report highlights that the Council lacks consistent leadership, strategic direction, constructive challenge and a robust corporate plan. Optimism bias clouds officer's awareness of risks, and to some degree the Council has been "blindsided" by the financial situation.
- On Governance: The Report concludes that the Council's "poor, late and incomplete reporting, together with a lack of audit and a reluctance to accept and act on challenge" has "severely undermined informed decision-making" and there is a culture of secrecy.
- On Culture: The Report describes member and officer relationships as poor and deteriorating, with both sides describing a culture of mistrust and broken relationships which are "hindering constructive discussions" on key financial, housing and asset issues. Members and officers do not share an understanding of their respective roles. Inspectors consider the Council to be insular and in denial of the situation it faces.
- On Use of Resources: The Report concludes that a lack of long-term planning, risk management and an "overly optimistic reliance" on property markets has led to the Authority's financial strategy to be unsustainable.

#### *Compliance with the Best Value Duty*

I have carefully considered the Report and other relevant material, including findings from the CIPFA review, recent reports from the Council's External Auditors, and the Corporate Peer Challenge conducted by the Local Government Association. I am satisfied that Spelthorne Borough Council is failing to comply with its Best Value Duty in relation to Continuous Improvement, Governance, Leadership, Culture, and Use of Resources. I am therefore minded to exercise powers of direction under section 15(5) and 15(6) of the 1999 Act to implement an intervention package that ensures the Council's compliance with its Best Value Duty. The proposed intervention includes the appointment of Commissioners to exercise certain and limited functions as required, for five years. The Commissioner team, if appointed, would consist of a Lead Commissioner and Commissioners with expertise in finance, commercial

investment and governance. The Council will be directed to prepare and agree an Improvement and Recovery Plan to the satisfaction of the Commissioners. I would like the Commissioners to report on progress against this Plan after the first six months, and then at six monthly intervals. I need to ensure the Council's compliance with its Best Value Duty: the Commissioners' assessments will provide assurance to residents and strategic partners. The Council will also be directed to actively engage with the Commissioners whilst reviewing and implementing any proposals for unitary local government.

#### *Representations*

I am inviting representations from Spelthorne Borough Council on the respective Inspection Report and on the proposed intervention package by 28 March 2025. I want to provide the opportunity for members and officers of the Council, and any other interested parties, especially the residents of Spelthorne, to make their views on the proposal known.

I made clear in my written statement of 5 February that potential proposals on unitary local government must demonstrate how local councils have sought to work together in coming to a view that best meets local needs and is informed by local views: given the potential implications for the proposals currently being developed by councils in Surrey for unitary local government, I have taken steps to ensure that this report will be seen by all relevant parties across the area. I will carefully consider all representations and any other evidence received, before deciding how to proceed with the Council.

#### *Conclusion*

The proposal to intervene in Spelthorne Borough Council is not taken lightly. The proposed intervention package is designed to strengthen and accelerate the improvement work needed at the Council. I am confident that the proposal will address the failings identified and are necessary to ensuring the Council's compliance with their Best Value Duty. I hope that with focus and oversight, improvement will come at pace and that it will not be necessary for the Commissioners to use their powers. However, they must be empowered to do so if they consider that the required improvement and reforms are not being delivered.

I am committed to working in partnership with the Council to provide the necessary support to ensure its compliance with this Duty and the high standards of governance local residents and service users expect.

I will deposit in the House library a copy of the Inspection Report I have referred to, which is also being published on gov.uk today. I will update the House in due course.

## **Terrorism Legislation: Codes of Practice**

[HLWS523]

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

Today, the Government is launching a consultation on our revised Codes of Practice to Schedule 7 to the Terrorism Act (TACT) 2000 and Schedule 3 to the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act (CTBSA) 2019. These powers are key components of the UK's national security infrastructure, providing examining officers (accredited constables and immigration and customs officers) with the power to stop, question and when necessary, search and detain individuals who pass through the UK's borders for the purpose of determining, under Schedule 7, whether that person is, or has been, involved in the commission, preparation, or instigation of acts of terrorism and, under Schedule 3, to determine if they are engaged in hostile activity. These powers are non-suspicion. Officers may stop and question a person whether or not there are grounds for suspecting that the person is or has been concerned in terrorism or hostile state activity.

The Codes of Practice set out the processes and safeguards governing the exercise of Schedule 7 and 3 powers by examining officers. It provides detail on how the power should be used, including examples where relevant, and is intended to ensure the highest standards of professionalism and compliance with these important powers.

The Government is proposing several changes to the Codes of Practice to clarify use of the powers, clarify the rights and protections of individuals subject to the powers, and impose additional modest safeguards. These include responses to recommendations made by the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation.

The consultation will run for six weeks, until 27 April 2025. The Government will publish its response thereafter, and will then amend the Codes through secondary legislation at the next available opportunity. A copy of the consultation will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and made available on GOV.UK.

# Written Answers

Monday, 17 March 2025

## Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund

Asked by **Lord Watson of Invergowrie**

To ask His Majesty's Government when they plan to announce funding for the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund beyond March. [HL5431]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The department will shortly be finalising business planning decisions on how its budget will be allocated for the next financial year. All decisions regarding the adoption and special guardianship support fund are being considered as part of these discussions. An announcement will be made as soon as possible.

### Adoption: Reviews

Asked by **Lord Watson of Invergowrie**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have for reviewing the National Adoption Strategy, which was last updated in July 2021. [HL5432]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** Adoption England published a three-year strategy in 2024 that the government supports. This sets out a wide range of work to build on its work to develop adoption services across the country in partnership with those with lived experience. The full publication can be found here: <https://adoptionengland.co.uk/sites/default/files/2024-04/Adoption%20England%20Strategy.pdf>.

The department has provided funding of £9 million in 2024/25 for Adoption England to help develop national approaches for adoption services.

## Army: Armoured Fighting Vehicles

Asked by **Earl Attlee**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many armoured regiments equipped with Challenger 2 tanks are established in the British Army, and to what formations they are assigned to. [HL5395]

Asked by **Earl Attlee**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many armoured brigades are on the establishment of the British Army. [HL5396]

**Lord Coaker:** The British Army have two armoured brigades. These are the 12 Armoured Brigade Combat Team (12 ABCT) and the 20 Armoured Brigade Combat Team (20 ABCT).

There are currently four armoured regiments in the British Army that are equipped with the Challenger 2 Main Battle Tank. They are The Queen's Royal Hussars

(QRH), The King's Royal Hussars (KRH), The Royal Tank Regiment (RTR), and the Reserve armoured regiment, The Royal Wessex Yeomanry (RWxY).

The KRH, RTR, and RWxY are assigned to 12 ABCT and The QRH is assigned to 20 ABCT.

## Artificial Intelligence: Copyright

Asked by **Lord Freyberg**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many meetings have been held by ministers and officials at the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport between July 2024 and February 2025 specifically addressing artificial intelligence and copyright issues; what was the distribution of these meetings between representatives of (1) creative industries, (2) artificial intelligence technology companies, and (3) meetings with both sectors represented, with a breakdown of these figures by month; and whether minutes of these meetings are publicly available. [HL5404]

**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.

The current best estimate of the number of meetings involving officials at the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (including the Intellectual Property Office) and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport between July 2024 and February 2025 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
January '25	9	12	5
February '25	8	8	6

This includes meetings where officials from both departments attended.

The minutes of official level meetings are not routinely published

Asked by **Lord Freyberg**

To ask His Majesty's Government when they plan to introduce specific legislation addressing copyright and artificial intelligence following their consultation; what

consideration they have given to incorporating copyright protections for creative works within the Data (Use and Access) Bill rather than through separate legislation; and what impact assessment they have conducted on the potential effects on creative industries of the Data (Use and Access) Bill being enacted before establishing clear copyright frameworks for artificial intelligence. [HL5405]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The Government's consultation on Copyright and AI closed on 25 February. It would be premature to legislate now: the Government is clear that no changes will be considered unless we are completely satisfied we are delivering a solution which works for creators. Our priority is to review the evidence from the consultation which will inform the Government response, including any legislative proposals.

### Arts Council England

*Asked by Lord Murphy of Torfaen*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they expect to announce the findings of the independent review of Arts Council England. [HL5560]

**Baroness Twycross:** Baroness Hodge will share her findings with the government in the autumn of 2025, and the government will publish the conclusions of the review along with the government's response in 2026.

### Business: Employers' Contributions and Minimum Wage

*Asked by Baroness Foster of Aghadrumsee*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the RetailNI survey results published in February which show that 74 per cent of the businesses surveyed expect to reduce the number of employees and other staff following the increase in employer National Insurance contributions and minimum wage. [HL5496]

*Asked by Baroness Foster of Aghadrumsee*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the RetailNI survey results published in February which show that 86 per cent of the businesses surveyed expect to cancel expansion plans following the increase in employer National Insurance contributions and minimum wage. [HL5497]

**Lord Livermore:** Raising the revenue required to fix the public finances and rebuild public services has required difficult decisions on tax, which has meant asking some employers to contribute more.

The Government has protected the smallest employers by increasing the Employment Allowance to £10,500. This means that next year, 865,000 employers will pay no NICs at all and more than half of employers will see no change or will gain overall from this package.

The National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage rates are set on the independent and expert advice of the Low Pay Commission (LPC). The LPC has representatives from business, employee, and academic communities, and through their social partnership model reaches a consensus agreement on the rates. By seeking advice from the LPC when setting the minimum wage rates, the Government is able to ensure that the right balance is struck between the needs of workers, affordability for businesses and the impact on the economy.

Wider business support is devolved in Northern Ireland and is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Executive. The Northern Ireland Executive's Spending Review settlement for 2025-26 is the largest in real terms of any settlement since devolution and they receive over 24% more funding per person than equivalent UK Government spending in the rest of the UK, including the 2024 restoration financial package.

### Cars: Carbon Emissions

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of net zero targets on the car industry in the UK, particularly in relation to new vehicle manufacturing. [HL5428]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The Secretary of State and Minister Sarah Jones speak to the automotive industry regularly, so we know targets are important for certainty. We also need to ensure the transition to Zero Emission vehicles works for industry. That is why the Department for Transport has recently sought views from industry on how Government can best support it to meet the targets in the Zero Emission Vehicle mandate. The response will be published in the near future.

This Government has also committed over £2 billion of funding to 2030 for zero emission vehicle manufacturing and supply chains. This support will be crucial for scaling up green technologies - supporting growth across the UK.

### Children: Social Services

*Asked by Lord Laming*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that chairs of family group conferences are fully trained. [HL5413]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The department knows that many local authorities have an existing family group decision making (FGDM) service in place, including many who use the family group conference model. In some local authorities, independent coordinators are recruited to facilitate or 'chair' FGDM meetings and, in other areas, social workers are trained to deliver the service.

Through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, the department is seeking to place a duty on local authorities to offer an FGDM meeting to all parents and those with

parental responsibility whose children are on the edge of care, unless this is not in the best interests of the child. This will ensure that families have the opportunity to participate in planning and decision-making at this critical point.

As part of this, the department will be developing guidance about best practice in delivering FGDM. This will include guidance on how to ensure that facilitators of the FGDM process have the appropriate skills and training. We are conscious of the additional resources that local authorities will require to fulfil this measure, which may include recruiting or training extra staff. That is why this government has committed to an uplift of £13 million for the Children's Social Care Prevention Grant for 2025/26, which will be used to support the rollout of FGDM across the country for all families on the edge of care. This money can be used to expand a local authority's existing service, including training additional facilitators for FGDM.

### Companies: Recruitment

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to encourage firms to continue to hire employees, following the changes announced in the Autumn Statement 2024. [HL5629]

**Lord Livermore:** The Government has protected the smallest businesses from these changes by increasing the Employment Allowance from £5,000 to £10,500. This means that next year, 865,000 employers will pay no NICs at all, and more than half of all employers will either gain or will see no change. It means employers will be able to employ up to four full-time workers on the National Living Wage without paying any employer National Insurance contributions (NICs).

Businesses will still be able to claim employer NICs reliefs including those for under-21s and under-25 apprentices.

Achieving economic growth is vital. That's why the growth mission is the central mission of the government. Through the growth mission, the Government is ensuring economic stability, increasing investment and reforming the economy. As laid out in the Plan for Change, the Government's goal is to deliver higher living standards for people in every part of the United Kingdom and to build 1.5 million houses by the end of the Parliament.

### Conduct Committee: Pay

*Asked by Baroness Hoey*

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker how much each lay member of the Conduct Committee is paid. [HL5500]

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble:** Lay members of the Conduct Committee are paid £600 for each full day worked for the committee. Preparing for and attending a committee meeting is deemed to amount to a full day's

work, and the committee normally meets around once a month when the House is sitting.

### Development Aid

*Asked by Lord Booth*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their timetable for returning to the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for overseas aid, as set out by the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015, following their decision to cut overseas aid to 0.3 per cent of gross national income. [HL5294]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** The Government remains committed to returning to spending 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI) on Official Development Assistance (ODA) when fiscal circumstances allow, in line with the International Development Act 2015.

We will return to 0.7 per cent when, on a sustainable basis, the government is not borrowing money for day-to-day spending and underlying debt is falling. The Office for Budget Responsibility's latest forecast shows that the ODA fiscal tests are not due to be met within the Parliament.

The Government will continue to monitor future forecasts closely, and each year will review and confirm, in accordance with the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015, whether a return to spending 0.7 per cent GNI on ODA is possible against the latest fiscal forecast.

*Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask His Majesty's Government which countries will be affected by cutting the aid budget to 0.3 per cent by 2027. [HL5370]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** The Prime Minister has set out a new strategic vision for government spending on defence and security, and Official Development Assistance (ODA). Detailed decisions on how the ODA budget will be used will be worked through as part of the ongoing Spending Review based on various factors including impact assessments and value for money.

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the reduction, expressed in pounds sterling, of the proposed cuts to the development budget; and by what amount, expressed as a penny in the pound increase, would the basic rate of income tax have to be raised to fund a deferment of these cuts for 2025–2026 while still funding the increase to the defence budget. [HL5389]

**Lord Livermore:** The UK will step up to safeguard collective security on an enduring basis by increasing defence investment to 2.5% of GDP by 2027. Our increase in defence spending will be funded by reducing Official Development Assistance (ODA) from 0.5% to 0.3% of GNI. Precise allocations will be determined as



part of the Spending Review process. The government has committed to not increase taxes on working people, which means it will not increase their income tax, National Insurance Contributions, or VAT.

*Asked by **The Lord Bishop of Sheffield***

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the recent announcement of the diversion of funds from the Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget to the defence budget, whether they plan to decrease the proportion of ODA spent on in-donor refugee support. [HL5420]

**Lord Livermore:** The Government is committed to ensuring that asylum costs fall and the Home Secretary has reduced in-donor refugee costs by taking action to reduce the asylum backlog and seeking to end the use of costly asylum hotels. We therefore anticipate further reductions to in-donor refugee costs in the next Spending Review period.

The Home Office's Spending Review settlement will be subject to agreement with HM Treasury in the usual way.

*Asked by **Lord Wigley***

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the announcements regarding the reduction in Official Development Assistance, which countries or humanitarian organisations will be exempted from cuts to aid. [HL5437]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** The Prime Minister has set out a new strategic vision for government spending on defence and security and Official Development Assistance (ODA). He has been clear that the government will continue to play a key humanitarian role, including in Ukraine, in Gaza and in Sudan. Detailed decisions on how the ODA budget will be used will be worked through as part of the ongoing Spending Review based on various factors including impact and value for money.

## **Development Aid: Homicide**

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

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that development assistance is not provided to regimes engaged in or permitting the killing of their citizens. [HL5637]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** The Programme Operating Framework (PrOF) sets out the mandatory rules for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) programme delivery and is published on gov.uk. The framework includes a requirement that the FCDO's programmes and projects comply with all relevant UK laws, legislation and guidance. The UK's obligations under international law, including human rights and humanitarian law, should be fulfilled, and reputational risks must also be considered.

## **Development Aid: Humanitarian Situation**

*Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool***

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the impact of the freeze on funding for the United States Agency for International Development and cuts to UK development aid on humanitarian problems globally; and what is their assessment of the risk of starvation as a result. [HL5290]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** We are currently working to assess the implications of the US funding pause across development sectors, geographic regions and multilateral organisations. We are gathering information and working with other donor partners to share analysis of the pause.

The UK is reducing UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) from 0.5 percent of gross national income (GNI) to 0.3 percent in 2027 to support increased spending on defence to 2.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) from April 2027. The Prime Minister has been clear that the UK faces a period of profound change, with conflicts overseas undermining security and prosperity at home. The Government will continue to play a key humanitarian role, including in Ukraine, in Gaza and in Sudan.

## **Employment: Artificial Intelligence**

*Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the use of artificial intelligence technologies to help people back into the workforce through (1) monitoring individuals affected by illness; and (2) matching job vacancies with job seekers. [HL5429]

**Baroness Sherlock:** 1) The Health Transformation Programme is exploring how technology can improve the Personal Independence Payment service and support better outcomes for people with Health Conditions and Disabilities.

By creating modern digital health and disability benefit services, the Programme will collect health data in a structured way. This will allow us to use data more effectively to tailor support to individual needs and to connect individuals to the right work, health and skills support for them.

Structured data will also enable the Department to harness emerging technologies, such as AI. We will evaluate the impact of the changes on customers and DWP, before using AI tools widely.

2) We are working on the design for the national jobs and careers service with a pathfinder being planned. As part of the design of the service, we will explore and test the most appropriate use of technology (including AI) to support job seekers with their work search.

## Fawaz Akhras

Asked by *Lord Green of Deddington*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that Dr Fawaz Akhras, a British citizen, is able to return to the United Kingdom. [HL5544]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** Any requests for assistance to help facilitate the return of British Nationals to the UK are considered with published policy, and applications may take longer during periods of high demand, or when further enquiries need to be made.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office provides information on the assistance we can provide, and to whom, in our publication: Support for British nationals abroad (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/support-for-british-nationals-abroad>).

## Financial Services: Education

Asked by *Lord Storey*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the suggestion that money habits are set by the age of seven. [HL5422]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) is an arm's length body of the Department for Work and Pensions and has a statutory duty to coordinate the UK strategy for financial wellbeing. This strategy includes a goal to ensure that two million more children and young people in the UK are receiving a meaningful financial education by 2030. To support the provision of financial education, MaPS undertakes and promotes research to improve their understanding of children and young people's financial education needs and their financial wellbeing. MaPS' assessment of the evidence is that the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that help people to manage money and achieve good financial wellbeing begin to develop from an early age and continue to develop throughout childhood and the teenage years. MaPS' published research can be found here:

<https://maps.org.uk/en/publications/research>.

Financial education is currently taught through the national curriculum for mathematics at key stages 1 to 4 and citizenship at key stages 3 and 4. Together this covers personal budgeting, saving for the future, managing credit and debt and calculating interest. Primary schools are free to teach financial education within citizenship. The non-statutory primary citizenship programme of study at key stages 1 and 2 equip pupils to look after their money and realise that future wants and needs may be met through saving.

The government has established an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, which seeks to deliver an excellent foundation in core subjects, including mathematics, and a rich, broad and innovative curriculum that readies young people for life and work.

The Review group will publish an interim report in early spring setting out its interim findings and confirming the key areas for further work and publish its final report with recommendations this autumn. We will take decisions on what changes to make to the curriculum in light of these recommendations.

## Government Departments: Assets

Asked by *Lord Agnew of Oulton*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent on 17 February (HL4608), which ministerial department failed to produce a strategic asset management plan (SAMP) in 2024; what consequences or enforcement measures are in place for departments that do not produce such a plan; and which departments are included in the Government Property Agency's office portfolio SAMP instead of having their own standalone plans. [HL5388]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** Departments are responsible for their own SAMPs, and required to update these plans yearly. Guidance and tools are provided to ensure consistency and effectiveness.

In the event an updated asset plan is not produced, the Government Chief Property Officer can write to the Principal Accounting Officer alerting them to the requirement.

Last year, all ministerial departments produced an updated asset plan except the Department for Business & Trade (DBT), although plans for the offices occupied by DBT were set out in the Government Property Agency's office portfolio SAMP. DBT will produce a plan for 2025.

By agreement, HM Treasury and Department for Education did not produce a 'stand alone' departmental asset plan but featured in the Government Property Agency's office portfolio SAMP as onboarded clients.

## Government Departments: Procurement

Asked by *Lord Agnew of Oulton*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Twycross on 20 February (HL4194), which of the Government Major Projects Portfolio projects have (1) increased in cost and by what percentage relative to their original budgets, (2) been delayed beyond their original delivery schedule and by how many months in each case, and (3) been reduced in scope. [HL5387]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. The Infrastructure and Projects Authority publishes details on the estimated budgets and delivery timescales for each of the Government Major Projects Portfolio projects as part of its annual report, from which the change in cost and schedule between years for individual projects can be calculated.

## Great British Energy Bill: Environment Protection

Asked by *Baroness Coffey*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Written Answer by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath on 27 February (HL5005) is consistent with his Written Answer on 6 February (HL4366) that clause 3 of the Great British Energy Bill would, if enacted, be considered 'environmental law'. [HL5401]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** The answers are consistent with one another. Whilst the Great British Energy Bill is considered environmental law, it is not proposing any changes to environmental law so there is no basis for the minister to form a view on the need for advice from the Office for Environmental Protection on any matter relating to the natural environment.

## Gulf of Mexico

Asked by *Lord Balfe*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Chapman of Darlington on 7 March (HL5231), what are the "long-standing processes on establishing geographical feature names for UK use"; and whether the Gulf of Mexico will be renamed. [HL5583]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** The Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (PCGN) advises HMG on policies and procedures for the representation of geographical names for places and features outside the UK, excluding those of the Antarctic. For names of international maritime features beyond any sovereignty, PCGN usually advises reflecting the common English conventional name, which for this body of water is the 'Gulf of Mexico'.

## Human Rights: Armed Conflict

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 to address dehumanisation in situations of conflict. [HL5418]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The UK is committed to protecting those most at risk in situations of conflict. Promoting compliance with International Humanitarian Law is a cornerstone of our commitment to the rule of law and the UK calls on all parties to a conflict to observe robust standards.

## Iraq: Internally Displaced People

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Leeds*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support people in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

who are internally displaced because of the threat posed by Daesh. [HL5309]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The UK continues to collaborate with the Government of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government, and the international humanitarian community as we collectively seek durable solutions (led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) for those displaced and living in insecure conditions.

Through the International Organization for Migration, the UK is contributing to the immediate stabilisation of those who remain internally displaced by funding quick impact projects and livelihood support activities. For example, we have provided the UN funding facility for stabilisation with £32 million, to restore vital public services such as utilities and education across liberated areas of Iraq. The UK also provides funding to the office of the UN durable solutions adviser to lead the UN's strategic coordination efforts.

We will always strive to ensure that internally displaced persons in Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, are protected and that their returns can be safe, dignified, and voluntary.

## Iraq: Islamic State

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Leeds*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support survivors of Daesh crimes in Iraq. [HL5311]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The UK strongly lobbied the Government of Iraq to pass the Yazidi Survivors' Law in March 2021. As a ground-breaking piece of legislation, this represented an important first step towards accountability and justice for survivors of Daesh violence. These survivors are predominantly minority women, who suffered from crimes such as conflict-related sexual violence and domestic servitude.

The UK is funding the General Directorate of Survivors' Affairs with £340,000 over three years (2022/23-2024/25), through the International Organization for Migration. This funding will support the law's full, and survivor-centred, implementation. It will also further develop capacity for Daesh accountability and help survivors access mental health and psychosocial support and rebuild their lives.

Furthermore, the UK will continue to work with Iraq and international partners to ensure that Daesh are held accountable for the crimes they have committed, following the closure in September 2024 of the United Nations investigative team to promote accountability for crimes committed by Daesh.

## Iraq: Religious Freedom

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Leeds*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the threat to religious minorities in Iraq from Daesh and its affiliates. [HL5310]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The UK is disappointed that minority communities in Iraq, including Christians and Yazidis, continue to report cases of discrimination, intimidation, and harassment by armed groups. These cases can be exacerbated by their political underrepresentation, limited routes for redress, and protracted displacement.

This is why our programmes, through the UK Integrated Security Fund, tackle the key drivers of instability and aim to support a more accountable, capable, and inclusive society, through effective governance structures.

For example, in 2023, we implemented a £15,000 programme in Bashiqa, in Nineveh Province (an area still recovering from the impacts of Daesh), to improve religious tolerance and social cohesion, through initiatives focussed on arts and culture. This was implemented by The Lotus Flower, a charity supporting women and girls impacted by conflict and displacement, with funding from the UK's John Bunyan Fund for Freedom of Religion and Belief.

Reducing the threat from Daesh and preventing a Daesh resurgence remains a top priority in our relationship with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdish Regional Government.

### **Israel: International Criminal Court**

*Asked by **The Lord Bishop of Southwark***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have made representations to the government of Israel regarding the Protection of Israeli Public Officials from the Action of the International Criminal Court in The Hague against the State of Israel Bill 2024. [[HL5328](#)]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** We have not raised the Protection of Israeli Public Officials from the Action of the International Criminal Court in The Hague against the State of Israel Bill 2024 with the Government of Israel. We respect the independence of the International Criminal Court (ICC) which is the primary international institution for investigating and prosecuting the most serious crimes of international concern. The UK is a State Party to the Rome Statute. This brings with it obligations that put us in a different position -to Israel, which is not a State Party.

### **Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme**

*Asked by **The Lord Bishop of Southwell and Nottingham***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the changes to the system for reclaiming VAT on listed places of worship on projects which have already signed a contract and where the work has begun, such as St Mary Magdalene Church in Newark. [[HL5530](#)]

**Baroness Twycross:** Based on the Department's analysis of previous data, 94% of applications between 2022-2024 have been under £25,000, and most of these claims were for under £5,000. We believe that the modifications were necessary and adequate given the tight fiscal challenges we inherited from the previous government.

We expect the cap will be applied to all claims received on or after 1 April 2025. We will provide published guidance on scheme applications and eligibility in due course.

### **Livestock: Animal Welfare**

*Asked by **Baroness Hodgson of Abinger***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of how effectively livestock projects funded by the International Finance Corporation implement the good management practices set out in its Good Practice Note on Improving Animal Welfare in Livestock Operations, published December 2014. [[HL5246](#)]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** The Government works internationally to promote high standards of animal welfare and recognition of the overlap between animal welfare, animal health and sustainability.

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) has rigorous and internationally recognised standards which align to those of other jurisdictions such as the EU. The IFC assesses potential industrial livestock projects which it supports against these standards as part of its due diligence processes.

The UK will continue to engage with IFC to ensure it applies its Performance Standards to all investments, including related to livestock production, and where appropriate, provides guidance and support to clients to achieve these.

### **Long Covid**

*Asked by **Lord Strasburger***

To ask His Majesty's Government how they are monitoring the prevalence of long Covid in England; what is their estimate of number of people in England currently suffering from long Covid; what is their analysis of how long those people have had long Covid; and at what rate is the prevalence of long Covid increasing or decreasing. [[HL5423](#)]

*Asked by **Lord Strasburger***

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the effect of long Covid on the economy in each year from 2020 to 2024, including the effect with respect to those affected by long Covid of (1) their economic inactivity, (2) the diminution in their quality of life, (3) their lost income, (4) the cost of informal caregiving for them, and (5) their extra healthcare costs. [[HL5424](#)]

*Asked by Lord Strasburger*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many specialist clinics dedicated to treating long Covid were operating in 2020, and how many are operating now. [HL5425]

**Baroness Merron:** The most recent data from the Winter Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Study, a joint study carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the UK Health Security Agency, shows that, for the period 6 February 2024 to 7 March 2024, an estimated 1.8 million people, or 3.3% of the population, in private households in England, self-reported experiencing long COVID symptoms more than four weeks after a COVID-19 infection. The following table shows a breakdown of duration:

<i>Duration</i>	<i>Estimate</i>
4 to 11 weeks	148,971
12 to 25 weeks	105,946
26 to 38 weeks	28,107
39 to 51 weeks	57,164
52 to 77 weeks	105,962
78 to 103 weeks	116,876
104 to 155 weeks	253,770
156 weeks and over	365,922

No estimate has been made of the rate at which prevalence of long COVID is currently increasing or decreasing in England. The ONS does not regularly collect this data.

No estimate has been made of the effect of long COVID on the economy in each year from 2020 to 2024, including the effect with respect to those affected by long COVID of their economic inactivity, the diminution in their quality of life, their lost income, the cost of informal caregiving for them, and their extra healthcare costs.

The most recent data from the infection study shows that for those who self-report long COVID of any duration, in England and Scotland, who are aged between 16 and 64 years old and are not in education are less likely to be employed or self-employed compared with those who have not reported long COVID.

On 18 December 2020, NHS England had put in place 69 dedicated clinics across the country. As of 1 April 2024, there were over 90 adult post-COVID services across England along with an additional 10 children and young people's hubs.

**Ministry of Justice: Public Consultation***Asked by Lord Keen of Elie*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many policy reviews and consultations the Ministry of Justice has launched since the General Election on 4 July 2024;

what the subject of each review is; and what the anticipated timescales are for their completion. [HL5674]

**Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede:** Following the election, this Government has outlined its ambitions through the Plan for Change, which sets out an ambitious set of milestones - across the missions - for this Parliament.

As the House would expect, Government continually reviews its work to ensure that it is delivering the best outcomes for the people of the United Kingdom, and that its policies continue to represent the best value for the taxpayer.

Public reviews will be available on Gov.uk as they are published.

**Oak National Academy: Financial Services***Asked by Lord Storey*

To ask His Majesty's Government what topics the additional lessons on Financial Education being produced by the Oak National Academy will cover. [HL5421]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** Oak National Academy's forthcoming financial education resources will support teachers to deliver high quality lessons that prepare children to manage money sensibly and confidently. The resources will cover key stages 1-4, incrementally building pupils' understanding of key financial concepts, such as saving and budgeting. They will focus on real life applications of mathematics and frame learning in specific, contemporary contexts that reflect the modern world. As well as covering personal finances, the resources will help children and young people consider the important role money plays in wider society.

**Offshore Industry: North Sea***Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the feasibility of introducing a rigs-to-reefs programme in the UK sector of the North Sea, and what legal or regulatory barriers exist to such a programme under domestic and international law. [HL5383]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** The OSPAR (Oslo and Paris convention for the Protection of the Marine environment of the North-East Atlantic) Convention prohibits the dumping or leaving in place of any disused offshore Oil and Gas installation in the marine environment. To re-purpose an installation, for example as a strategic compensation measure, installations would need to be re-classified and regulated by the relevant competent authority.

*Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential for repurposing North

Sea oil and gas infrastructure for carbon capture and storage, and what financial or regulatory incentives exist to encourage operators to pursue this option instead of full decommissioning. [HL5384]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** The Government's consultation in 2019 on the 're-use of oil and gas assets for carbon capture, usage and storage projects' concluded that there is the potential for significant cost savings for some CCS projects which can re-use appropriate oil and gas infrastructure.

The Government has set out how change of use relief can be issued for certain re-purposed assets. Under this regime, oil and gas companies will be relieved of their decommissioning obligations for repurposed assets if certain conditions are met. Secondary legislation to clarify this process is being developed and is expected to be introduced in due course.

*Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton*

To ask His Majesty's Government what proportion of decommissioned offshore oil and gas infrastructure from the UK sector of the North Sea is currently processed in UK dismantling facilities. [HL5385]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** This information is not held by government. External estimates suggest that 78% of the onshore dismantling of offshore oil and gas infrastructure is undertaken in the UK.

## Offshore Industry: Tax Allowances

*Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many decommissioning relief deeds (DRDs) have been entered into since their introduction; how many DRDs have been triggered to date; what estimate they have made of the cost of the resulting total payments; and what estimate they have made of the potential future liability arising from all active DRDs. [HL5386]

**Lord Livermore:** The Government lays a Written Ministerial Statement in Parliament each year updating on the progress of its Decommissioning Relief Deed (DRD) policy. The latest statement was made on 21 March 2024 covering the 2022-23 financial year and indicates 108 DRDs had been signed as of this date. The statement also reports several DRD payments, which relate to 2 DRD claims. The next statement will be laid in due course.

HM Treasury recognise a provision when an amount can be reliably measured and a DRD claim is notified or a DRD claim is pending. These provisions are set out in the Treasury's Annual Report and Accounts (ARA). The ARA for 2023-2024 indicates a provision of £227m in relation to claims as of the 31 March 2024. The next ARA will be laid ahead of parliamentary summer recess.

The ARA does not include an estimate of the overall financial effect of DRDs because it is unquantifiable. The likelihood of economic conditions at the individual firm level, required for DRD claims to be admissible, cannot

be accurately estimated due to the absence of comparable data to use in any calculation.

## Police: Wales

*Asked by Lord Wigley*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many frontline and support police officers are currently employed in Wales, and what were the corresponding figures in 2010. [HL5439]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** The Home Office collects and publishes data annually on the primary function of police officers, as at 31 March each year, in the 'Police Workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin.

The functions framework was replaced in 2015 which means that police functions data for 2015 onwards are not directly comparable to data collected under the old framework. Any attempts to compare across the two frameworks should be done with caution.

Data on the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) police officers in frontline, frontline support and business support roles can be found in Table F6 of the data tables accompanying the publication. Table F6 includes data going back to 31 March 2010. Data for March 2010 to March 2014 has been estimated and therefore should be treated with caution.

Table 1 below shows the number of FTE police officers in frontline, frontline support and business support roles in Wales. As at 31 March 2010 it is estimated that there were 6,375 FTE police officers in frontline roles, 388 FTE police officers in frontline support roles and 270 FTE police officers in business support roles. As at 31 March 2024 there were 6,677 FTE police officers in frontline roles, 436 FTE police officers in frontline support roles and 372 FTE police officers in business support roles.

*Table 1: FTE police officers in frontline, frontline support and business support roles, as at 31 March 2010 and 2024, Wales*

	<i>Frontline</i>	<i>Frontline support</i>	<i>Business support</i>
2010 (estimated)	6,375	388	270
2024 (actual)	6,677	436	372

Notes:

1. Frontline includes visible operational frontline roles and non-visible frontline roles
2. Figures for 2010 are estimated and are not directly comparable with figures for 2024

## Pornography Review

*Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to implement the recommendations of the report by Baroness Bertin Creating a Safer World—the

Challenge of Regulating Online Pornography (HC 592), published on 27 February. [HL5416]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The Independent Pornography Review is a wide-ranging and thorough piece of work which assessed the effectiveness of pornography legislation, regulation, and enforcement. The Review's final report was published on the 27 of February 2025.

This is an important yet deeply complex topic. The findings of the Review continue to be assessed by the Government.

### Prisoners' Release

*Asked by Lord Keen of Elie*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many prisoners have been released early under the prisoner early release scheme since its introduction, broken down by offence category. [HL5408]

*Asked by Lord Keen of Elie*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will publish (1) the names of all prisons participating in the prisoner early release scheme; and (2) the number of prisoners released from each institution. [HL5411]

**Lord Timpson:** On 07 November, the Ministry of Justice published transparency data on how many offenders were released on the first days of Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 of SDS40 (1,889 prisoners on the first day of Tranche 1, and 1,223 prisoners on the first day of Tranche 2).

SDS40 is a legal requirement that applies to all prison institutions. Data on prison releases forms a subset of prison population data which is intended for future publication. In accordance with the requirements of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, we may not give any early indication of the contents of this statistical report.

*Asked by Lord Keen of Elie*

To ask His Majesty's Government what consultation took place with victims' groups before implementing the prisoner early release scheme; and what steps they have taken to address concerns raised by victims' groups. [HL5410]

**Lord Timpson:** Following our inheritance from the previous Government, we were forced to introduce SDS40 as an emergency measure to prevent the imminent collapse of the Criminal Justice System.

Unlike the previous Government's disastrous early release scheme, this Government ensured that probation had time to complete pre-release work and risk assessments. We also exempted a number of offences, including sex offences, violent offences with over 4-year sentences and specific offences often linked to domestic abuse.

The implementation of SDS40 was considered at a victim support sector roundtable, and then subsequently through meetings with a sector engagement group, which includes a broad range of victims' groups and representatives. To address the concerns raised about the amount of information available to victims about the measure and its practicalities, we published an explanation of the policy on GOV.UK and provided victim support organisations with frequently asked questions and answers to support them when engaging with victims who may be affected by the measure.

### Prisoners' Release: Reoffenders

*Asked by Lord Keen of Elie*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the prisoner early release scheme on reoffending rates; and what measures are in place to monitor released offenders. [HL5407]

**Lord Timpson:** Our initial operational insights suggested there was not a significant change to the use and application of recall since the implementation of SDS40. We will, however, continue to monitor this.

The number of people who have been recalled or have reoffended following release under the early release measure (SDS40) forms a subset of prison releases data which is scheduled for future publication. In accordance with the requirements of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, we may not give any early indication of the contents of this statistical report.

Proven reoffending rates are published regularly on an annual and quarterly basis. The most recent rates are available at the following link: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/proven-reoffending-statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/proven-reoffending-statistics).

SDS40 brings forward normal release with licence conditions and offenders released under this measure are managed by probation in the standard way.

### Prisons: Overcrowding

*Asked by Lord Keen of Elie*

To ask His Majesty's Government what impact the prisoner early release scheme has had on the availability of prison places; and what assessment they have made of alternative measures to address prison overcrowding. [HL5412]

**Lord Timpson:** Following the inheritance left by the previous Government, in July 2024, the Lord Chancellor was forced to introduce the SDS40 scheme to avoid imminent gridlock across the Criminal Justice System.

We have already published data for day one of Tranches 1 and 2 on 7 November 2024 on the numbers of prisoners released and are considering how routinely publishing SDS40 data best fits with our regular Accredited Official Statistics.

When this Government came into office, we were dangerously close to prisons overflowing. That would have meant police would have had to stop arresting and we would have face a complete breakdown in law and order.

Whilst the SDS change provided the intended immediate relief to the system, this was never expected to be a long-term solution. To ensure we are never in a position where we run out of prison places again, the Lord Chancellor announced the Independent Review into Sentencing, alongside a series of prison capacity measures. This included reforming our recall practices to target the unsustainable growth in the recall population since the pandemic and an extension of the maximum period offenders can spend on Home Detention Curfew from 6 – 12 months.

### Pupils: Ukraine

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many Ukrainian children are currently receiving an education in primary and secondary schools. [HL5394]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** Information about the nationality or country of birth of children in schools in England is not collected by the department.

However, ad hoc surveys of admission officers were conducted in 2022 and are available here:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-placements-for-children-from-outside-of-the-uk>.

This shows that, between 1 September 2021 and 27 September 2022, when adjusted for non-response, there had been an estimated 22,100 applications for school places for children from Ukraine. 13,100 of these were for primary school places and 9,100 were for secondary school places.

Of these 22,100 applications, 20,500 offers had been made at that point in time. This figure is also adjusted for non-response. This represents 92% of applications. 12,300 of these were for primary school places and 8,100 were for secondary school places.

### Second-hand Goods: VAT

*Asked by Lord Teverson*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to reduce VAT on reused, refurbished and repaired goods to incentivise circular consumer practices. [HL5578]

**Lord Livermore:** Second-hand goods may already benefit from a reduced rate of VAT under the VAT margin scheme. Sellers of eligible goods are not required to charge VAT on the full final sale price of the good, but instead on the difference between the amount paid for the item and the final sale price.

VAT is the UK's second largest tax, forecast to raise £171 billion in 2024/25. Tax breaks reduce the revenue available for vital public services and must represent value for money for the taxpayer. Exceptions to the standard rate have always been limited and balanced against affordability considerations.

The government has no plans to further reduce VAT on reused, refurbished and repaired goods.

### Social Security Benefits

*Asked by Baroness Finlay of Llandaff*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many claimants applied to migrate from other benefits to Universal Credit in (1) January, and (2) February; and how many of these claimants disclosed that they have a life prognosis of 12 months given to them by a medical professional. [HL5403]

**Baroness Sherlock:** The number of people, by legacy benefit, sent a Migration Notice and of those that made a claim to Universal Credit is only available to December 2024.

These statistics are published quarterly on Stat-Xplore, with the last update on 18 February. The next official statistics update is due on 13 May, which will have data to end of March 2025. There will also be people who claim Universal Credit (natural migration) without being asked, which will have been counted in the overall published People on UC statistics.

The latest available statistics are provided in the separate spreadsheet and available at [Stat-Xplore - Table View](#).

Our Move to UC official statistics analytical datasets do not contain terminal illness information and work to identify, understand, link data and quality assure would only be available at disproportionate cost.

*Asked by Lord Sikka*

To ask His Majesty's Government what was (1) the total amount paid out for each benefit administered by the Department for Work and Pensions, (2) the total monetary amount of alleged fraud for each benefit, (3) the total number of prosecutions in each case, and (4) the total amount recovered, in 2023–24. [HL5523]

**Baroness Sherlock:** Total estimates of benefit expenditure and estimates of fraud and error across all benefits can be found at: [Fraud and error in the benefit system - GOV.UK](#)

As outlined in [DWP Annual Reports and Accounts 2023 to 2024](#) on page 103, there were 655 prosecutions but a breakdown by benefit is not available.

Debt Management Unit's total recovery in 2023-24 amounted to £2.81 billion (excluding Housing Benefit recovered by local authorities but including £46 million Housing Benefit debt recovered by DWP), page 133 of the [DWP Annual Reports and Accounts 2023 to 2024](#).



## Special Envoy for Women and Girls

*Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the (1) remit, and (2) budget, of the newly appointed UK Special Envoy for Women and Girls. [HL5636]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** The UK Special Envoy for Women and Girls will work alongside the Foreign Secretary and Minister for Development, to progress the UK's foreign policy and international development objectives on women and girls. More information on the Special Envoy's responsibilities can be found at: Harriet Harman KC - GOV.UK. The UK Special Envoy for Women and Girls is an unremunerated role. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will reimburse all reasonable expenses properly and necessarily incurred in respect of the appointment.

## Stonewall: Membership

*Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Collins of Highbury on 25 February (HL5027), whether any of UK Government Investments, the Crown Estate, or the Intellectual Property Office are paid members or affiliates of Stonewall. [HL5550]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** None of these organisations are paid members or affiliates of Stonewall.

## Sudan: Development Aid

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government how they are supporting communities in Sudan through the UK Aid programme; what is the impact of this support and how many people are benefiting from it; and how will that be affected by cuts to UK development aid. [HL5291]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** The Government will continue to play a key humanitarian role, including in Ukraine, in Gaza and in Sudan.

In response to the crisis in Sudan UK aid is making a difference and saving lives. Over 600,000 people in Sudan and a further 700,000 people in neighbouring countries who have fled the conflict are now receiving life-saving aid. Between October 2023 and October 2024, UK aid has benefited nearly 2.5 million people in Sudan.

The impact on specific programmes will be informed by the ongoing Spending Review and departmental resource allocation processes. Plans will be set out in the usual way in due course.

## Visas: Ukraine

*Asked by Lord Wigley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to extend the right given to Ukrainian citizens to reside in, and benefit from relevant services in, the UK. [HL5436]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** To provide future certainty, Ukrainians provided with temporary sanctuary in the UK under the Ukraine visa schemes can apply for a further 18 months' permission to remain in the UK through the Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE) scheme, which opened to applications on 4 February 2025.

Those granted further permission to remain in the UK under the Ukraine Permission Extension scheme will receive the same rights and entitlements to access work, benefits, healthcare and education as provided under the existing Ukraine Schemes.

The Homes for Ukraine scheme remains open and free of charge for Ukrainians in need of sanctuary to apply to come to the UK.

We will, of course, continue to keep the Ukraine Schemes under consistent review in line with developments in the ongoing war.

## Wales Office: Finance

*Asked by Lord Wigley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the estimated cost of maintaining the Wales Office in the 2024–25 and 2025–26 financial years. [HL5438]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** The estimated cost of maintaining the Wales Offices in London and Cardiff are £622k in 2024-25 and £769k in 2025-26.

## Wales: Defence

*Asked by Lord Wigley*

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the recent announcements on the increase in defence spending, what plans they have, if any, for (1) the recruitment of additional military recruits from Wales, (2) the tendering of new contracts for supplies or services for defence purposes with business in Wales, or (3) the appropriation of additional land or buildings for defence purposes in Wales. [HL5435]

**Lord Coaker:** Defence is proud of its strong ties in Wales, from RAF Valley and the Royal Welsh to the construction of AJAX armoured vehicles in Merthyr Tydfil. As mentioned by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury last month during a visit to Newport, detail of how and where the defence budget will be invested in the future will be set out in the Strategic Defence Review.

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